



Front Cover

PREFACE

Mission Printing, whose purpose is to send the gospel around the world, has produced and distributed more than one hundred titles. Some of these are personal Bible studies designed to convert the lost to Christ. Other books deal with false teachings so as to help Christians young in the faith to meet religious error effectively. A number of books have been written to assist the young Christian to grow toward spiritual maturity.

We furnish many World Bible School teachers with these materials. This book is the result of a World Bible School teacher asking for help in answer to a letter from a student in Central Africa. His questions, you will notice, are rather involved and required lengthy answers to cover the subject matter introduced by his inquiries.

Some of the answers to his questions, and replies to his remarks, are a little *sharp*, but they are not meant to be bitter. What I have had to say collides with his teachings, but there is no intent to be hostile. I recall that Jesus clashed with the false teachers of his day and His language to those who perverted truth was less than cordial. He had great patience with those who did not know but His speech was pungent toward those who perverted His doctrine.

It is hoped that this book will be read with open and unbiased minds, will evoke further study of God's word, and, growing out of the serious investigation of it, the results will be the turning of honest hearts to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Guy V. Caskey
December 1988
Arlington, Texas
U.S.A.
October 1966

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A LETTER FROM MALAWI, CENTRAL AFRICA

Dear Kathy,

I am very thankful indeed for the World Bible School Introductory Lesson Course you have sent me. I do hope that I will learn a lot more things from you as we continue to study the Bible together.

Now I will be asking you some questions concerning the Church of Christ. I can assure you that we can be sincerely wrong as well as sincerely right. As we know there is a right way and a wrong way to study the Bible. The right way is to come to the Book with an honest and open heart to find God's revelations to man. The wrong way is to have preconceived convictions and then search

the Scriptures for proof texts to establish our beliefs. This is the method that is followed by the cults.

Why do the Church of Christ sing, "What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus," and "Just as I am and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot. To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God I come?" Why then does the Church of Christ insist on that according to Acts 22:16 our sins were washed away in the water of Baptism?

While we are thinking about the songs, is it not a bit inconsistent to sing songs that were written by men and women whom the Church of Christ believe to be unregenerate? Were these song writers baptized in the manner that you, the Church of Christ, prescribed as being essential to salvation? Has the Church of Christ ever produced great songs comparable to those in most of the hymn books?

Let us now come to the point of our understanding of salvation by grace. Is the Church of Christ in line with those people who believe in salvation by Grace believe that salvation is provided for us by God on the basis of the atoning death of Christ, but that to be saved by grace, we must accept the salvation which He has freely provided?

What is your interpretation of Romans 11:5-6 [the Church of Christ]? I am amazed that any Bible student would teach that

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God elects all men to salvation. If this were true all men would be saved. What do you do with Acts 13:48; Romans 8:28-30; and Romans 9:11, 16?

It is to be regretted that there are some that preach that faith is merely giving mental assent to historical facts. But, my dear Kathy, most preachers who preach salvation by faith do not believe or preach this. Bible preachers believe the same as you do that a dead faith cannot save. We believe that the faith that

saves is a living faith that will change and transform the life of the believer. We believe if there is no such transformation it is not a saving faith. What do you do with such clear declarations as Romans 3:28; 4:4-5; 5:1?

Bible preachers believe in and preach obedience, but not as a condition of salvation but as a result of salvation. You mentioned in your lessons four conditions that a sinner must obey in order to be saved: (1) Faith, (2) Repentance, (3) Confession, and (4) Baptism. And the baptism which you prescribed was not only that of a believer in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but that it must be for the remission of sins.

Dear friend, would you tell me that men such as Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Dwight L. Moody, Charles G. Finney, David Livingstone and William Carey to mention a few if you know them already, are now in hell, simply because they were not baptized according to your [the Church of Christ] formula?

While we are on the subject of baptism, I have never been able to understand that since you believe baptism is essential to salvation that you do not also believe that it is essential to be baptized each time a person gets saved. The Church of Christ teaches that when a person backslides he loses his salvation. Why then is it not necessary for a person to be baptized again and again each time he is saved?

While we are making obedience as a condition of salvation why stop with four points? God commands us to be perfect (Matthew 5:48). Christ commands us to love one another even as he loved us (John 13:34). He commands us to pray without ceasing (I Thessalonians 5:17). He commands us to reckon ourselves dead unto sin (Romans 6:11). He commands us to be filled with the Spirit of God (Ephesians 5:18). These are just a few of the

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many of the commands of God in the New Testament. If we are to be saved by obedience, why do we not have to obey all of

God's commands if we are to be saved? By the way, what does the Church of Christ teach about being filled with the Holy Ghost? It is a command of God (Ephesians 5:18)?

Perhaps this accounts for the fact that one sees so few (if any) Church of Christ people who have the joy of the Lord. How could a person have the joy when he knows that his salvation depends on his obedience, and he knows that he is disobedient? Even if we do obey all of these four points, this is just the beginning of salvation. I have never had the privilege of meeting any one member of the Church of Christ, a person who knows and understands the deep things of God. Perhaps this is because of their lack of emphasis on the Holy Spirit.

Finally I would like if you would send me cassette tapes or books that would also help me in understanding really about your position. I want to know more about "Campbellism and its history and heresies." How do you understand or have studied about the rise of Campbellism during the early 1800's in America? Do you have clear details about the various roles of Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott and Barton W. Stone in Campbellian writings? Did these men actually "restore" the Gospel, the Church and true New Testament worship, as they claimed, or did they simply create another sect bent on a more dogmatic sectarianism than others they renounced?

And what of their theory of "baptismal remission of sins?" Do the oft-quoted versus such as Acts 2:38 and Mark 16:16 prove their point? And are the Cambellites the only people who are Christians? Does a Church have to wear the "Church of Christ" label in order to be a Church of Christ?

I am very much troubled on this subject matter. Please help me with any books or tracts if possible for my further Bible study. If you want to speak on cassette tape, then please do so. I will understand you dear. May I prayerfully urge you to give prayerful consideration to the things asked above.

Yours

very

sincerely,

N. Chenda Mkandawire

September 10, 1988
N. Chenda Mkandawire

Dear Mr. Chenda:

Kathy gave me your letter to read and asked that I reply to it. I lived in South, Central and East Africa for many years, beginning in 1949. I preached the gospel in Nyasaland (visited Rumpi) and helped with the church in that country. Many of my students came from your country to Tanganyika (Tanzania) to the Bible school in the Southern Highlands at Chimala.

I am saddened and disappointed at the tenor of your letter. I have been preaching the gospel for fifty-four years and my life has been to share pure New Testament Christianity with people around the world.

I have also made a strong effort to set the right kind of example before these people among whom I have lived. Let me explain what I mean by looking at some of things in your communication which would create these feelings of distress.

First, you say you are very thankful for the World Bible School Introductory Course that was sent to you, but immediately thereafter you set out in a tone of criticism what you assume Christians believe and practice. Throughout the whole letter, you seem to set yourself up as an authority on the teachings of *The Church of Christ*. How could you say you "hope to learn a lot more things from you as we continue to study the Bible together," when, in fact, you presume to know much more about every subject you introduce than the young lady with whom you are corresponding? That seems shameful to me for I never thought that kind of an attitude characterized the speech and conduct of a Christian depicted in the New Testament.

The *quality of your criticism* throughout is unfortunate, and is seen in such statements as: "Perhaps this accounts for the fact

that one sees so few (if any) Church of Christ people who have the joy of the Lord." Such a statement seems unjust and judgmental to me. Mr. Chenda, you should not presume to know the hearts of all members of the church of Christ. That kind of posture in your mental attitude must be wrong, and it is hoped that you will see and retract your mistake.

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Why would you ask for books and cassettes when it is so clearly manifest that you have already made up your mind what you are going to believe? It appears that you hold a position, for some reason, which tends to down-grade and depreciate people by calling them *Campbellites*

In what way will it help you in the study of God's word to "know more about Campbellism and its histories and heresies?" I was somewhat let down in my expectations when you did not name or define any heresies of so-called Campbellism in your missive. The young Christian woman who sent you the Bible study lessons and who, above everything else, would like for you to be an undenominational New Testament Christian, must have been frustrated when you made such unkind statements and asked if the *Campbellites* (as you seem to prefer to call them) "simply created another sect bent on a more dogmatic sectarianism than others they renounced?" What did you hope to prove and what ground did you hope to gain when you asked, "Are the Campbellites the only ones who are Christians?" Such tactics are unbecoming to Christian deportment, and, I believe, frustrate the real issues in a serious study of the word of God. It is my hope that those who read this book will find such approach offensive and will turn to an open-hearted treatment of the passages under consideration in this response.

Another statement that seems lamentable to me is: "I have never had the privilege of meeting any one member of the Church of Christ person who knows and understands the deep things of God." Some of the great scholars of church history in the last one hundred and fifty years who have written excellent,

if not incomparable, works upon the period of the Reformation and Restoration have been members of the church of Christ. Why would you be asking a fine Christian lady, concerned about lost souls, to help you understand more about the Bible when you are convinced there is not a single Christian (a member of the church of Christ) who knows or understands the deep things of God? This almost dashes one's hope and blasts one's expectation of teaching one the truth found on the pages of God's Book. Please do not use such a Bible study course as a forum to promulgate your denominational beliefs and test their strength and validity through this means? It is for you to decide, but a careful examination of one's heart in such a case would be very much in order!

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A DIVIDED CHRISTENDOM

Perhaps you know there are 20,000 churches in Christendom; there are 2,050 in the United States alone. Each wears a different name, subscribes to a different doctrine, teaches different tenets, worships separately in different ways and walks a different course. There are some similarities between them, but enough differences to produce and maintain division.

Do you believe that God was unable to make His plan of human redemption plain enough for people to understand it and thus be united? Or, do you think He intentionally confused it so that He may damn the souls of those who might fail to understand the right way? Do you think God did not have the ability to make His plan of salvation distinct, plain, clear, obvious, definite, well-defined, clear-cut? Or, would you conclude that He made it vague and unrecognizable, concealed it so as to make His will indiscernible and thus promote confusion and division? If God did such a thing intentionally, deliberately, He is not **good**, and if He lacked the ability to make it clear and unambiguous, He is not **God!**

JESUS PRAYED FOR UNITY

Jesus prayed earnestly for unity. Do you believe it possible for us to have it? How? In that same prayer, Jesus said, "Your word is truth." Is it possible for us to know the truth? And, if you know the truth and I know the truth, will we be united? If we are divided, does that mean that one (or both) of us does not know the truth? Or, may it mean that one (or both) of us does not believe the truth? Listen to Jesus, "I do not pray for these [apostles] alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word [message]; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:20-21).

Jesus was saying that if believers are united upon the message He gave the apostles, the world would believe that God had sent Him. If they were not united in His Word, the world would not believe that God had sent Him. So, much of the infidelity (unbelief) that characterizes the world today is not only traceable but is attributable to a divided Christian world. A dissenting,

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discordant, differing Christendom will go off at a tangent in divergent ways. Splinter groups, factions and doctrinal clans are formed and eventually crystallized until there is fabricated a religious structure completely antagonistic to peace and unity in the world. You have the answer to the question, "How do you account for 20,000 different beliefs?" Until the religious world decides to return to the belief and acceptance of the word of God that Jesus gave to His inspired representatives, and they in turn transmitted to us, the situation is irremediable.

THE CURE FOR DIVISION

Call this pessimistic, negative and gloomy, but there is no possibility of repairing the damage Satan has wrought through division, or restoring the *ancient order* of God's plan of redemption, until men are willing to read and hear **all** that He has said upon any subject, lay aside **all** preconceptions, presumptions and prejudgments to walk by His divine will.

UNITY AN APOSTOLIC COMMAND

What do you think Paul, an inspired apostle, meant when he besought the Corinthian Christians: "that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Corinthians 1:10)? Were these just idle words, impossible for them, or us, to accept and practice? What is the meaning of Luke's account of the work of the early church, "and they continued daily with one accord" (Acts 2:46)? And, the statement above that passage, "Now all who believed were together" (verse 44)? "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). I don't have to ask you if these circumstances are true in the church today. Why are they not true? Is it because people cannot understand the word of God? If that is so, it would be a reflection upon the capability and competence of God. And, further, what do you think Paul meant when he urged the Ephesian Christians to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3)? With all of the controversy going on in the religious world, mixed with argument, contention and disagreement, do you believe that those who call themselves Christians are heeding this charge and admonition of the apostle? Or, do you believe that it is possible for them to comply with His mandate and practice it?

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ONENESS ESSENTIAL TO UNITY

Continuing with the discussion of this issue of *unity*, Paul told them there is **one body**. You likely know that he had already apprised them of the fact that the **one body** is the **church**. "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body ..." (Ephesians 1:22-23). "He is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18). "... for the sake of His body, and the body is the church" (Colossians 1:24). If there is one body and the body is the church, the simple deduction is there is but one church! How do you account for

20,000 who are hopelessly, helplessly and haplessly divided? In this same context, Paul further affirms that there is **one faith**.

I hope you are not one of those who *thanks* God for all the churches so that one may *join the church of his choice*. Or, *thanks* God for so many different *faiths* so as to find one best suited to his personality, desires and inclinations. And, I further hope you are not one of those people who asserts: "It does not matter what one believes, as long as he is sincere and honest." Jesus said: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The **what** one believes is all-important. There is a parallel between this and the physical body. It is not simply *eating* that sustains physical life, but **what** one eats. If he ate rat poison believing it was salad dressing, would his belief guarantee him that he would feel no harm from the error? If one sincerely believes and accepts false doctrine as the truth, is he thereby guaranteed salvation because he was honest?

In this same context, Paul advised them that there is **one baptism**. How is it we can understand and perfectly agree that there is **one God, one Christ, one Spirit**, but in the very same chapter—in fact, the very same verse of Scripture, we become irretrievably divided over **one church** (body), **one faith, one baptism**.

A DIFFERENT OR CORRUPTED GOSPEL

Paul warned the Galatians if one came to them teaching a different gospel, he would be accursed. And, he cautioned them not to believe or receive any other gospel that that which they, the apostles, had preached to them.

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Maybe it would be better to read this text from the New Testament: "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel

from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9).

CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE GOSPEL?

Is there any prospect or any feasibility to our understanding what that gospel is? Can a knowledge of the truth be achieved? If this is not possible, how can we comply with his inspired mandate: "Let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind" (Philippians 3:16)? Can we walk by the same rule? How?

The New Testament emphasizes and reiterates that people can understand what the will of God is. Listen to Paul as he said: "... having *made known* to us the mystery of His will ..." (Ephesians 1:9). In the third chapter of this same book, he spoke of the blessing given to him "that I should preach among the Gentiles [nations] the unsearchable riches of Christ, *and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery ...*" (3:8-9). In speaking of the purpose of the work of the apostles in preaching the gospel, Paul informed the Corinthian Christians, "... God has *revealed* them to us through His Spirit" (I Corinthians 2:9-10). The Greek word from which our word *reveal*, *apokalupto* derived means "to remove the cover," or "to take the cover from." You remove the cover so that people may see.

But with 20,000 divisions, conflicts, discords, disagreements and contentions, it would appear that they do not see anything, except what may correspond with and fit into their own doctrinal mold, preconceived ideas and scheme of things. Why? Why does it appear hopeless and irreparable? Did God intend it that way? Is it possible for men today to "Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it" (Jeremiah 6:16)? Can people who believe in Christ and his word be united, believe the same things, speak the same things, be of one heart and soul, walk by the same rule, possess singleness of

mind, serve together with one accord, walk in the old paths? Or is this which Christ prayed for and the apostles commanded just a fiction and a fantasy?

AND NOW TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

It is my pleasure to answer your questions. I sincerely hope they will be helpful to you and of benefit to those with whom you may share such Bible studies.

Question: "Why do the Church of Christ sing, 'What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.' and 'Just as I am and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot, to Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come.' Why then does the Church of Christ insists on that according to Acts 22:16, our sins are washed away in the water of baptism?"

Answer: I do not know anyone in the Lord's church who believes or teaches that our sins are washed away in the **water of baptism**. In all the years I have been preaching, teaching and serving in the kingdom of Christ, the Christians I have met believe that one is cleansed in the blood of Christ. Water could never wash away one's sins. If it could, one who is interested in seeing people saved would be inclined to *force* that act upon them or force them into complying! But, **when** does the blood of Christ cleanse one? And, **what** response on the part of the sinner is necessary for Christ's blood to be applied to his sin-sick soul?

IT IS THE BLOOD OF CHRIST THAT CLEANSSES

The only satisfactory answer to those questions is to go to the word of God and let it decide for us. We will look at many passages: "Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death" (Romans 6:3)?

There are several lessons in this passage to which you should give note. First, for one to come into Christ and thus be united with Him (verse 5), he must be *baptized* into him. That point should not be argued, if you have read all those passages upon the subject. But, perhaps, we should read them anyway, lest there be some apology or protest for not understanding. We

are baptized into His name (Acts 8:16). "... we were baptized into one [His] body" (II Corinthians 12:13). The passage which we have just read as a text says that we were baptized into **Christ**. So, also, does Galatians 3:27: "For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ."

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HIS DEATH?

But there is a second lesson in the verse—*baptized into His death*. It is through the benefits of His death that we are blessed. This is the fundamental fact of the gospel. "I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you." Paul said, "... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures ..." (I Corinthians 15:1-4). His blood, you may remember, was shed in His death, "But they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out" (John 19:33-34).

But Paul says in this verse that we were baptized into His death wherein His blood was shed. It is in His death that we come in contact with His blood. It is there we receive the remission of our sins. "For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed [poured out] for many for the remission [forgiveness] of sins" (Matthew 26:28). John, the apostle, apprises us that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (I John 1:7). It is rather interesting that these verses we have read say four things: (1) we are *baptized* into Christ; (2) we are *baptized* into His body; (3) we are *baptized* into His name; and (4) we are *baptized* into His death where His blood cleanses us. In the face of these plain, certain, easily understood truths, unquestionable and infallible, it is unapprehended by me why you would entertain any doubt about the essentiality of baptism; and, more than that, why you would aver that it is non-essential, and then offer the names of such men as Dwight L. Moody as proof that one does not have to be baptized to be a Christian or go to heaven.

DO YOU BELIEVE CALVANISM?

Do you believe the Calvinism that Moody taught? *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Volume VII, page 491, says, "He [Moody] preached Calvinism and believed it with all his heart." Do you believe his baptizing (?)

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(sprinkling) infants was scriptural and met with God's approval? Do you believe this doctrine of Calvinism? "Predestination, by which God adopts some to the hope of eternal life, and adjudges others to eternal death. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others."

DOES BAPTISM HELP ONE?

Do you agree with Moody? "Nor will being baptized do you any good. They believe that because they were baptized into the church, they were baptized into the kingdom of God. I tell you that it is utterly impossible. You may be baptized into the church, and yet not be baptized into the Son of God" (*The Way to God—Moody's Sermons*). We have just read those passages which unequivocally say that when one is baptized into His body (the church), he is baptized into Christ (the Son of God). Yet, Moody denied it. Do you deny it?

IS INFANT SPRINKLING A GOOD SUBSTITUTE?

Do you concur with Moody on infant baptism? "You who were dedicated to God in your childhood in the ordinance of infant baptism by your parents do hereby declare your personal acceptance of the same, and you recognize baptism as the seal of this covenant, confirming you in its promises and binding you to all of its obligations."

"These quotations clearly mark the Illinois Street Congregational Church off from the Baptists; and when we recognize that the

church recognized sprinkling and immersion, it is further emphasized that the church was not Baptist" (*The Chicago Years*, pp. 24-25).

In *Life & Work of Dwight Moody*, page 350, there is a picture with this caption: "Mr. Moody Christening the Twins (infants about one year old) of Mt. Hermon School." Is this what you are telling me you believe? While the Baptists would reject Moody's position on sprinkling, how do they feel about his doctrine on predestination. Do you still believe that "some are ordained to eternal life and some to eternal damnation, and that the number is so fixed that it can neither be increased nor diminished?"

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WHAT DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT SAY?

Let us look further on what the New Testament has to say about baptism and about our response to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles on the subject.

You indicate that it is some kind of peculiar, outlandish, incredible doctrine which we espouse and teach when we tell people they must "repent ... be baptized ... for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). And, you call it "your (church of Christ) formula." What is out of the ordinary, or strange about quoting a passage from an inspired apostle? When those believers on Pentecost were cut to the heart at the preaching of Peter and other apostles, the simple, understandable reply was: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized into the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall received the gift of the Holy Spirit." What a plain, certain, unambiguous, intelligible and lucid speech spoken by this inspired apostle!

First of all, Peter's directive was an imperative. It was something that the people were commanded to do. This meant that it was a duty, an urgent need for them to comply. It further means that it was authoritative, binding, mandatory, compulsory.

But it was also something to which they could respond and with which they could comply. They, doubtless, understood very well what Peter was saying about "the remission of sins." He used the word *aphesis* which means "to send away, dismiss, send forth, to remit, forgive, pardon" (*Analytical Greek Lexicon*). The thought was borrowed, it is believed, from the Old Testament practice of sending the *scapegoat* far away, never to be seen again. So, Peter was **commanding** these inquirers, "Repent and be baptized that your sins may be sent very far away." They must have understood him because approximately 3,000 complied with this mandate from the Lord that first day (Acts 2:41). Why would you have difficulty understanding or complying with that? They didn't!

THE COMMAND REPEATED

When Peter had explained to those Jewish brethren who had accompanied him to the house of Cornelius that "God had granted repentance unto life to the Gentiles also," he then asked,

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"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:47-48).

While I do not believe *water* will cleanse one of his sins (I have already shown that it is the blood of Christ), I believe that it must be a baptism in water, because God said so! If God had said to baptize them in milk, or apple cider, or sand I would believe that! Would you?

Riding along in a chariot, Philip and the treasurer of Ethiopia came to a *certain water*. The Ethiopian nobleman said, "See, here is *water*, what hinders me from being baptized?" The record says they went down into the *water* and he baptized him; and they came up out of the *water* (Acts 8:36-39).

The beauty and importance of all of this, Paul explains in Romans 6:3-5, is that it pictures the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The sinner dies to sin by repentance—that is, he ceases practicing it, having a godly sorrow for his sins, and he is then buried with Christ in baptism and rises to walk in newness of life (verse 4). The new life, you will notice, begins when he rises from the watery grave.

Peter's statement to the people in Cornelius' house got my attention when I understood that "he commanded them to be baptized." Surely, you must know the import of a command from the Lord, spoken by an inspired apostle! Is it necessary to obey a command of God? Or, are commands simply optional? Do we sit in judgment on which commands are necessary and which are unnecessary?

You indicate that there are some commands which we do not have to obey to be saved, and you quoted several. "Christ commands us to love one another. ..." You don't think we have to do that to be saved? "He commands us to pray without ceasing." Do you not think we have to pray regularly and steadfastly to meet with God's approval? "He commands us to be filled with the Spirit of God." Is it your position that one does not have to be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to satisfy the requirements God has laid down for us to be Christians, his faithful children?

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IS OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD NECESSARY?

If *obedience* is not necessary to salvation, to what is it necessary? You speak as if *obedience* to God's word and *remission of sins* are totally unrelated.

After Paul told the Romans that they had been baptized into Christ, and, therefore, into His death, and that they had been buried with Him and raised with Him to walk a *new* life, he later said in that same chapter, "But God be thanked that though you

were slaves of sin, yet you **obeyed** from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been **set free from sin**, you became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18). One cannot fail to see that through the **obedience** of these Romans to that form (*tupon*), type of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (verses 3-4), they had been **made free from sin** and become God's servants.

SUBMISSION IS REQUIRED TO BE SAVED

Everyone should agree that it is necessary for us to *submit* ourselves to God and His will in order to become Christians and live the Christian life. These words, *submit*, *subject*, along with many others are common in the New Testament, and they mean "to arrange one's self under." "Therefore submit to God" (James 4:7). Early in His ministry, Jesus said: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does* the will of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

But, listen to Him further: "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and *does* them ..." (verse 24). Back to our original question: "Was it necessary for the people in the house of Cornelius to *obey* the command of Peter to be baptized? Or, was it optional? Were they left to decide on their own about its importance and necessity? Was this a command they did not have to keep? You will recall, no doubt, John's discussion of this issue. He made the point both strong and clear: "He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4). But this is not all John said on the question: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (I John 5:3).

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DID JESUS MEAN WHAT HE SAID?

When Jesus commanded the apostles to preach the gospel to the whole world and said: "He who believes and is baptized will be

saved" (Mark 16:16), did He mean that it was necessary for one to believe and be baptized to be saved? Or, was this a nonessential command? Was it left up to the discretion and pleasure of those who heard the gospel to decide what to do about it? Can you imagine those to whom the apostles preached, and commanded to believe and be baptized, going around saying, like many are saying today, "It is not necessary to be baptized? We know it is a command, but it is not one of those commands you have to obey." That kind of falderal (the meaning of that word is *mere nonsense*) marks the thinking of so many religious leaders of our time. No wonder we have 20,000 divisions in the Christian world!

WAS AWAY YOUR SINS

It is thrilling to read and we should all be thankful for the uncomplicated, straightforward, facile language of Ananias to Paul. "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Since God had sent Ananias to Paul and instructed him what to say, do you think what he told him to do became necessary terms of obedience? Was it necessary for Paul to get up and be baptized in order to meet God's wishes and fulfill the demands of the Devine summons?

EVEN THE GRAMMAR SAYS IT!

Grammarians of the New Testament language tell us that these verbs in the sentence are in the *middle voice*. That simply means that Paul was instructed to "do something for himself, on behalf of himself, or in the interest of himself." So the responsibility was his. There was no other alternative. It could not be done by proxy; a representative or a substitute could not handle this important matter for him. It was not a matter left to his choice or volition. Literally, Ananias said to him, "Get up, and get yourself baptized and get yourself washed from your sins." It is both interesting and significant that the Greek text says, "and wash away the sins of you." Some translations say, "they sins." In modern-day English, we would say, "your sins." You may take

note at this point Paul still had his sins. You see, it is *genitive case*; or, in English, it's called *possessive case*. That is easily understood. I say to you, "This is **my** Bible." It means, not only is it in my possession, but it belongs to me. That is what Ananias said to Paul, "You still possess your sins, and you need to arise and get yourself baptized and get yourself washed from your sins."

Ananias did not say in this verse what it is that washes away one's sins. But we have learned that truth long ago from many passages. It is the blood of Christ that washes away sins. That blood is applied when we have the faith in Christ and His word to dispose our hearts to submit our wills unreservedly and completely to His instructions. It is a total surrender, and when it is, we have no problem with obedience to Him.

If we do have a problem with *obedience* to His requirements of us, we could not become Christians in any New Testament sense of the word. Until there is that disposition of heart to resign one's own will and way and accept His totally and unconditionally there is absolutely no conceivable way to obey God acceptably in anything, or ever meet with Divine approval!

BAPTISM ALSO NOW SAVES US

Let us give special attention to what Peter said about this point in his letter, I Peter 3:20-21. "Who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Peter calls baptism the *antitypon*, or the antitype of the salvations of Noah and his family through, by means of, water. As Noah and his family were saved through water, so baptism, the antitype, saves us. Peter is not saying, nor do we believe, that the abstract act of baptism saves any one. That is, baptism

apart from a living, acting, vitalizing, moving faith would be a mere form and farce. Baptism without a genuine repentance preceding it would constitute only a formality, a ceremony, a ritual. There must be godly sorrow, a *turning around* in one's mind, an *about*

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face in one's direction and a resolution to cease a life of sin and face in God's direction. Otherwise, baptism would be no more than a rite, such as sprinkling an infant.

I do not think I am acquainted with any ten year old children who could not easily comprehend all these passages we considered on this subject. This is likely one of the reasons Jesus prayed for unity—not only because it was so desirable for peace and harmony and good-will, but because it is so understandable, so simple. There is no need for division due to an inability to see and comprehend. Isaiah well expressed it: "A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others" (Isaiah 35:8).

CAN A MAN OF THE WORLD TELL THE TRUTH?

Question: "While we are thinking about songs, is it not a bit inconsistent to sing songs that were written by men and women whom the Church of Christ people believe to be unregenerate? Were these song writers baptized in the manner that you, the Church of Christ, prescribed as essential to salvation? Has the Church of Christ ever produced great songs comparable to those in most of the hymn books?"

Answer: It is possible for someone who is not a Christian to speak or write something that is, in fact, true. We have hundreds, even thousands, of song writers in this country, many of whom in character are low, base, vulgar, immoral, un-Christian, but who write both music and lyrics that are beautiful and true. Much of it is not true, however, and the poetry is

vulgar and filled with obscenity and coarseness. All of this I reject, contradict and discard. If something is false, indecent and improper, why should I not disapprove of it and exclude it from anything I may do or say?

The daily news is spoken and written, for the most part, by people who are not Christians, but they transmit to the public a great deal of needed information, much of which is true. Some of it is not. A news commentator tells me, during his discussion of the evils of alcohol, that there are 18,000,000 addicts in the United States. He has access to data, records and information which corroborate his assertion. I believe his statement, and I

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even repeat it in speeches or lessons I teach. One must be rather twisted in his thinking who would question such use of available data or who would discard it on grounds that the the source is un-Christian!

Satan and his demons, at times, spoke the truth. "And suddenly they cried out, saying 'What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God' " (Matthew 8:29)? They knew who He was and acknowledged it. Should we reject truth simply because we may question the source of it? Hear Paul on this very subject: "Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in that I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice" (Philippians 1:15-18).

What makes error palatable and acceptable is the fact that it is often concealed by its mixture with truth. Truth is so often polluted by error. Even one drop of poison can turn a glass of water into a deadly potion. On the other hand, if one is able to separate truth from error, there is no reason why truth would not still be truth.

If a Hindu priest tells the truth on some subject, I accept it and rejoice. I may expose his purpose, just like Paul exposed the evil purpose of these men who were preaching Christ. Just because a man may tell the truth on one topic does not, by any means, affirm he is right in all other topics

There are some things you say in your letter which are true and I agree with you on those points. For instance, you said: "I can assure you that we can be sincerely wrong as well as sincerely right." I don't reject that just because you said it. But, when you assert that baptism is not essential to one's salvation, I take issue with you and deny your affirmation categorically and challenge your position. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." I don't believe you can misunderstand that. It is as simple as $2 + 2 = 4$! I have met people through a half century of experience with your denominational stance and they believe (doctrinally) that $2 = 4$, not $2 + 2$. The only thing that could conceivably cause you to deny this passage would be a defense of a

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system of false doctrine to which you feel bound, for some reason or another, to defend and protect. Peter said, "Repent and let every one of you ... be baptized for the remission [the sending away] of your sins." This simple, easily understood statement does not need any explanation. No human being can make that plainer than God has already made it! Ananias said to Paul, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16). It would be a serious matter to doubt or deny the truthfulness of these statements; and I fear it would be more serious to change or pervert them.

IS GOD'S KIND OF MUSIC GOOD ENOUGH?

Perhaps, I am not competent enough in the field of music to say whether Christians—that is, members of the Lord's church, have ever produced great songs comparable to some others. I do know that *our people* have written hundreds of beautiful songs

which are in correspondence, without question, to the word of God, and they are widely used. This may be a matter of personal preference. Some songs I personally like better than I do others. It appears to me to be calamitous to reflect unfavorably upon someone else, particularly their inability to perform certain works. The quality of hundreds of songs which Christians have composed, and have been sung by millions as they worship God in honor of Christ, have been a blessing to my life, and, I believe, to the lives of countless other people. The character and tone of your comment and criticism would indicate that you are an expert or a specialist in this field. Likely, you did not intend to leave such a bold inference. Why not confine your questions and remarks to the principles of the Bible rather than human tastes and judgment?

WHAT ABOUT GOD'S GRACE?

Question: "Let us now come to the point of our understanding salvation by grace. Is the Church of Christ in line with those people who believe in salvation by Grace believe that salvation is provided for us by God on the basis of the atoning death of Christ, but that to be saved by grace we must accept the salvation which He has freely provided?"

Answer: I see nothing wrong with the statement, the question and the inference in the above section of your letter. It is not a

question, however, of "What does the Church of Christ believe?" The ultimate question is, "What does the Bible teach on this or any other subject? What does God say?" The Bible teaches that we are saved by His grace. "For by grace you have been saved ..." (Ephesians 2:8). "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). Do you believe God's grace is for all men? Do you believe their knowledge and reception of His grace is contingent upon our preaching the gospel to a lost world? Or, do you believe that God is a respecter

of persons—choosing some to eternal life and others to eternal damnation?

There is no way for anyone to be saved apart from the grace, the mercy, the provision and the condescension of God to man. We cannot save ourselves; we do not even deserve to be saved. It is only through His love, care and concern for us that we can be saved here and hereafter. The word *grace*, *charis* is found 156 times in the New Testament. It is well defined in a passage of Scripture, Luke 1:30, "... for you have found favor with God." It is through the Son of God, "through Him we have received grace" (Romans 1:5). It is upon the basis of His death, His sacrifice, that grace has been made available to us. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us" (Ephesians 1:7-8)

I believe, and so do my brethren, that the Bible teaches we are saved by faith. O yes, we are saved by grace, but faith is the ground of our acceptance of that grace. The faith of the individual (and which comes by hearing the word of God—Romans 10:17) is a response to God's love and grace, and it is much more than you claim when one says, "I believe that Christ is God's Son and I accept Him into my heart as my personal Savior. I am, then and there, immediately saved." It would be well for you to examine the word *faith* as it is used in the New Testament.

NEW TESTAMENT FAITH

Christianity is a system of faith, and in that arrangement the individual who is converted to Christ undergoes that change by his personal belief. God's scheme of human redemption makes salvation contingent upon one's response to His plan.

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There are a number of words in the New Testament which belong to the same family and are translated *faith* or *belief*. It would

help tremendously in the understanding of the subject to examine and define these words and observe how they are used in these passages of the word of God. The root word for *faith* is *peitho*, and it means "to persuade, or to be persuaded; to confide in, trust." This word is used 55 times in the New Testament. Here are some of the uses: (1) Trust. "He *trusted* in God" (Matthew 27:43). This is our word for *faith*. (2) *Persuade*. "... and am *persuaded* of the Lord Jesus" (Romans 14:14). (3) *Confidence*. "We have *confidence* in the Lord" (II Thessalonians 3:4). (4) *Obey*. Some seven times this word is translated *obey*. "As many as *obeyed* him ..." (Acts 5:36). "*Obey* them that have the rule over you" (Hebrews 13:17). "That they should not *obey* the truth" (Galatians 3:1; Romans 2:8; Galatians 5:7; Acts 5:37; James 3:3).

The word *obey* in these passages is from *peitho*, the root word for *faith*. "As many as **obeyed** him ... as many as were convinced and persuaded by him." The word *pistis* is a cognate (that is, related by birth; belonging to the same family of words) of *peitho*, used 244 times in the New Testament, and following is the definition of this word *faith* by the standard, reputable scholars of the New Testament language.

HOW THE LEXICONS DEFINE FAITH

Pistis (faith): "Used especially of the faith by which a man embraces Jesus, i.e., a conviction full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah, the divinely appointed Author of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God, *conjoined* with **obedience to Christ**. In faith to **give one's self up to**" (-Henry William Thayer).

"Acknowledge Jesus as Savior and **devote themselves to Him**. To believe and **embrace** what God has made known either through Christ or concerning Christ ... Believe my word and their testimony that they are good and **and must be followed**. Believe in the Son and **accept** what His name proclaims Him to be (John 3:23). **Recognition and acceptance** of Christ's teaching. ...Full confidence ..." (-Arndt & Gingrich).

I would like to deviate for a moment here from the lexicographers and insert several quotations from Dietrich Bonhoeffer,

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the German theologian, on the subjects of grace and faith. Bonhoeffer evidently felt that they were inseparably connected, and he expresses the view that one's response to God's grace through faith is linked with **obedience to Christ**

Listen to what he has to say: "The only man who has a right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ ... But those who try to use this grace as a dispensation from following Christ are simply deceiving themselves ... If you dismiss the word of God's command, you will not receive His word of grace ... The man who **disobeys** cannot believe, for only he who obeys can believe ... For faith is only real when there is **obedience**, never without it, and **faith only** becomes **faith in the act of obedience**" (*The Cost of Discipleship*, pp. 55, 69, 73).

But let us return to the lexicons (Greek Dictionaries): "The fact that **to believe is to obey** is particularly emphasized in Hebrews 11. Here it has the more or less explicit sense of **obedience**. How naturally *pisteuon* includes **obeying**. **Pistis** (faith) is to be understood as **to acceptance** of the Christian message" (Romans 1:5; 3:25; 10:17; I Corinthians 15:14, 17; I Thessalonians 1:8). (-Gerhard Kittel).

Kittel spends 54 pages in his *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (10 large volumes), discussing the subject of *faith*. He says some things I believe we need to know and remember.

In Volume VI, page 217, he has this to say about the subject: "According to Paul, the event of salvation history is actualized for the individual, not in pious experience, but in baptism (Galatians 3:27-29). Faith makes it his. Hence, faith is not the end of the way to God ... It is at the beginning. If *faith* is **believing**

acceptance of that which the *kerugma* (preaching) proclaims, it is not thereby reduced to a confession of God's act, it recognizes the validity of this act for me. Faith is *hupakoe*.

The word *hear* (*akouo*) is found 437 times in the New Testament. *Hupakoe*, which derives from *hear* is used eighteen times (as you will note later) and is translated *obedience*. *Hupakouo* is used twenty-one times and is also translated *obey*. Hearing and obedience are the same word.

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HEAR?

What did Kittel mean by that last statement? The word *hupakoe* is a very strong word for **hear**. That particular word is translated **obey** in the New Testament eighteen (18) times. "You have **obeyed** from the heart ..." (Romans 6:17). He spoke of those "who **obey** not the gospel ..." (II Thessalonians 1:8). "When Abraham was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, **obeyed**; and he went out ..." (Hebrews 11:8). This word means "to hear." But it has a connotation and an import that requires: 1. To *hear audibly*. The significance of this is that "it is loud enough to be heard, so as to be audible." 2. To *hear understandingly*. This alludes to "perception, the meaning of; know or grasp what is meant by." 3. To *hear receptively*. This involves a favorable reception, take in, admit; mentally approving; and acting upon it accordingly." 4. To *hear retentively*. This alludes to "the power or capacity for retaining; tenacious; holding to; continuing."

This gives you some idea of what the word **hear** involves as it is used in the New Testament. So, what is faith? It is to hear and understand what God has said; it is to receive what God has said; and it is to retain and continue to practice what God has instructed. But to elaborate a bit more on the Bible definition let us consider the Greek word as it is used in the New Testament: 1. To give ear to, to listen (Acts 12:13). 2. To obey (Matthew 8:27). 3. To render submissive acceptance (Acts 6:7; Romans

6:17; II Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 5:9). 4. A hearkening to obedience (Romans 5:19; 6:16; I Peter 1:14). 5. Submissiveness (Romans 16:19; II Corinthians 7:15). 6. Compliance (Philemon 21); then Kittel returns to the idea of: 7. Obedient, submissive (Acts 7:39; II Corinthians 2:9; Phillipians 2:8).

IS OBEDIENCE A CONDITION OF SALVATION?

Question: "Bible preachers believe in and preach obedience but not as a condition of salvation but as a result of salvation. You mentioned in your lesson four conditions that a sinner must obey in order to be saved: (1) faith, (2) repentance, (3) confession, and (4) baptism. And the baptism you prescribed was not only of a believer in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but that it must be for the remission of sins."

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Answer: I have considerable difficulty following your logic. "Obedience is necessary but not necessary to salvation." Do you believe that *faith* is necessary to salvation? You see, *faith* is a command. A command is something you obey or disobey. It is something you **do** with what God has given you. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16). Do you believe you have to obey that command to be saved?

Jesus said to some Jews who questioned Him: "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). The language here is *ean me*, what grammarians call a *categorical imperative*, positive, direct; explicit." And, an imperative is a command. So, *ean me* means "except or unless." Jesus warned them, "Unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." And, He also said, "Where I am, there you cannot come!" "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" (John 6:29). Do you believe one has to obey (do) the work of God in order to be saved? You denied that obedience is necessary to salvation. Can

you be saved without faith, which Jesus said is a work of God? Jesus once said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15)! How important is it to *hear*—which means *obey*? Do you believe one must hear and repent? Is it only baptism to which you are so averse? If you think one should repent, why do you not believe he should should not also be baptized? Tell me what your problem is.

In the same paragraph, you deny that *repentance* is necessary to salvation. You say it is necessary but not necessary to salvation, because "obedience is not a condition of salvation." To what is repentance necessary, if it is not necessary to salvation? What did Jesus mean when He issued that same categorical imperative to the Jews in Luke 13:3? "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Do you think the Holy Spirit was telling the truth when, through Peter, he commanded the thousands on Pentecost, "Repent and be baptized ..." (Acts 2:38)? What is the import of the language of Paul, in preaching to those on Mar's Hill in the city of Athens, "... but now (God) commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30-31)? Did God command something that was not necessary to one's salvation? Peter

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commanded those Jews in Solomon's porch of the temple, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). It sounds mighty like having one's sins blotted out is contingent upon repenting. Then you list *confession* and place it in the same category and tell us that it (confession of Christ as the Son of God) is not necessary as an act of obedience to be saved. I do not know what you have been reading to learn such doctrine, but one thing I know, it is not the Bible! Or, if it is the Bible you have been reading, I would rather recommend you start believing it! An exact, or literal, reading of Romans 10:9-10, is this: "Because if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus ... you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses into salvation." Do you want to be saved? If you do, you had better listen to the mandate of the inspired apostle.

Let's read another. "Everyone therefore," said Jesus, "whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33). Is this one of those directives of the Lord you do not have to obey to be saved? Such conclusions would account for the 20,000 different churches in the Christian world today! I am surprised that we don't have even more!

Last, in your list, you name *baptism*. But, we have treated this topic earlier in the letter and it should not be necessary that we repeat it. Only let me remind you that Christ commanded it, the apostles commanded it and even an ordinary Christian (disciple) commanded (by the direction of God) Paul to arise and get himself baptized and get himself washed from his sins (Acts 22:16). You state in that same paragraph that we prescribe that believers be baptized. Indeed, we do! And, do you wonder why? Here is the reason, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved."

The Nobleman from Ethiopia asked Phillip when they approached a certain water, "What hinders me from being baptized?" "Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all of your heart you may' " (Acts 8:37). He then confessed his faith in Christ as the Son of God and immediately thereafter they both went down into the water and Philip baptized him. This is a simple and beautiful story, and I could hope that every honest heart would respond favorably to it.

CAN ANYONE WHO IS NOT A BELIEVER BE BAPTIZED?

Are you telling us that there are others besides believers who can be baptized? Unless one is a believer (is able to believe and does believe), you couldn't baptize him if you wanted to. You could dip a small baby or an infant in water like the Greek Orthodox priests do (even three times), but that would not be baptism as the New

Testament describes and defines it. You can't baptize someone who does not believe, nor could you baptize someone who does not repent. A drunkard (alcoholic) used to drive to my house and cry and beg me to baptize him. That experience happened over and over; but I knew there was no way I could baptize him until he repented. I could have dipped him in water (submerged him), but it would not have been baptism. It would have been a mockery on my part to even go through the form. My mother was sprinkled when she was three months old by her father, a denominational preacher. But that is as foreign to the New Testament as snow is to the Sahara Desert!

THE USE OF THE WORD NAME

Jesus commissioned his apostles to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). The term *name*, as used here, has a variety of applications. For instance, the angel of the Lord instructed Joseph concerning Mary's child, "... and you shall call His name Jesus" (Matthew 1:21). In this manner, he had reference to a designation, to a proper name, to an appellative "having to do with the giving of names; the act of calling by a name; title, designation." Sometimes in the the New Testament, *name* is associated with authority. "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17). That is, whatever you believe, teach and practice, do it by the permission and authority of the Lord. I sign my *name* to a check and give it to you. My name on that check gives you authority to cash it at a bank.

But, in many instances, where the *name* of Christ, or God, or the Holy Spirit is used, it has reference to relationship. The Israelites were batized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea (I Corinthians 10:1-3). It is not possible, as you well know, for two million Isralites to be literally baptized into Moses. This is

symbolic language that has to do with relationship. Paul told the Romans that "we were baptized into Christ." That's relationship. So, Jesus commanded his apostles to teach and convert people throughout the nations and in the process help them to change their relationship by being baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

IT IS RELATIONSHIP

You certainly have to change your spiritual relationship to become a Christian. You have to renounce and leave the world (the sin that is in the world) and make a transition. Come from the outside to the inside, and the spiritual relationship is with God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Revealer of the truth. When my wife and I married years ago, we changed our relationship—from a single relationship to a married relationship. When our children were born, they came into a family relationship that was identified by my name—the Guy Caskey family. In your letter, you seem to question whether one should be baptized into the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Do you believe Matthew 28:19? Or, do you wish to contradict and deny it?

We have already discussed with you the purpose or design of New Testament baptism: "for the remission of sins, ... to wash away sins, ... to save us, ... to get into Christ, ... to get into his death, ... to get into his body, ... to become his children, ... to obey him." This and other passages says that we are baptized into a relationship—and that means an affiliation, an affinity, a closeness, an association. Spiritually, we are now related to all those in God's family. There is a linkage and a proximity that did not hitherto exist. Language, race and culture once separated people, but now we are all one in Christ Jesus. The barriers of race, color, language, economics, and such like, are gone and in this new relationship into which we were baptized we are one people, one family. God is our Father. Jesus Christ, as the Son over His house, is our Elder Brother and the Holy Spirit is our Comforter and Guide and other Christians are brothers and sisters. In that relationship there is love, warmth, sharing, understanding, unselfishness, tolerance and helpfulness.

In connection with this, you then ask, "Would you tell me that men such as ...Dwight L. Moody ...David Livingston, et al,

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are now in hell, simply because they were not baptized according to your (the Church of Christ) formula?

In the first place, I don't have any formula. Whatever I teach and practice, there is clearly and immediately a "thus says the Lord." But, since you have brought it up, let me discuss with you another fellow on your list—having already talked with you about Dwight Moody.

ARE GOOD MEN SAVED ON THEIR GOODNESS?

David Livingstone was primarily an explorer. He was also a medical doctor and a man of integrity and moral character. He helped the native peoples in south and central Africa in many ways, wanting them to be able to raise their standard of living by educating them in various fields of endeavor. They liked him. As far as I am able to tell from history, he never converted (?) very many of them. The churches he established were small and soon became extinct. He advanced colonialism and the British government and the British people promoted him, making him a hero.

Livingstone was sent out at the first by the London Missionary Society which was made up and supported by the Congregationalist denomination which, historians say, was practically Presbyterian. They claimed legislative and administrative powers (*The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia*, volume III, page 232).

WHICH WAY DO WE GO?

Let me pause here to ask: "Do you believe that men in these churches have legislative powers? Do they have the authority from God to enact, make laws, to be bound upon their

members?" Is what they decide in councils, synods, conventions and ecumenical meetings of church leaders authoritative? Are people bound by their decisions and mandates?

In subscribing and submitting to the church laws they enact, does God expect the average member of that denomination to keep the laws, rules and regulations faithfully? When the laws of one church synod differ from the laws of another church convention, which would you advise that people respect and keep?

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When some churches teach that babies should be baptized because "all are born in sin, inclined to evil and that continually," and others teach that only those who have been taught and have believed can be baptized, who do you advise that people should follow? What should be their guide? Should it be their ancestry? Their conscience? The majority of the people? The Bible? Which?

Would you suggest that if one believed that living relatives should be baptized for the dead (who were not baptized during their lifetime), that they should do so and join the Mormon Church? What standard do you believe people should follow, since there are thousands of them?

Would you advise that we all agree on the *Five Points of Calvinism*: (1) *Total Depravity*; (2) *Unconditional Election*; (3) *Limited Atonement*; (4) *Irresistible Grace*; (5) *Perseverance of the Saints*? Or, would you prefer that people subscribe to the Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed and the Augsburg Confession of the Lutherans?

In your judgment, do you think there are greater opportunities of unity if we all subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Article of Faith and the Prayer Book of the Episcopalians or Anglicans; or Pendleton's Baptist Church Manual? I have had in my library copies of the Methodist Discipline and the Roman Catholic Catechism (about 1000 pages). Which would you recommend should serve as the

basis of world-wide unity and the belief and practice of all Christians?

Do you think I subscribed to the teaching of Watch Tower, joined the Jehovah's Witnesses cult and lent my support to Jesus as a sort *secondary god* that this would be a safe and sure way to promote unity? What about aiding and abetting the Christian Science myth? Would such encouragement further the advancement of Christian unity and promote apostolic truth around the world? Then, there is the maze of Mormonism. Should I lend a helping hand to lift people to some kind of understanding of this system? *Eternal marriage* might be attractive to many people over the world! That gradual progression from frail, sinful man into a god may be the very thing that would facilitate this difficult problem of unity! Maybe Zen Buddhism is the answer to unity. There is already a

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following of more than 150,000,000 persons. That's a good start! It is a religion of *meditation*, and many people would find that attractive. The list goes on endlessly.

CHRIST HAS ALL AUTHORITY

The plain and repeated teaching of the New Testament is that Christ has all authority—legislative, executive and judicial. That does not leave any authority for the pope, priest, predicant, pastor or pilgrim. No body of earth's wise men have the right to meet and decide what men and women are to believe and practice in religion. But Livingston, and hundreds of others, who were associated with this denomination assumed these powers.

Listen to some of these teachings: "Congregational churches and ministers were supported by public taxation. ..." "It was the early rule to baptize infants, one of whose parents was a church member. When such baptized persons grew up and married but failed to join the Church, the question arose whether their children should be baptized ..." (ibid. 234). They believed and

taught the moral corruption of human nature. Let me pause again and ask, "Do you believe that babies are born sinners? Do you believe that there are 'infants in hell not a span long?' " "They adhered to the traditional Calvinism. They emphasized *predestination and limited redemption*," according to their articles of religion. Do you believe that God has decided beforehand that a certain number will be saved and a certain number will be damned and that the "number is so fixed that it can neither be increased nor diminished?"

The Anabaptists tried to persuade Zwingli and the Reform Tradition to go back to the fountain of truth and reject infant baptism and discard it from their practice because they said the original documents taught only adult baptism, but he refused. They debated the issue before the town council, and the council decided in favor of Zwingli. Adult baptism was forbidden and thousands of Anabaptists were murdered. Which group do you think we ought to follow in our pursuit of unity? And, which represented the true spirit of Christianity?

I do not propose to sit in judgment upon David Livingstone or Dwight Moody. God will do that. It is entirely His prerogative. But I deny the Calvinistic teachings of both these men and

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declare to you that they in no way resemble the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles revealed in the New Testament. If you choose to make these men your models and eulogize and praise them, you may do so, but not without my urging that you look to a higher standard than either of those men (or any of the others you named) as the criterion for you imitation.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CHOSEN BY GRACE?

Question: "What is your interpretation of Romans 11:5-6 (the Church of Christ)?"

Here is Paul's statement: "... at the present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace."

Answer: The true Israel, God's people, has come to consist of only a *leimma*, a portion left, the main bulk gone. This main bulk of the Jews despised grace and would not let it work faith in them. But this remnant, Christians, were not held with an irresistible grace by God's sovereignty, a grace that was intended only for them, and from which all the rest were barred. You must remember that "the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). God's grace is not offered to just a few. God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4).

MEN HAVE THE POWER TO ACCEPT

You state: "I am amazed that any Bible student would teach that God elects all men to salvation. If this were true all men would be saved." You confuse God's provision for all men to be saved and God's appointing men to salvation.

God made arrangements for all men to be saved. If not, why would He issue such charges to the apostles: "Go into **all** the world and preach the gospel to **every** creature" (Mark 16:15)? "... Go therefore and make disciples of **all** nations ..." (Matthew 28:18-20)? "Therefore, He is also able to save the uttermost **those** who come to God through Him" (Hebrews 7:25). His wish is that all men would be saved, but He created man a free moral agent, with the power of choice, decision,

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volition, and He does not force him. God will not rob him of that power He gave to man in creation. He invites him. His grace has appeared to all men; it is available; but men must accept the invitation and come to Him.

All men will not accept His grace, we have shown, but God would like for them, as free moral agents, to receive it. Thus, Jesus issued his invitation, "Come to Me, **all** you who labor and are heavy laden" (Matthew 11:28). The fact that He invited them to come shows that they have the power of choice. Why would Jesus invite them, knowing that many of them **could not** come (according to your doctrine)? They could come to him or they could refuse to come. John, in the Revelation, said: "And **whoever** desires, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17). His coming to Jesus is based on the **will** of the individual; and there is no respect of persons—**whoever will!** Black, white, yellow, red, it matters not. High, low, rich, poor, educated, uneducated—all stand on equal footing as far as the Lord's invitation to them is concerned.

This is in keeping with the tenor of Jesus' invitation to the lost: "Many are called, but few chosen" (Matthew 20:16). The word *call* means an *invitation*. The invitation to accept Jesus, submit to His will, become a Christian, is one He wants all men everywhere to hear and accept, but they don't all choose to do so. As the New Testament commentator, Lenski, says, "It is not an irresistible grace." You don't have to accept it. God does not coerce you. It is not something He thrusts down your throat, so to speak.

WHAT ABOUT ACTS 13:48

Then, you ask, "What do you do with Acts 13:48?" Here is the reading in the King James Version: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Let us look at what the passage says about those who were ordained to eternal life. (1) *They heard this* (that is, God's word). Other translations say, "They listened." Williams translation renders it: "They kept on listening." (2) They were glad. "Hearing this they began to rejoice." "The heathens were delighted." "They were overjoyed when they heard this." "They kept on rejoicing." (3) *They glorified the word of God.* "They praised God's mes-

sage." "They thanked God for His message." "And thankfully acclaimed the word of the Lord." (4) *They believed*. As many as had become disposed, believed."

No wonder such people were appointed to eternal life. This passage does not say, nor even indicate, that God, apart from their *hearing* His word, *rejoicing* in that word, *glorifying* God on account of His word, and *believing* His word, were arbitrarily appointed to eternal life. A more accurate and literal translation is found in such versions of the Greek scholars as *The Simple English Bible* and *A New Easy-To-Read Version*, which render it: "When the non-Jewish people heard Paul say this, they were happy. They gave honor to the Lord's message, and many of the people believed the message. These were the people appointed to have eternal life." And this, of course, is in perfect harmony and keeping with the analysis of the passage in the paragraph above.

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH ROMANS 8:28-30?

Then, you ask, what we do with Romans 8:28-30. The passage is rather lengthy, but let us read it. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom he foreknew, he also predestine to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these he also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." The *all things* in the passage is limited to the context. We all know that sin, for instance, does not work good to anyone. How is the expression qualified? Paul was talking about what God has done and is doing for us through Christ and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He shows how hope sustains and how the Holy Spirit translates to God the unutterable longings of the Christian's heart. He helps in our weaknesses and makes intercession for the redeemed (Christians).

In this context, the apostle speaks of the adverse things of life, its calamities, hardships and trials. By God's overruling, He works

these things to His children's good—that is, the real good, good in the long run, good in view of eternity. But for whom does He work this good? "Those that love God and those who are called according to His purpose." These two categories

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are the same people, of course! Who are those who love God? "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me" (John 14:21). "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (I John 5:3). "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments" (II John 6).

What is meant by the words, "called according to His purpose?" God's purpose in sending His Son into the world was to save those who believe in Him. So, He purposed to save men **through** His Son. It is His purpose to save all who want to do right. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Hence, all who feel the burden of sin and their need for righteousness, or their need to be justified—made right with God—are called. We have already noticed Jesus' invitation, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden ..." (Matthew 11:28). Those who answer this call, who accept this invitation, are the *called according to His purpose*. I don't really believe that is hard to understand!

And, furthermore, this truth corresponds with everything the Lord and inspired men have said elsewhere upon the subject. Paul spoke of this call in II Timothy 1:9-10, in these words: "Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ."

I could hope that it would be both interesting and profitable for you to notice that this purpose and this grace bestowed upon us are in the relationship of Jesus Christ our Lord; and, more than that, it was revealed, made known, through Christ. We come into that spiritual relationship by submission of our own wills to His

will—by our obedience unreservedly to Him. We occupy and sustain that connection, that affiliation, by our love for Him. And that means, Sir, that we obey His commands. Read carefully the passages just quoted in the third paragraph above!

This *purpose* of God (*protithemi*) is not predicted of men, but of God. It is the act of His placing His plan for the redemption of man out before His mind (this is a figure of speech which

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gives God human characteristics so man can comprehend something of His Majesty and His doings in the affairs of men). God was looking at what man was and could be in this great scheme of human redemption—sin, redemption, glorification—all were naked and open to His eye.

This great plan of preaching the saving message of life to all mankind, of saving the lost by sacrifice of His Son, of purchasing the church with the blood of Jesus, was "according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:8-11). It is in accordance with that purpose which runs through all the ages and which He has now accomplished in Jesus, the Christ, our Master.

But this passage says they were *called*. How was this done? We are not left to guess or speculate. The Bible is very plain on the subject: "... because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel ..." (II Thessalonians 2:13-14). Isn't that clear and easy? He calls us, how? By the gospel. What was our response? Belief of the truth? What did the Holy Spirit do? Sanctified us—set us apart from the world and the evil in it.

Then Paul says "He justified them." That is, He made them right with God. They stood in the right relationship with the Maker. And these are the ones, in the final day of accounts, He will glorify.

So, this entire scheme, outline, or arrangement for the salvation of the human race, God *set before* His face before the worlds began. He ordained, He foretold, He purposed, He predestined this program and the schedule for it. It was His *purpose* that **in Christ** all men should be saved; and He is able to save every man who will come to Him **through** Christ. This prearrangement is big enough, glorious enough to include all men of every age and dispensation. Unfortunately, all men will not **accept** His invitation, **hear** his call, **submit** to His will, **love** his commandments, **believe** His gospel and **come** into His kingdom. And, isn't it wonderful that the kind of God we worship and serve does not coerce and compel a man to be a Christian. He created man with the power of choice and He will never rob him of the prerogative. God is not a bully who strong-

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arms and bludgeons people to serve Him. He predestined the great sphere of Christianity and the salvation of all who would voluntarily cross into that place of safety and salvation.

You make God unjust and a respecter of persons when, in your Calvinism, you deny that He has proffered salvation to all men in every country and every age of the Christian Dispensation. You thereby oppose God's offer of forgiveness to all penitent and obedient believers. You gainsay Paul's affirmation that the gospel "... is the power of God to salvation for **everyone** who believes" (Romans 1:16). No one I know in the brotherhood believes or takes the position that "God elects all men to salvation." God elects only those who choose to be elected! No other service, except a voluntary service rendered out of love, would He, even for a moment, accept!

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH ROMANS 9:11-16?

Beginning with verse 10, Paul relates the story: "And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, the purpose of God according to election

might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.' What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.' So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy."

God was selecting His own instruments to work out His own plans. But I would like for you to notice carefully that God's selection of Jacob and rejection of Esau had **nothing** to do with their salvation. Your whole letter is a futile attempt to prove that God elects one person to be saved and reprobates another to damnation. That is not even the subject under consideration in this passage. One will always miss the truth when he tries to make God say something He is not saying and by taking it out of context.

If Paul had been talking about the salvation of Jacob and Esau, there would have been no point in mentioning the fact that the

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younger was selected instead of the older; for even the most dogmatic predestination would not say that the oldest son is the natural heir of salvation and all the other sons reprobates. The fact is that the selection of Jacob was the selection of a people rather than an individual—a people through whom God, in his great plan, intended to bless the whole world. "Go into all the world." Had it been the selection to salvation, then the nations descending from Jacob were all elected to salvation, and Esau's descendants were all lost! But God's language to Rebecca shows plainly, without controversy, that He was speaking of the descendants of Jacob and Esau rather than of them as individuals: "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). The statement, "The older shall serve the younger," does not

apply to Jacob and Esau as individuals, for, as individuals, Jacob came nearer serving Esau. But it came to pass that the descendants of Esau served the descendants of Jacob (I Chronicles 18:12).

"So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God who shows mercy." In bringing to fruition God's plans to bless all nations through Abraham's seed, He followed the counsel of His own will, not man's. The will of Isaac that Esau should have the blessing of the first-born, and the running of Esau to procure venison for his blind father, did not frustrate God's plan to save the world through the lineage of Jacob—Christ. It is through God's wisdom and mercy that His plan of salvation was introduced to the whole world. Please don't change Paul's subject matter and try to make it fit the system of Calvinism which declares that God, before the foundation of the world, decided that certain ones were predestined to life eternal, and others were ordained to eternal damnation!

KEEPERS OF THE LAW

One of the major problems that Paul had with the newly established churches throughout the Empire was the Judaizing teachers. They taught that one had to be circumcised and keep the Law in order to be a Christian. In other words, they were saying that in order for you to be a Christian, you had to become a Jew. Inasmuch as the Jews were certain they were God's people on account of their works of the law of Moses, it is very pertinent

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that Paul would add, "But if by means of grace, no more of works." He dealt thoroughly with the subject to the Galatian Christians. "Knowing that a man is not justified by works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

THE LAW WOULD NOT JUSTIFY

The first part of the discussion of Romans is given over to the subject of *justification*—being made right with God.

Paul's argument with these Jewish teachers was that no one is justified by the Law of Moses. *Justification* comes through the wonderful system of God's *grace*.

The Law of Moses served a number of good purposes for Christians: (1) The things that were written beforehand were written for our learning (Romans 15:1-4), and (2) concerning those things He said He would not have us to be ignorant (I Corinthians 10:1-12). (3) They serve as examples: Time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, et al. "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition ..." (I Corinthians 10:11). (4) The law made people aware of sin, defined sin and made them conscious they were sinners. Paul said he would not have known lust except the Law said, "You shall not covet" (Romans 7:7). (5) It served as a corrective measure. It was added because of transgression (Galatians 3:19). It disciplined people and served expedient and helpful functions. "Do we then make void (destroy) the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law" (Romans 3:31). Paul's argument was that "one cannot be *justified* by law." The Jews felt that because they were descendants of Abraham and they were given the law, and they were law-keepers, God owed them salvation. He was in their debt. But the apostle contended that this is not how you are *made right (dikaiosune)* with God.

DIFFERENT WORKS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

There are a number of different kinds of *works* in the New Testament which Jesus and inspired writers discussed.

Men's Works: "But all their works they do to be seen by men" (Matthew 23:5). Such works are in vain. "... for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing" (Acts 5:38). "... and rejoiced in the works of their own hands" (Acts 7:41). "Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their words" (II Corinthian 11:15). No one who believes the Bible, as far as I know, takes the position that man can be saved by his own works. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). This is a subject Paul frequently discussed with the churches he addressed, and he was always very explicit about it. "And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by **faith**" (Philippians 3:9).

Works of the Flesh: "Now the works of the flesh are evident ..." (Galatians 5:19). "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 5:11). "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has He reconciled" (Colossians 1:21). It is rather shocking to know there are many people in the world today, who, as a religion, practice Satanic works and justify themselves in their evil doings. But I am sure you do not believe that men are saved by such works!

Works of the Law: In speaking of the Gentiles in a period of history, Paul told the Romans that they "show the work of the law written in their hearts" (Romans 2:15). Then Paul turned his attention to the Jews and asked them: "Where is the boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith" (Romans 3:27). Under the grace of God and the great system of faith, the Jews had no room for boasting. It had been excluded by the gospel, **the faith**, the scheme of human redemption provided by Christ. He calls it the "law of faith." Do you believe we are saved by the "law of faith?" To show that one cannot be *justified* by the Law of Moses, Paul told the Roman Christians that the Jews had not attained to the righteousness of God, and the reason they had not was "because they did not

seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law" (Romans 9:32).

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The passage you asked about in your letter, Romans 11:5-6, reiterates and reaffirms Paul's declaration that the law will not justify one. It is an avowal that he continued to make to all the churches where this problem existed. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law ..." (Galatians 2:16). This is what he was proclaiming in the next chapter, 3:2: "This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

THE LAW ABOLISHED

When Paul positively avouched that we have been saved by grace through faith, and not by works, he was contending with this Jewish problem of keeping the Law of Moses. He not only told them that they could not be justified by it, but that it had been abolished. Since Christ's death on the cross, they were no longer under it (Colossians 2:11-14). In fact, some who had endeavored to keep it had fallen away from grace (Galatians 5:4).

What is so unsound and unbalanced is how people in the twentieth century, who are not of Jewish descent, are deluded into contending that we should be keeping the law which (1) was never given to us in the first place (Deuteronomy 5:1-6), and (2) was abrogated at the cross (Colossians 2:14). He has given us a new and better covenant. "He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:9-10).

The Works of God: "Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work'" (John 4:34). Do you think that Jesus considered it important or necessary to do the work of God?

The people searched diligently, frantically, for Jesus, when they came to Capernaum and found Him, they asked Him: "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" (John 6:28-29). Do you believe it is necessary for us to work the works of God today? To make myself clear, let me ask you, "Do you believe that in order for us to be saved we have to work the works of God?" Jesus said to

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them that the work of God was to believe on Him whom God had sent. Do you believe that is a *work* we have to *work* to be saved? Is this an act of *obedience* which is necessary if we are to be saved? Or, do you believe that *faith* is one of those works (acts of obedience) that is not necessary to salvation? Or, do you take the position that *faith* is not a work at all? Be careful! Because Jesus said it was a work of God!

Paul tells us that certain things came to pass "that the works of God should be revealed in him" (John 9:3). Paul and his companion fulfilled the work of God (Acts 14:26). Was this business of going into all the world to preach and share the gospel with the lost a work of God that was optional, left up to their discretion? Was it something that was really not necessary? Listen to this beautiful and meaningful statement about God's works: "'So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord, who does all these things.' Known to God from eternity are all His works (Acts 15:17-18).

The Works of Christ: "And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ ..." (Matthew 11:2). "But of that day ...no one knows ... It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work ..." (Mark 13:32-34). This work assigned by the Son of God to His servants, was that vital? When he gave them a job to do, a service to render, was it necessary that they attend to it? Did

they need to obey Him? Or, was this an obedience that was not really necessary?

John, in his record, related Jesus saying: "But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me" (John 5:36). What impresses me about all of this is the seriousness and compunction with which Jesus treated the work God had given Him to do. It is a familiar saying of Jesus; that I came to do the will of Him who sent Me and finish His works. "That Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing" (John 7:3). "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day ..." (John 9:4). The Greek text reads that Jesus said: "It behooves us ...". The New Testament is replete with passages that tell us of the works of Christ. "Many good works have I shown you from My Father. For

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which of these works do you stone Me" (John 10:32)? "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4).

ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD

Here are two passages which further emphasizes the necessity of our doing the Lord's work: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58). Is this charge to be steadfast, immovable and abounding in the Lord's work just so much idle talk? Is He here indicating that we have such latitude that we may or may not give our consent? Is it according to our pleasure and preference that decide whether to comply with this mandate of an inspired apostle?

Paul commended Timothy when he said regarding him: "For he does the work of the Lord, as I also do" (I Corinthians 16:10). Is there an alternate choice? Is it just a matter of prudence and good judgment? Or, do you really think we will have to work the

works of the Lord—the works to which He has assigned us in order to meet with His approbation?

The Works of Faith: There some works the New Testament writers discuss that are necessary for us to do in order to be saved: "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). This word James used, translated *justified*, is that same word to which I have already made reference several times—*made right with God*. He has a commentary on this principle back in verses 17 and 18: "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." These passages declare that one cannot be made right with God, occupy and sustain an acceptable relationship with Him, without these works of faith. "Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of *faith* with power" (II Thessalonians 1:11).

Do you believe in works of faith? Do you believe that repentance is a work of faith? Do you believe that baptism is a work of faith? If not, what do you believe these are?

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BAPTIZED MORE THAN ONCE

Question: "While we are on the subject of baptism, I have never been able to understand that since you believe baptism is essential to salvation that you do not also believe that it is essential to be baptized each time a person gets saved. The Church of Christ teach that when a person backslides he loses his salvation. Why then is it not necessary for a person to be baptized again and again each time he is saved?"

Answer: Although we have already discussed this at some considerable length, I am glad to reiterate the principles and

reread the Scriptures which may help in understanding what God has said upon the subject.

Let's use several of the word-pictures that are given in the New Testament. "Jesus said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'" (John 3:5). One is born, you will notice, into God's kingdom—not by a physical birth but by a birth of water and the Spirit. He thus becomes a citizen in the Lord's kingdom. He will remain as a citizen in that kingdom until, by his misconduct, "the Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those that practice lawlessness" (Matthew 13:41). You are able to see, I am sure, that the time of disinheritance is in that final day of judgment and separation.

Take this example: I was born in the United States of America. By virtue of that fact, I am a citizen of this country. Every time I violate a law in this country, I am not thereby stripped of my citizenship. A few times in many years of driving an automobile, I have infringed the rules and laws of the road. I may have done it inadvertently, or through carelessness or the press of duty impelled me to drive beyond the speed limit. On several occasions I have been given traffic tickets and paid fines. Did that mean, because I had transgressed the law of the land, I must repeat and reduplicate my citizenship?

Another picture of the Lord's church is that of a family. This is one of the most familiar, and most often used, to be found in the New Testament. "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth [you don't believe our souls are purified in **obeying** the

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truth, do you?] through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been **born again**, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (I Peter 1:2-23). This word for **born, regenerate**, is used 97 times in the New

Testament, and in such passages as I Corinthians 4:15, "I have begotten you through the gospel." Do you believe this is how we are begotten [born] again—through the gospel? "Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (I John 4:7).

But who are those who love God? You ought to know that answer. It is found many times in the Book: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (I John 5:3). Do you believe you have to keep God's commandments to be born into His family? Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). More than that, He said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word" (John 14:23).

Paul told Timothy that the "the house of God [that is—the family], which is the church of the living God" (I Timothy 3:15). We are born into God's family. I was born into my father's family. I am still a member of it after all these years. I have not always behaved as I should, or as my father wanted me to, but I am still in his family. When I did not deport myself properly, it was not necessary for me to be born again into his family! I never said to my father at any time, after I grew up, "I'd like to join this family." Had I said such a thing, he probably would have sought medical help for me! I never said to him, "I have failed to conduct myself properly as a son of yours should; so, I would like to be born again into your family!" You say, "Ridiculous." And, I say, "Amen!"

THE SECOND LAW OF PARDON

Well, what is the procedure when a child of God misbehaves and sins against God and His family? We have a very good example of that in Acts 8, and what should be done when a Christian errs. There was a man in Samaria who had practiced sorcery for years and had bewitched the people, small and great. He heard Philip preach Christ and he, along with many others, was baptized. I think you can depend upon it that his conversion was genuine, for Luke, in recording it, related it in these words: "Then Simon himself also believed" (verse 13). That is, he did

what the other Samaritans did. If their faith was genuine, his was genuine. But more than that, "when Simon was baptized, he continued with Philip." So, he believed just like the other Samaritans did; he was baptized and he continued with Philip. I am sure you admit, and the Bible teaches, that Simon was a Christian. His conversion was authentic, legitimate, bona fide. There was no fake here.

Later, when Simon saw "that by the laying on of the apostle's hands the Holy Spirit was given," his old desires and worldly ambitions he had nourished before he became a Christian came back upon him, and he offered them money to give him that same power. But, notice what Peter said to him, "... Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity" (Acts 8: 18-23).

He was not baptized again. You understand that? He was told to repent and pray God that his sin might be forgiven him. He understood it quite well. It struck home, so to speak, for he responded to Peter: "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me" (Acts 8:24). Isn't that simple? Isn't that easily understood? Ask a ten year old boy in your house or community if he understands it! I have no doubt that he will answer that he does!

CAN ONE WHO HAS BEEN SAVED EVER BE LOST?

You indicate in your question that it is not possible for one who has been saved to lose his salvation—that a Christian cannot so sin as to fall from God's grace—that if he has ever been saved he has eternal security and he is always saved.

Let us look at several passages which set forth the truth of the possibility of apostasy in clear and lucid terms: "I am the vine,

you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are

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burned" (John 15:5-6). Look at this uncomplicated syllogism: (1) One cannot be saved apart from Christ. (Major premise.) (2) If one does not abide in Christ and bear fruit, he is taken away and burned. (Minor premise.) (3) Therefore, one who does not bear fruit and remain in Christ shall be lost. (Conclusion.)

From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more" (John 6:66). (1) Here are people who were disciples, learners, followers of Christ. (2) They turned back from following Him. They left Him and they never did walk with Him any more. (3) Therefore, those who were once his followers were lost.

"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). (1) These people were once Christians, for you cannot be estranged (severed) from something or someone to whom you were never attached. (2) In seeking to be justified by the law they had fallen away from grace. (3) Therefore, a Christian can apostatize and be lost.

"But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13). (1) These people heard the word of God, received it with joy and believed it. (2) In time of temptation they fell away. (3) Therefore, a child of God can fall away and be lost.

In I Corinthians 10:1-12, Paul related how many of God's children fell away and were lost. (1) They came out of Egypt. They were baptized into Moses. (2) Many of them became idolaters and immoral and "with most of them God was not well-

pleased." Twenty-three thousand fell in one day, and this happened to them as an example for us. (3) "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

Look at II Peter 2: (1) They were purchased by the Lord (verse 1). (2) They had escaped the pollutions of the world (verse 20). (3) They forsook the right way and went astray—loved the ways of unrighteousness (verse 15). (4) They became cursed *children*, presumptuous, self-willed, despisers of government, rioters, like beasts, spots and blemishes, deceivers, adulterers, wells

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without water, clouds carried with a tempest, worse than they were at the beginning, and so bad that it been better for them to have never known the way of righteousness. (5) They are finally to be lost. But let us read in this context these three verses. The truth is so straightforward: "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of this world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and 'a sow, having washed, to wallowing in the mire'" (II Peter 2:20-22). There are some old sayings in my country, and perhaps in yours too: "This is as easy as pie," "as easy as falling off a log." Just look at what Peter said: (1) They had escaped the defilements of the world; they had known the way of righteousness; the holy commandment had been delivered to them; they had been washed. (2) They had become entangled in the defilements again; they had been overcome by them; their last state was worse than the first. (3) It was like a dog returning to his own vomit again; and like the sow that had been washed returning to wallowing in the filth and mire of the pig sty. (4) So, a Christian may thus become entangled in the affairs of the world again, and be worse off than before he became a Christian.

NOTICE WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS CAN HAPPEN TO ONE'S FAITH

(1) "Having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck" (I Timothy 1:19). (2) Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith (I Timothy 5:12). (3) "Some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (I Timothy 4:1). (4) "Who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some" (II Timothy 2:18)

Note the statement: (1) The child of God is saved by faith. (2) His faith may be **overthrown, cast off, departed from, and may be shipwreck**. (3) Therefore, the child of God may be lost.

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ARE THERE JUST FOUR THINGS TO OBEY?

Question: "While we [you mean you] *are making* obedience as a condition of salvation why stop with four points?"

Answer: Although I have already answered this question, I will answer it again. No one has said we stop with four points of truths. When God commands us to do something, He means it. It becomes necessary for us to comply; and one would be a fool to deny that. God doesn't command any non-essentials. When God commanded Noah to build an ark, was that a nonessential? When he specified the construction must be of gopher wood, was that important? Suppose Noah had said "Pine and gum woods are more available and more easily worked; so, I believe I will build the ark out of these." Do you think such a decision on Noah's part would have been pleasing and acceptable to God? Listen to this: "Thus Noah did, according to all that God commanded him, so he did" (Genesis 6:22).

Since you deny that obedience to God's commands is essential to salvation, maybe you need to explain, in keeping with your

doctrine, what the inspired writers meant when they said: "Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ ..." (Romans 1:5-7). Since you declare that *obedience* is not necessary to salvation, may I ask, "Is faith necessary to salvation? What about the *obedience of faith*? Is that necessary?" "... according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith" (Romans 16:25-26). If obedience to the faith is not necessary, please tell me why it was "according to the revelation of God." And why was it made known to all the nations? Do you tell people in Malawi that they don't have to obey God to be saved? Let me plead with you to get back to teaching what is so clearly taught in God's word.

"And the word of God spread, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were *obedient to the faith*" (Acts 6:7). If you had been there would you have discouraged them in becoming *obedient*? Would

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you have told them, "You are saved by *grace* and *obedience* has absolutely nothing to do with your salvation?" What do you think those Jewish priests did in becoming *obedient to the faith*? I can tell you: They did exactly the same things the people did on Pentecost; they repented and were baptized for the remission of sins. Those priests did the same thing the people did in Solomon's porch of the temple; they repented and turned around (changed their lives and relationships) that their sins might be blotted out. Those priests did what the people of Samaria did at the preaching of Philip: "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized" (Acts 8:12).

How I wish that preachers and teachers everywhere would tell people, in my country and yours, to believe and accept these plain truths of God's word. Do you urge your fellow countrymen to "become obedient to the faith?" It is difficult to reconcile this New Testament teaching with your question: "If we are saved by obedience, why do we not have to obey all of God's commands if we are to be saved?"

GOD'S PART AND MAN'S PART

God has a part in our salvation, but expect man also to have a part. It would be an unfair and untrue allegation should be charged with espousing the position that we can save ourselves. While Peter made the statement to thousands of people on Pentecost, "Be saved from this perverse [crooked] generation," (Acts 2:40), he used the term in an accommodated sense. He knew that they could not save themselves, but the language clearly and manifestly declares that man has to respond. There is a reaction on his part. His reply is, "I will surrender to your will; I will comply with your instructions; I will subject myself totally to your requirements of me." This is to "work out your own salvation ..." (Philippians 2:12). It is realizing that we are "workers together with God" in this matter of our ultimate and eternal inheritance. Can we save ourselves? No! Can we cooperate with God in the doing of His will with us? Yes, indeed! Some of the things the New Testament says comprise God's part in man's salvation: (1) The grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9). (2) The mercy of God (Titus 3:5). (3) Redemption is God's part. "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, ... but

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with the precious blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:18-19). (4) The goodness and kindness of God. "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads to repentance" (Romans 2:4)? (5) The love of God. "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

But there are some things the New Testament attributes to man's part in his salvation: (1) obedient children (I Peter 1:14), (2) believers in God who raised Him from the dead (verse 21), "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God **must believe** that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6), (3) Purified their souls in obedience to the truth (verse 22), "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3), (4) Being born again by the incorruptible word of God (verse 23), "What **must I do** to be saved" (Acts 16:30)?

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Question: "By the way, what does the Church of Christ teach about being filled with the Holy Ghost? It is a command of God (Ephesians 5:18)."

Answer: The question that is ultimately important is, "What does the Bible teach about being filled with the Holy Spirit?" This is our only standard. No one has a right to teach anything that the Bible does not teach! Because division exists today in the religious world not over what the Bible teaches but over what it does not teach!

When one becomes a Christian, he receives the Holy Spirit. "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38). The expression, "the gift of the Holy Spirit," is called the Genitive (Case) of Apposition. But what does that mean? Literally, it means "putting side by side." "The placing of a word or expression beside another so that the second word explains and has the same grammatical construction as the first." Here is an example: *Grandwell Ngulubu, the teacher*. The *teacher* is the same person named here, Grandwell Ngulubu, and tells what he

is, a teacher. *Steven Soko, the farmer*. Steven Soko and the farmer are the same person, and the second word explains the first. So, Peter is telling this vast audience on Pentecost that they must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission (sending away) of their sins, and they would receive the gift, namely, the Holy Spirit.

Writing to the Roman Christians, Paul elaborated this subject by telling them these things: "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9). For the word *dwelt*, the Greek has *house*. He is saying that the Spirit of God *houses in you*. In the next verse he states, "If Christ is in you." These passages tell us that both Christ and the Holy Spirit dwell in the Christian.

In verse 11, he continues his argument about the Spirit *housing* in us. While the Spirit *houses, dwells* in us, He does not *empower* us as He did the apostles, and those upon whom the apostles laid their hands. He did things for the apostles He does not do for us today. He (1) revealed the truth to them (I Corinthians 2:9-10; Ephesians 3:5). He doesn't reveal the truth to us today; the truth has already been revealed and we have access to it. He (2) inspired them. "Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say" (Luke 12:11-12). You can't do that now; and I can't do that. There is no need for us to be inspired today for the we have the truth already revealed. He (3) enabled them to speak in tongues, or languages they had not studied. "They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4, 6, 8). Men can't do that today. It was necessary then so that the truth could be revealed and confirmed. But once it is established and corroborated such powers of the Spirit are no longer needed. He (the Holy Spirit) (4) empowered the apostles to work miracles. "Many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (Acts 2:43; I Corinthians 12:12).

These miracles served as credentials of the apostles—they were proof that they were sent from God. Their message, therefore, was true, and men could believe it and depend on it.

THE HOLY BIBLE AND THE CHRISTIAN TODAY

What does the Holy Spirit do for us—that is, Christians today? (1) He is a gift to the Christian (Acts 2:38). (2) He dwells in the Christian (Romans 8:9). The body of the Christian "is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 6:19). (3) The Holy Spirit helps the Christian in his weaknesses (Romans 2:26). "He takes a share in our weaknesses." (4) He intercedes for the Christian (ibid.). (5) The Holy Spirit works through the instrumentality of the word of God (Ephesians 6:17; II Thessalonians 2:13-14). (6) He works powerfully through the gospel (Romans 1:16). (7) The Holy Spirit works powerfully in the life of the Christian. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear; but of power and of love and of sound mind (II Timothy 1:7).

This power is available to the Christian. But, what is the nature of this power? What is the degree of it bestowed upon Christians? What is the extent of God's power working in the life of the Christian today? Is it miraculous power? It could be if that is what God willed. The question under consideration is not: "What is God able to do?" but, "what does He do in the execution of His will?" You see, He spoke the worlds into existence by His word (Hebrews 11:1-2). In one blinding flash of creative power, He could bring into existence the entire cosmos. He raised the dead, opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped the ears of the deaf, caused the lame man to leap as an hart, cleansed the leper and stilled the storm.

I asked a man recently: "Do you believe God will heal miraculously my stomach ulcer? What about replacing an eye or a limb?" His answer was weak and wavering. I asked a man in Africa one time to replace the glass eye of one of his converts with a natural eye so he could see. He said that would be testing

God; and I said it was a *cop out*, a flimsy excuse to hide and disguise his deception. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). "And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, have found them liars" (Revelation 2:2).

Another so-called divine healer in Africa prayed for an old blind man in a "healing service" in Johannesburg, and he screamed over him, shook him, asked him if he believed Jesus would heal

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him? The old gentleman replied, "I believe it with all my heart." Each night his family led him away from the services still blind. They said he didn't have enough faith. That is not the way Jesus and the apostles healed!

The Christian is to be filled with His Spirit and led by His Word, which the Spirit revealed and which He uses in converting and leading people to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And, along the Christian walk the Spirit uses that word to shape and fashion the Christian into the likeness of Christ so that his life will reflect the glory and goodness of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

MEN ARE QUICK TO JUDGE

Question: "Perhaps this accounts for the fact that one sees so few (if any) Church of Christ people who have the joy of the Lord. How could a person have the joy when he knows that his salvation depends on his obedience, and he knows that he is disobedient? Even if we obey all these four points, this is the just the beginning of salvation. I have never had the privilege of meeting anyone member of the Church of Christ person who knew and understood the deep things of God. Perhaps it is because of their lack of interest on the Holy Spirit."

Answer: I do not wish to belabor the point, but briefly, I will answer the question again. We do not believe that there are just four points that God commands us to obey. It is our conviction that we must "first give ourselves to the Lord" (II Corinthians 8:5). This is a total and unconditional surrender to him. So, whatever He commands us to do becomes an obligation on our part to comply with all of our hearts. A refusal to do so would constitute disobedience and Jesus is one day coming to "... take vengeance upon them that obey not the gospel ..." (II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

I am sorry that you resort to the casting of unkind and harsh reflections upon Christians whom you do not know. It is altogether possible that those whom you have never met "know and understand the deep things of God." And, it may be, that some of those fine and dedicated Christians have "great joy in the Lord." We believe that we give the emphasis to the Holy Spirit that is given in the New Testament. He revealed the truth,

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established and confirmed it by miraculous signs and wonders, and He uses that truth as an instrument today to combat errors and shape the lives of God's children.

GOD DOES NOT FORCE MAN

We are well aware of the fact that the New Testament teaches us that God saves us, and that He saves us out of his love and mercy and grace. But we are also well aware of the fact that God does not force man to be saved—that He does not slip up behind man, when he neither desires nor expects to be saved, and slip some kind of binder over his head and drags him away, an unwilling convert! There must be response, acceptance, surrender to the will of God on the part of man, and it must be willing, voluntary, whole-hearted obedience. If you have read the Bible (and I would presume that you have many times) you must know that!

OBEDIENCE NECESSARY TO SALVATION

Getting back to some of the old questions already answered, let me ask again: "When God commands you to believe in His Son, and to believe His words, do you think you must obey Him? Or, do you argue, 'That would be *obedience* and I deny that you have to *obey* God to be saved?'" "God tells you to do something in His word and you refuse to do it, or think it is necessary, because if you did it, that would be *salvation by obedience*, and you couldn't afford to obey God because you don't believe *obedience* has anything to do with your salvation!

Sir, what kind of doctrine have you embraced? And, from where did you adopt it? I can most assuredly tell you that you did not get it from the word of God.

Writing to the Philippians, Paul issued this divine directive: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have already *obeyed*, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, *work* out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). Do you think the Philippian Christians felt that *obedience* had anything to do with their pleasing God and being saved? Or, did they think this was just a lot of empty, idle talk? In *working* out their own salvation, was there any sort of reaction on their part? "And with many other words he testified and exhorted them,

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saying, 'Be saved [escape] from this perverse generation'" (Acts 2:40). Does that sound like any kind of responsibility on their part? They knew very well, ultimately, that only God could save them, but Peter was impressing inerasably upon their hearts that there had to be an active, obedient response on their part. "... and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not *obey the gospel* of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence

of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Take careful note of what He says about those who do not **obey the gospel** of our Lord Jesus. (1) He is coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on them. (2) They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction. (3) They will be away from the presence of the Lord. (4) They will be away from the glory of His power. And, yet, you have been telling us that you do not believe that *obedience* has anything to do with salvation!

"... and having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation **to all who obey Him**" (Hebrews 5:9). The very Source of eternal life is to those only who **obey** Him. May I ask why you do not believe that?

"... eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and **do not obey the truth**, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil ... but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who **works what is good**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 2:7-10).

Look at what this verse says: (1) Those who persevere, (2) those who do good, (3) those who seek for glory, honor and immortality—these shall have eternal life. Do you believe that it is necessary for one to persevere, do good, seek immortality? Be careful, that would require *obedience* and remember you do not believe that *obedience* is necessary to one's salvation, or eternal life? Read again this verse about those who **do not obey the truth**. Do you believe that one has to **obey the truth** to be saved?

Question: "Finally, I would like if you should send me cassette tapes or books that would also help me in understanding really about your position."

Answer: Inasmuch as you have set yourself up as an authority on what you call "your position," telling us what we believe and don't believe, ascribing to us a lack of Christian joy and sincerity and any understanding of "the deep things of God," I find it implausible and questionable, if not incredulous, that you sincerely want to know what we believe. But, assuming that I may be wrong in my appraisal of you (based upon what you have said in your letter), I have written rather extensively in answer to your questions; and I pray that the Bible information I have given you will influence for good both you and those whom you teach.

PRIDE OR PREJUDICE, WHICH?

Question: "I want to know more about Campbellism and its history and heresies. How do you understand or have studied about the rise of Campbellism during the early 1800's in America. Do you have the clear details about the various roles of Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott and Barton W. Stone in Campbellian writings? Did these men actually restore the Gospel, the Church and true New Testament worship, as they claimed, or did they simply create another sect bent on a more dogmatic sectarianism than others they renounced. And what of their theory of *baptismal remission of sins*? Do the oft-quoted verses such as Acts 2:38 and Mark 16:16 prove their point? And are the Campbellites the only people who are Christians? Does a church have to wear the name 'Church of Christ' label in order to be a Church of Christ?"

Answer: It is with deep regret and sadness that people who claim to believe the word of God and who also claim to work for unity among God's people are so presumptuous and narrow minded that they view any Bible principle that does not coincide with their prejudgments with a jaundiced eye and close their minds to the possibility of considering anything that is contradictory to their long-cherished system of belief and articles of religion.

Sir, when you argue against Acts 2:38 and Mark 16:16, you are not taking issue with Campbell, or Caskey, or any other human being, but you are contending with God and disputing his word. You are thereby promoting division and that ought to *scare you to death!*" "He who rejects me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

Kathy, the young Christian lady who was trying to help you come to a knowledge of the truth, in all likelihood never heard of Alexander Campbell or Barton W. Stone. She became a Christian by reading and studying her New Testament, simple and uncluttered by denominational rubbish.

In more than fifty years, I have scarcely heard the names of these men called from a pulpit or a class room. Most of what I have heard of these men is by some denominational preacher who lashes out in prejudice and bias in the hope he may belittle and downgrade others and make his own position more secure in the eyes of those who listen to his tirade.

I have read books about the lives of these men, and I have read their writings. I have great respect for those who have made a sincere effort to go back to the New Testament, preach what Jesus and the apostles taught (can we know what they taught?), practice what the church practiced under the direction and instruction of inspiration. But, simply because I admire men for teaching truth, does not make me a follower of any one of them. I have thousands of books in my personal library. I have read and studied the works of such men as Lenski (Lutheran), Barnes (Presbyterian), Clarke (Methodist), et al, and in their scholarship they teach truth, contrary to their own doctrinal practices; but simply because I may accept a Bible truth that was taught by one of these men does not make me a Lutheran, a Barnesite or a Clarkeite!

When men teach what the Bible teaches on a subject, they are right. Upon that we can agree and be united. But because we agree does not make me his follower or make him a follower of me. Let me give you some examples: 1. John Calvin (Mark 16:15:16; **Baptism an immersion for the remission of sins.** "He commanded all who believe to be baptized for their sins. Therefore those who have imagined that

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baptism is nothing more than a mark or a sign by which we profess our religion as soldiers wear the insignia of their sovereign as a mark of their profession have not considered what was the principle thing in baptism—which is, that we ought to receive it with the promise, 'He who believes and is baptized will be saved.' The word baptize means immerse and it is certain that immersion was observed in the early church" (*Institutes*, Book IV, chapter 13).

I believe that John Calvin taught what the Bible teaches on that subject. We are united upon that Bible topic and principle. But that doesn't make me a Calvinist! It is calamitous that the Presbyterians, and others, who claim to be followers of his teachings, do not believe and practice this. If they did, division in this instance, would be erased and we would stand united. John Wesley said of Romans 6:3 and John 3:5: "We are buried with him, alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion. By water, then, as a means, the water of baptism, we are regenerated or born again; whence it is also called by the apostle, "The washing of regeneration" (*Notes on the New Testament*, 1825). My affirmation, relative to this teaching, is that it is true because he simply said what the Bible says. But that doesn't make me a Wesleyan or a Methodist because we are agreed and united upon a Bible teaching.

Martin Luther said of baptism: "On this account I could wish that such as are baptized should be completely immersed in water according to the meaning of the word, and the significance of the ordinance, as also, without doubt, it was instituted by Christ"

(*Works*, XI, page 76). I don't know whether Martin Luther practiced this or not; but he taught it; and he said that it is "without doubt," that his is how Christ instituted it. I agree, but I am not a Lutheran and do not follow him.

Timothy Dwight, a Congregationalist and former President of Yale University, said of John 3:5: "To be born of water here means baptism, and in my view, it is necessary to admission to the visible church" (*Shepherd on Baptism*). It doesn't make me a Congregationalist to agree with Timothy Dwight.

Adam Clarke (Methodist), thought that in Romans 6:4, "the apostle here alludes to the mode of administering baptism by immersion, the whole body being put under water." We both

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believe that baptism is a burial and resurrection with Christ and that the one who arises from the watery grave begins to walk in a new life. But I do not follow Adam Clarke and I am not a Methodist. In his comment on Colossians 2:12, he said: "Alluding to immersion practiced in the case of adults wherein the person appeared to be buried under the water, as Christ was buried under the heart of the earth. His rising again the third day, and their emerging from water, was an emblem of the resurrection of the body; and, in them, a total change of life."

Lenski (Lutheran): "This baptism as appointed for all nations bestowed the remission of sins. A refusal of baptism would be a repudiation of Christ and of all the gifts contained in his name. Baptism is pure gospel that conveys grace and salvation from God through Christ; it dare not be changed into a legal or legalistic requirement. This preposition (*eis*) connects remission so closely with baptism that nobody has yet been able to separate the two." Do you believe that: (1) Baptism bestows the remission of sins? (2) A refusal to be baptized would be a repudiation of Christ? (3) That baptism is pure gospel that conveys grace and salvation from God through Christ? (4) The the preposition (*eis*) connects remission of sins so closely with

baptism that no one has ever been able to separate the two? I am not a follower of Lenski and I would resent you calling me a Lenskite!

Barnes (Presbyterian): "Baptism is a willingness to be pardoned in that way, and it is a solemn declaration of our conviction that there is no other way of remission. He who comes to be baptized, comes with a profound conviction that he is a sinner, that there is no other way of mercy but in the gospel, and with a professed willingness to comply with the terms of salvation, and to receive it as it is offered through Jesus Christ." I do not know how a statement could be clearer or more in harmony with the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament. I think it is lamentable, even catastrophic, that you do not believe it. Please don't call me a Barnesite because I believe he was telling the truth, and that he was endeavoring to restore New Testament teaching upon the subject of baptism!

The Expositor's Greek New Testament (Acts 2:38): "As each individual was to be baptized, so each, if truly penitent, would receive the forgiveness of sins." Robert Nicholl edited this series of Greek New Testament Commentaries by many authors.

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None of them, as far as I know, was a member of the church of Christ; but, as Greek New Testament language scholars, they were teaching the truth on the design or purpose of baptism. I hope I am not accused of being a Nicholite.

The Pulpit Commentary (Acts 2:38): "Peter preaches the word with power, the hearers are pricked in their heart, and by his direction they are baptized, and so put in possession of the promised salvation." Paul said in Romans 6:3-4, that we are baptized into the death of Christ, and so are freed from sin. As our burial or total immersion, in baptismal water was followed by an entire emergence, so our death with Christ to sin, which that immersion symbolized, is to be followed by our resurrection with him to a new life.

The Pulpit Commentary, commenting on Matthew 25:24, a picture of the judgment and the eternal kingdom of God, says "Christians are by baptism made inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, gifted with heavenly citizenship, which, duly used, leads to eternal glory."

But let us read what several other New Testament scholars have to say on the subject Peter discussed in Acts 2:38: Dr. Hackett: Baptism—"In order to the forgiveness of sins." Harkness: Baptism—"For the purpose of receiving the forgiveness of sins." Harman: "Repentance and baptism are necessary for the forgiveness of sins." Harper (Greek Lexicographer): "Remission of sins is the to be aimed at in the actions expressed by the predicates, 'repent and be baptized.'" McClintock and Strong (*Cyclopedia of Biblical Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*), (Acts 2:38): "To be baptized for the remission of sins" means to be baptized with a view to receiving this. Henry Thayer (prince of New Testament Greek Lexicographers), Acts 2:38: "The *eis* [into, for] expressing the end aimed at and secured by repentance and baptism just previously enjoined."

I believe that these New Testament language experts and Bible scholars were, in their scholarship, teaching the truth on the subject of baptism. I do not know whether they always practiced what they preached or not. As I study the writings of some of them, they teach candidly and unequivocally what the New Testament writers taught, but seemed not to be as outright and positive in their practice as in their intellectuality and erudition.

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But none of these wise men, lovers of wisdom and intellectuals, is my model or my representative. I admire and respect them for their meticulous methods of study and for their careful and scrupulous investigation of the text of the word of God, but not one of them is my **guide** and not one holds any divine authority to dictate what I believe and practice. And I may add, I do not honor one of them by wearing his name!

WEARING THE NAME OF CHRIST

Question: "Does a church have to wear the Church of Christ label in order to a Church of Christ?"

Answer: In New Testament times, the church did not have a **proper** name. The word *ekklesia* is 115 times in the Greek New Testament. It has several designations and applications in those many passages. Most of time it is spoken of simply as **the church**. In those days, you must be aware, there were no denominations such as the 20,000 we have in today's world; so it made good sense to refer to *the called out ones* only as **the church**. It is, on several occasions, referred to as **the church of God**. The reason for that was some emphasis was placed upon the deity of Christ. That is, Christ is God, and the church belongs to Him. The elders (bishops, shepherds—they are called all three in these verses), were ordered to feed the *church of God* which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:38). This was not some title, or name, or popular designation of the church. Paul was asserting that the church belongs to Christ by virtue of the fact that He purchased it with His life's blood; and he was affirming by his statement that Christ is God, Divine, Deity.

The writer of Hebrews calls it **the church of the firstborn** (Hebrews 12:23). He used the plural here, *prototokon*, which literally says, "the church of the firstborn ones." It is the church made up of Christians, the highborn ones. They are members of spiritual royalty—sons and daughters of the King. They are princes and princesses in this Royal Family of God. They should live high above the world and not be contaminated by it.

It is called "church of Christ" because God's people in various localities—towns, cities, villages, hamlets over the world—belonged to Christ. They were His possession by virtue of

purchase and by virtue of the fact that He built it (Matthew 16:18). And it is true that they, and we, should honor him by

wearing his name, not as some popular appellation. It is not a label, a tag, a denomination, but a people who are bought and owned by Christ and who have surrendered their will completely to His. This truth I have just enunciated is found in a great many passages in the New Testament and it behooves us to read a few of them for you: "From whom the whole family [fatherhood] in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:15). "For is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

I would think it is necessary for **me** to wear **my** name, Guy Caskey, to be properly identified. There are other ways to identify me—face, height, weight, age, fingerprints, etc. But, my name and I go together! So, I would not hesitate to tell you that I am a member of the Lord's church, the church of Christ—the church that belongs to Him, which He built and which He paid for with His life's blood. I would never tell you that I am a member of a church which wears some human name or designation, just as I would not tell you that I am Winston Churchill or Franklin Roosevelt!

As members of the Lord's church, the disciples had a name which God gave them, and that name was **Christian**. Acts 11:26: "And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." The word that Luke used here for *called* is *chrematisai*. It is translated by several different English words that nine (9) times it is used in the New Testament: warned, revealed, admonished, spoke and called. But what is not only interesting but very significant is that each time the warning, revealing, speaking, admonishing and calling was done it was by God. So, it was God who called them Christians—not some despicable tag or title attached to them by pagan despisers. The word *Christian* means "of or belonging to Christ." "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in

this matter" (I Peter 4:16). How shameful it is that men have not regarded this command! Some of the religious leaders and scholars of yesteryear, from whom I have already quoted, also lamented the fact that people in their day did not respect the name of Christ enough to wear it and honor Him.

Martin Luther: "I pray you, leave my name alone; call not yourselves Lutherans but Christians" (*Life of Luther* by Stark, page 289). John Wesley said he "wished that the very name Methodist should never be mentioned more but be buried in eternal oblivion." And, further: "Would to God that all party names and unscriptural phrases and forms which have **divided** the Christians might be forgot" (*Universal Knowledge*, volume IX, page 540). Charles Spurgeon: "I hope the name Baptist will soon perish but let Christ's name live forever" (*Spurgeon Memorial Library*, volume 1, page 168). Adam Clarke: "Now as these had their name from those great masters because they attended their teaching, and credited their doctrines, so the disciples were called Christians because they took Christ for their Teacher, crediting His doctrines and following the rule of life laid down by Him." Clement: "We give thanks that we are called by the name of thy Christ, and are thus reckoned as thine own." The dying words of Polycarp: "I am a Christian."

This is what I would like for you to be—a Christian **only** and **only** a Christian. There is no doubt from the content of your letter that you could have tremendous influence for good in teaching those to whom you have access to become and be just New Testament Christians. It would be a step in the direction of bringing about unity among those who "believe their words" (apostles' message), and helping to cause the "world to believe that He has sent Me (Jesus)."

Yours for the preaching of the pure gospel.

Guy V. Caskey

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