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A Letter To A Preacher's Wife

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A LETTER TO A PREACHER'S WIFE

Under date of September 14th., 1958, a newspaper giving the private life of a well known preacher we'll call Gates, wrote of his wife: "She's never been baptized which offends Gates' Baptist sensibilities so much that he has a standing offer of \$100 to any minister able to convince her she should take this step." The author herein accepted the challenge in the letter following. This is not an argument as to the action that constitutes baptism. That question is settled for any honest person who does not know more than the various dictionaries and encyclopedias that give the derivation of words. They are in a unit in saying that the Greek word translated "baptize" means the equivalent of "dip, plunge, submerge, immerse" ("overwhelm" covers the action whether one is baptized into a material or intangible element). Also, the many Bible passages that show the action of baptism show it to be a burial. **THAT QUESTION IS SETTLED.**

Greek writers from 522 B. C. to 450 A. D. used the word to mean immerse, like a cork floating "unbaptized," men wading water "baptized" to the arm pits, cast away armor exposed at ebb tide, but "baptized" at full tide, and men pretending to be in sport in water, pressing down a victim till he was "baptized" to the point of drowning. Among some 40 writers of such use are Pindar, Aristotle, Polybius, Strabo, Josephus, and Plutarch. The baptized person is completely covered—overwhelmed—by water, debt, suffering, the Holy Spirit—any physical or spiritual element. Incidentally, those who minimize the importance of baptism DARE not refer an inquirer, *without comment*, to any Scripture that tells the purpose of baptism, in answer to the question: "Why be baptized?"

THE LETTER

Mrs. George (Kate) Gates
Ardmore, N. C.

Should I address You?

Dear Rebel Christian, or

Dear Mrs. Gates:

From newspaper account, you appear to have accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour, but rejected Him as LORD, and your husband is unhappy over the situation. I am not writing this in hope of receiving the \$100 reward. My reward is far greater: I am privileged to set forth my Lord's will. Brother Gates, feeling obligated, may send the \$100 to the

BRAZIL CHRISTIAN MISSION

(Particulars in P.S.)

"The Bible Says" just what the Holy Spirit inspired, as originally written, BUT uninspired men translated the King James version. Turn to your Greek and you will corroborate the translation (revision) released in 1901, the American Standard version. Here we read: "And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, ALL AUTHORITY hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go Ye THEREFORE, and make disciples of all the nations, BAPTIZING them INTO the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe ALL things WHATSOEVER I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (Margin, the consummation of the age)."

The dictionary tells us that AUTHORITY means: "The RIGHT to command and to enforce OBEDIENCE." There are but three source-types of authority: 1, inherent; 2, delegated; 3, usurped. 1: The One who CREATES has the RIGHT to do with His creation just as He pleases; use, change, destroy. It is His. 2: Authority HE delegates still is His. He has dele-

gated authority, "a terror to evil works" and an encourager of good, to human governments (Ro. 13). He has delegated authority in the home, Eph. chapters 5 & 6. What the Holy Spirit said through holy men in the **NEW TESTAMENT** constitutes authority for the church (individuals, though officers in the church have very little authority). No other institutions have received delegated authority. 3: **ALL** authority not so delegated is **USURPED**, and the acknowledgment of such usurped authority makes one an accessory after the fact (for instance, acceptance of the rule of the pope of Rome).

As Jesus was the creative agent—co-Creator—the Father simply turned over to Him, His own share of inherent authority, after the resurrection.

The word **THEREFORE** placed **ALL** that **ABSOLUTE** authority, all that the mind of man could possibly conceive, back of that four-fold command, each item of the commandment thus being made of equal authority (importance): "Go . . . make disciples . . . **BAPTIZING THEM** . . . teaching them to observe **ALL** things **WHATSOEVER** I commanded you . . ." and I commanded you to "Go . . . make disciples . . . baptizing them . . . teaching . . . **ALL** I commanded". . . from faith unto faith, from generation to generation, until the great final consummation (personal evangelism thus becoming **OBLIGATORY** upon **EVERY** Christian).

Do you really believe that Jesus told the truth? That He really **HAS AUTHORITY** over every act and area of your life, that He said what He meant and meant what He said? If you do, you believe that **EVERY** disciple **MUST** be **BAPTIZED**. This passage is not considering whether one can be saved without baptism, but whether the authority of Christ is to be acknowledged and observed. At no place in the four gospels can I find that Christ was confessed as "Saviour" but He was confessed as **LORD**, Messiah, Christ, the one who should come, etc. After His resurrection where Jesus is mentioned as Saviour and Lord also, the word "Lord" preceeds the word "Sav-

iour" as in Acts 2:36. In Acts 5:31 "Prince" heir of authority, preceeds "Saviour." Our confession of Jesus is to be a confession of His Lordship. The Greek of Ro. 10:9 reads, "confess Jesus Lord." Confess Him to be what? good man? friend? Evidently the sense is, confess Him to be *Lord*, rendered in ASV, confess Jesus as Lord." A PROfession may be true or false, but a CONfession is an acknowledgment of a condition within. We cannot possibly CONFESS Jesus as *Lord* without OBEYING Him; otherwise we lie. Receiving Jesus Christ is a spiritual transaction, but we have bodies as well as soul and spirit. The human BODY must be surrendered to Christ's way of life. Initially, this is done in baptism, in harmony with His own gracious promise in Mk. 16:16. This is made plain in Ro. 6:3-7, where the "old man" of sin dies, is buried with Christ in baptism, where union with the living Christ occurs, as taught in vs. 5: "For if we have become UNITED WITH HIM in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Thus "the Bible says" we die to sin, our dead body is buried in baptism, union with the living Christ occurs, as we testify to our surrender to His Lordship in OBEDIENCE, and we arise to walk in newness of life, from henceforth (as the convert arises from the liquid tomb) no longer to be dominated by the spirit of the flesh, but to be dominated by the Holy Spirit, which can mean only obedience.

Peter tells us that purification of the soul comes in "your obedience to the truth." Again, he asks, "What shall be the end of them that OBEY NOT the gospel?" Paul answers in 2 Thes. 1:7-9: ". . . LORD Jesus. . . rendering vengeance to them . . . that OBEY NOT the gospel of our LORD Jesus . . . who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction . . ." (1 Pt. 1:22, 4:17, 2 Thes. 1:7-9). The very clearest statement of the basis of ETERNAL salvation in what "the Bible says" is in Heb. 5:9: speaking of the Son: ". . . and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that OBEY him the author of ETERNAL salvation." Acts 5:32 tells us that the Holy Spirit is given "to

them that OBEY him." This obedience is not doing "works" of merit, for Christ paid the full price on the cross, and His is the only merit. But it is "The obedience of faith," Ro. 16:26. And Ro. 8:9 warns us that without the Spirit of Christ dwelling within, one cannot be "of Christ."

Suppose a wealthy man, before his death, provided in his will that his only daughter receive \$1,000 yearly for four years to pay her way through school (college) then left \$50,000 to the Red Cross, with the proviso: Believing that his daughter would lead a happier life if married, she was to receive the said \$50,000 if married by the time she was 25 years of age, otherwise the Red Cross would receive the entire sum. Now none could argue that she earned the money by complying with the condition, but no law court would give it to her if she remained single after that time, for the Red Cross would receive the entire sum, (clear title). We are saved by faith, grace through faith, but there are conditions revealed in the Bible, and these conditions cannot be classed as "works" of merit. Baptism appears to be a definite **CONDITION**. Beyond question it is commanded and we cannot respect the Lordship of Jesus unless we teach and practice it. Meeting a condition is not a "work" of merit, but it is in harmony with the will, the mind, the love of Christ.

Yes, we are saved by faith, **BUT** it must be a **SCRIPTURAL** faith. We find such faith analyzed in Heb. 11:6: ". . . without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must *believe* **THAT HE IS**, (1) and that he is a rewarder (2) of them that seek after him." (3) A belief that God exists—mental acceptance of fact. A faith that rests upon emotionalism soon vanishes. It must be founded upon **FACT**. 2: "He is a rewarder"—equals **TRUST**. We may think we have confidence in one, but we cannot **TRUST** until we **ENTRUST** something to one. The thing that we must entrust to Christ (God) is our life, our future here and hereafter. In working for wages (reward) we give the

service BEFORE the wages (reward) is due. 3: How do we seek after God? You may have had a similar experience to this: One starts to a distant house on an errand. A little boy asks permission to go along. Your path leads through some woods, and the boy runs ahead. You come to a fork in the path and turn right. Suddenly you realize the boy is not ahead of you. Looking about, you see he has turned to the left. You call to him: "No, no, sonny. Come over here. If you want to walk with me, you must walk the way I am going." He then walks with you by OBEDIENCE. If we want to walk with God, we must walk the way He is going—OBEDIENCE. That is what "the Bible says" is faith; acceptance of FACT, plus TRUST, involving surrender to Christ as LORD, plus OBEDIENCE. Where the will of God is involved, THERE IS NO OTHER FAITH, and to tell a man he is saved by faith ONLY, without making clear to him what is involved in faith is misleading to him, and is not faithfully discharging our stewardship to our LORD; it is not recognizing His authority in ALL things, not fully acknowledging His LORDSHIP.

Again, we are commanded to BE baptized. The Jews indulged in many self-administered ablutions, but John's baptism was new to them (Jn. 1:26, 33; Matt. 21:25) for HE administered it. The Soul clinic sent out a group of personal evangelists and reported many hundreds of "souls saved." Later they reported the baptisms—less than 11%. Jesus said (by absolute authority) that when we make a disciple we are to see to it that such is baptized. WHY? You and I are prone to shudder at the thought of a helpless babe being left on the door step of a stranger. Evidently, Jesus does not want a baby disciple left on the door step of a hostile world. To BE baptized, someone already a Christian must know of it and see to it that he is inducted into a fellowship, into a community of heaven. That is why, evidently, He said, "baptizing them INTO (Greek, "eis" not "en) the name Divine. I realize that some scholars tell us that the Greek of the common people permits the translation of "eis" by

"in" instead of "into." Did you ever say, "He went in the house" instead of saying "He went INTO the house?" We abuse our prepositions. It is fair to assume that the Greeks were just as human as we are and that they, too, did likewise in the vernacular. But "the Bible says", when Mary visited Elisabeth that the latter said, "The babe leaped "en" my womb." Why didn't she say, "The babe leaped "eis" my womb"? That would have been absurd. If Jesus MEANT INTO, He had to use the word "eis" and not "en" as Elisabeth did. I can find no justification for trying to understand Jesus to have said "eis" when He meant "en." We are baptized INTO the DIVINE NAME, just as your children were born "INTO" the name Gates. Paul did not personally baptize his converts, but he did see that they were baptized for "MANY of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized." Paul always had traveling companions, helpers, and evidently they did the baptizing. Every definite case of conversion to the RESURRECTED Christ is recorded in Acts—and in every case they were baptized. Yes, we are baptized into the Divine family, into Christ, into the body (true church) into the obligations, the burdens, the responsibilities, the fellowship, the Christian community, into the victories, the joy, the peace, the triumph. We are baptized INTO Christ.

But there is another angle that must be considered. Love is the fulfilling of the law, the essence of Christianity. 1 Cor. 13 tells us that love is greater than faith, and that though we may have ALL faith, without love "I am nothing." Surely NOTHING cannot inherit eternal life. BUT, if we love Jesus we can show that love in but one way—obedience: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "If a man love me, he will keep my word." And (ASV): "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." 1 Jn. 5:3a reads: "For this IS the love of God, that we keep his commandments." Here is one of those very rare double positives, the promise that because we acknowledge His authority in all

things, we have absolute assurance that we know Jesus: "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." "And *this* is life *eternal* that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send even JESUS CHRIST."—Jn. 17:3. If we keep his commandments (live under His authority, His Lordship) we KNOW that we know HIM—hence, KNOW that we have eternal life. The apostle of love uses strong language: "He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whose keepeth his word, in Him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we KNOW that we are in Him." 1 Jn. 2:4, 5.

When Jesus cleansed the temple, the human authorities asked Him, not by what power, but by what **AUTHORITY** He did these things. "Who gave thee this authority?"

When we pray "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," if we refuse His Lordship, His authority over our lives, we are praying a lie; we are hypocritical. This is essentially a prayer that the authority of Christ be recognized.

Finally, the ultimate aim of Christ Jesus is to establish His rule, His authority, His Lordship over all the earth. In Col. 2:10,15 He is set forth as "head of all principality and power," and as "having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly." In 1 Cor. 15:24 Paul tells us that in the end, Jesus shall have "abolished all rule and all authority (human) and all power." "For he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." 1 Cor. 15:25. Even now He is shown, in Heb. 1:2 as "upholding all things by the word of his power."

In Phil. 2:10,11: "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is (Saviour? NO!) LORD, to the glory of God the Father." Ultimately, in the Revelation, He appears as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Baptism is a test for stubborn hearts. One has said: "No one ever lost by giving his whole heart to Jesus, and no one has even gained by keeping half of it for himself." "The heart is deceitful above all things"—self deception, self worship, exalting pride of self.

May we examine a few more Scriptures?

In Jn. 3:15 we read that without the birth of "water and the Spirit" one cannot ENTER the kingdom of God—the realm where the edicts of the King are implicitly obeyed. The old King James version says: "of water and of the Spirit," permitting one to consider two distinct births, one of human water of birth, and the other spiritual, but look at your Greek. It is not two births, but two parents, for the preposition "of" occurs but once. I am perfectly aware of the "washing of water with the word," but that is not meant here. Your wonderful husband has preached the Word, "the Bible says" to many thousands who were not saved. They heard the Word, yes, but he would never call them "saved." Why? Because the Word is of no value until obeyed. We MUST acknowledge Jesus as LORD, and that is done in obedience. Then why try to "explain away" the simple word "water" from Jn. 3:5? We all know that water is used in baptism. I have shown from what "the Bible says" that obedience is the basis of "eternal salvation." Baptism is not a "work" of merit but "the obedience of faith." I say to a child, "Press that button and you'll start the machinery." He may believe and trust my integrity, and tell others he can start the machinery by pressing a button, but as long as he does not OBEY, the machinery will not start. His obedience does not become a "work" of merit. All of the merit has been provided by the proper electrical installation in advance. Pressing the button is the OBEDIENCE of faith. If my entire reasoning is false and out of harmony with God's Word, His holy will, your baptism will not hurt you—and it should help your husband's position before the world—but if it is true—and I have shown you an abundance of Scriptures as the basis of all I say—then you owe Jesus

Christ a debt of obedience and should HASTEN to pay—for your own sake, for conscience sake, for the positive hope of eternal salvation, which, at least is jeopardized in the position the newspaper record gives of you. Why not yield your ENTIRE heart to Jesus Christ, in true humility by being baptized—*NOW*”?

Another passage to note is Jn. 1:12. Speaking of those who “received” Christ, He gave “the RIGHT to BECOME children of God, even to them that believe on his name.” You once were a girl; you BECAME a woman; you cannot become a woman now, for the word “become” indicates a change. A pup may become a dog; a kitten, a cat; a colt, a horse. A dog cannot BECOME a dog, nor a cat, a cat, nor a horse, a horse. Already they are such. I know the next verse says “who were born” again. But the margin says “begotten” and that *only* makes sense. The 17 scholars who revised the King James Version (released in 1901) represented all leading schools of thought: Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Lutheran, Reformed and, I believe, Unitarian. Under their prior agreements, no change could be made from King James version unless approved by at least 2/3—12, while six could block a change. In several other places the old “born” was changed to “begotten”, and in this place was entered in the margin, indicating a majority opinion. Definitely it does not make sense otherwise. Thus we are begotten of the Spirit when we receive Christ as Saviour and we BECOME children of God when we OBEY Him. While obedience is to continue throughout life, it is evident that the command to be baptized is the first step, hence it is written that we must be “born” of “water” AND the Spirit. The Spirit begets, obedience in baptism enables us to receive the Spirit—the Spirit that says whatever our Lord wants us to do we will do. Every mother knows that there is life before birth, but the breath (spirit) of life comes only after birth. The promise of the Spirit (the breath of spiritual life) is definitely promised in Acts

2:38 upon repentance AND baptism "unto the remission of your sins." Read without prejudice, Ro. 6:3-7. noting in particular vs. 5.

One final word. There are two kinds of commandments, moral and positive. It was just as wrong for Cain to kill Abel, as it has been to kill humans since the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill was given. The command simply defined right and wrong in the matter. Hence, moral commands are given because they make plain what is right and wrong. But positive commands become right merely BECAUSE commanded. You tell your child to shut the door, wash the dishes, get the mail, sweep the floor. Now it is neither right nor wrong to leave the door open till after the command. Then it become right to show respect to your authority. Baptism is a positive command. Obedience shows respect for Christ's authority, His Lordship.

I trust I have not wearied you. There is more, much more to be said, but this must suffice now. It is ample IF you believe what "the Bible says."

My concluding word for you, in Christian love, is Acts 20:32 and Heb. 13:20-21.

Humbly yours in Christ,

N. J. REASONER

P. S.: BRAZIL CHRISTIAN MISSION: Wm. A. Cook, Treasurer, 412 Winchester, Martinsburg, West Virginia, for the support of Merlin and Gertrude Shields. So Designate. This mission was begun soon after World War II, in the State of Goiaz, in the city of Goiania. This is in the south central part of Brazil; the city is quite young and is growing rapidly. The mission has done some excellent work. As the new capital, Brasilia, is being built in this same state, it affords a truly wonderful opportunity for growth for Christ, unhampered by previous local attachments. This mission secured

the first lot in Brasilia of any church (Protestant) and also has a 100 acre land grant. This is to afford employment for ministerial students that they may work their way through college. Already one such is employed and the products will go to mission support. Where but few lived three years ago, many thousands now live and as soon as the capital buildings, streets, etc. are completed many thousands will be there. The location is strategic, the time is propitious, the need is very urgent. They are calling for more missionaries. The Shields are to go next month and their support still lacks materially. The three C's are in competition—Communism (Chinese Communists are particularly interested in Brazil), Catholicism and Christ. If you want fellowship with Christ in Brazil, here is an unusual opportunity to make your work count.

NJR

Since the above was written the Shields family have gone to Brazil. More funds are still needed and the work is growing. You are cordially invited to share in this great work for Christ, individually and your group. The farm development is proceeding, more students are coming. Designate for Merlin and Gertrude Shields. As this goes to the printer their immediate need is \$3,000 for a Volkswagen to minister in their many outstations, and Brasilia (150 miles north).

N. J. REASONER

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