

Oeness-Trinitarian Pentecostal Final Report, 2002-2007

Abstract

This Final Report of the Oeness-Trinitarian Pentecostal dialogue and the six-year study that led up to it were commissioned by the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS), an international society of scholars established in 1970 to provide a venue for research related to Pentecostal and Charismatic studies. This Report deals with the five issues discussed during the five years of study (the sixth year was devoted to the Final Report): The Historic Division between Oeness and Trinitarian Pentecostals, Baptism, Christology and the Godhead, Salvation, and Holiness.

Keywords

Pentecostalism, Oeness Pentecostals, baptism, Christology, Trinity, salvation, holiness

I. Introduction

1. This Final Report and the six-year study that led up to it were commissioned by the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS), an international society of scholars established in 1970 to provide a venue for research related to Pentecostal and Charismatic studies. The SPS was the major context for scholarly exchanges between Trinitarian and Oeness Pentecostals throughout the Society's history. Though the Oeness participants were not large in number, they represented a consistently-present and significant part of the Society's scholarship, as is evidenced by the presidency of Manuel Gaxiola-Gaxiola and the prolific contributions of various Oeness scholars.

2. Prior to the year 2001, Catholic ecumenist and theologian, Kilian McDonnell, a long-standing member of the Society, suggested to the Executive Committee that the Society sponsor a dialogue between Trinitarian and Oeness Pentecostals. In response, the Executive Committee decided at the 2001 SPS meeting (Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK) that it was time to augment the ad hoc exchanges taking place between Oeness and Trinitarian Pentecostals with a more formal process. The chief purpose was to allow for a clearer understanding of Oeness and Trinitarian Pentecostal perspectives, including the

variations possible within each of them, as well as both the commonalities and differences between them. It was also hoped that fresh insights into commonalities would emerge to provide for more meaningful forms of witness between the traditions. Though both sides of the table would naturally defend certain ideas important to their tradition, the goal was a clearer understanding of their positions and not the winning over of one side to the other or the adoption of a compromise position.

3. It was decided by the Executive Committee at the 2001 meeting of the SPS that Ralph Del Colle (Catholic), then First Vice President of the Society, and Frank D. Macchia (Assemblies of God), Editor of *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* and past President of the Society, would make inquiries as to who could best serve as chairs of the two teams. David Bernard (United Pentecostal Church International) agreed to serve as chair of the Oneness side of the dialogue. Frank Macchia agreed to chair the Trinitarian side. David Bernard chose Bishop James Johnson (Pentecostal Assemblies of the World) as one participant and J. L. Hall (United Pentecostal Church) as the other. Frank Macchia chose Kimberly Alexander (Church of God, Cleveland, TN) and Edmund Rybarczyk (Assemblies of God). David William Faupel (Episcopal), then General Secretary of the Society, Kilian McDonnell, David Reed (Anglican), and Ralph Del Colle were invited to sit in as external observers of the talks.

4. The two teams met for the first time in 2002 at Southeastern University (Lakeland, FL) as a pre-conference event of the SPS. It was decided that the meeting would last one entire day. The morning session would be devoted to the presentation of a paper by both sides on a given topic planned the year before. The afternoon would be spent discussing the papers. This pattern was followed every year since then. The first year was devoted to the historic break between the two major traditions. Special emphasis was placed on their common origins, experience, worship, and fellowship. This was also a time of bonding as a group. Papers were offered by J. L. Hall (Oneness) and Edmund Rybarczyk (Trinitarian). The second year (2003, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY) dealt with the topic of baptism, with a special focus on the baptismal formula and the role of baptism in Christian initiation. Papers were offered by David Bernard (Oneness) and Kimberly Alexander (Trinitarian). The third year (2004, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI) addressed Christology and the Godhead, with special attention devoted to the issue of the Trinity. Papers were offered by David Bernard (Oneness) and Edmund Rybarczyk (Trinitarian). The fourth year (2005, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA) dealt with the topic of salvation with a broader coverage of Christian initiation. Papers were offered by David Bernard (Oneness) and Frank Mac-

chia (Trinitarian). The fifth year (2006, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA) centered on sanctification and holiness with further attention paid to soteriology as well as to different understandings of holiness. Papers were offered by invited guests: Howard Swansee (Pentecostal Assemblies of the World) and David Norris (United Pentecostal Church) for the Oneness position and Hollis Gause (Church of God) for the Trinitarian position. The sixth year was spent discussing a rough draft of the Final Report prepared in advance with the approval of both teams.

5. The discussion throughout the years came under some scrutiny from various people who were not involved. Some questioned why the talks were closed to a broader audience. It was not understood that dialogues are generally closed, and for good reasons. Teams require focused and concentrated discussion in order to cover a range of topics in a short period of time, with the goal of arriving at a final report. This goal would be impossible to accomplish if a larger audience participated. Also, it is important for teams in this setting to trust one another, create an environment in which to discuss issues candidly, and minimize the potential for misunderstanding.

6. Others questioned the diversity of the teams. Team members were carefully chosen by the heads of the teams with both theological expertise and diversity in mind. The choices were not the same as others would have made and there is always room for disagreement in such matters. But once the teams were working together it was thought by all participants and the Executive Committee that it would not be advisable to change the participants. It was thought that both teams were functionally suitable to achieve the goals of the Society and that ample opportunity would be offered for others to formally respond once the Final Report is released at the annual meeting and in the *Journal of the Society*. The Report would function as a launching pad for further discussion by a number of persons, from various contexts.

7. Lastly, there was some concern expressed that the team members would accurately represent the beliefs of their churches. The members were chosen with the goal of ensuring that they would, and in the discussions it was clear that all team members unequivocally affirmed the doctrines of their respective movements.

8. All of the team members found the time of study and dialogue to be stimulating and enlightening. They prayed together each time they met and developed genuine personal regard for one another. They recognized that all are striving to live by faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and that all have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. The issues that divided them were serious; nevertheless, they agreed that the ultimate objective is to do all to the glory of God.

II. The Historic Division of 1916

A. *History of Our Division: Joint Affirmation*

9. In surveying the history of our division in 1916, we recognize the following passions as influencing both sides of the early Trinitarian/Oneness debate:

- A restorationist fervor, or a desire to restore to the churches neglected features of apostolic experience and practice;
- An eschatological fervor in anticipation of Christ's soon return as a motivation for missions and holy living;
- A christocentric pneumatology with a special focus on the authority and power exercised through the use of Jesus' name;
- A devotion to Scripture over tradition as the standard for Christian faith and living.

The goal of unity in the bond of peace as the church seeks to grow in holiness and bear witness to Christ.

10. Though sharing similar passions, the two sides of the Oneness and Trinitarian Pentecostals arrived at different conclusions about the baptismal formula, the nature of Spirit baptism, the role of water baptism in salvation, Christology, and the nature of the Godhead. We recognize that both sides of the debate attempted with sincerity and genuine regard for the other side to be true to all of the passions listed above, even though the zeal for Scriptural truth took such precedence at times as to eclipse other valuable passions.

11. We also recognize, however, that there were noble but failed attempts following the division in 1916 at further discussion and possibly some degree of reconciliation. In addition, over the decades since then, some Oneness Pentecostals have worshipped in Trinitarian Pentecostal churches and meetings and vice versa. Though the doctrinal differences are serious, this grassroots participation demonstrates that people on both sides genuinely sought to lift up Jesus as Lord in the power of the Spirit. This worship and witness in the power of the Spirit is valued by both sides as foundational to our shared Pentecostal heritage.

12. Despite differences of biblical interpretation, we also affirm together that all revelation must pass the test of harmony with Scripture. No private or new revelation can contradict or supersede Scriptural teaching. Although Scripture is contextualized and illuminated through experience and practice,

the Scriptural teachings remain the supreme test of all experience and practice. This affirmation was valued and shared by both sides, in part, to dispel the idea that the Oneness/Trinitarian division had to do with a “new revelation” by the Oneness intentionally proposed as an insight beyond the teaching of Scripture.

B. Early Theological Reasoning: Oneness Pentecostal Team Affirms

13. The Oneness Pentecostals stress the need to follow the specific teaching of Scripture in all matters, even if it may contradict established or historic dogma. Early Oneness adherents resisted conforming to the mainstream of Christian tradition in areas perceived as out of harmony with the teaching of Scripture. The early Oneness Pentecostal leaders sought to be true to the restorationist impulse of the Pentecostal movement by restoring apostolic doctrine, experience, and practice. They noted that the apostles always baptized with the invocation of the name of Jesus. Their attempt to harmonize this apostolic practice with Matthew 28:19 led them to reflect further on the Godhead and to conclude that in Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and that Jesus is the one name that fully reveals the one God in his salvific work as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, they regarded Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as manifestations of the one God rather than three eternal persons. They identified the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus, thereby concluding that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is an integral part of receiving Christ. Based on the conversion accounts in Acts, as epitomized by Acts 2:38, they also concluded that water baptism and Spirit baptism are both part of Christian initiation.

C. Early Theological Reasoning: Trinitarian Pentecostal Team Affirms

14. The Trinitarian Pentecostals affirm that most early Assemblies of God leaders showed tolerance over nonessentials by allowing a degree of flexibility early on as to the use of the baptismal formula, so long as no one was contentious or divisive in propagating his or her own view.¹ To be respected was the early conviction that God is not bound by precise formulas. Furthermore, in supporting the dogma of the Trinity, Assemblies of

¹ The Assemblies of God was the first but not the only Pentecostal church to wrestle with such issues.

God leaders realized the need for overseers to manage the churches through doctrinal guidelines continuous with scriptural teaching, especially in areas of biblical interpretation valued as dogma by the historic church. They thus concluded that baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19) reflected an incorporation by the Spirit into communion with the Son and his heavenly Father, finding no need from the use of Jesus' name in baptismal accounts in Acts to question the historic dogma of the Trinity as a biblical doctrine.

III. Baptism

A. Meaning of Baptism: Joint Affirmation

15. We affirm together the importance of water baptism to the life and mission of the church, for Jesus was baptized in water as part of the inauguration of his public ministry (Matt. 3:16-17) and he commanded that we baptize those from all nations whom we disciple unto him (Matt. 28:19). Peter's call after the Day of Pentecost was thus for the audience to "repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38).

16. Baptism was prefigured in the Old Testament in the salvation of Noah and his family (1 Peter 3:20-21) and in the Exodus of Israel through the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:1-5).

17. Since baptism in the New Testament involves an obedient response to God's grace, we regard water baptism to be for those who believe. In devotion to Christ, believers are "buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead to the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Rom. 6:4). Paul states that baptized, Spirit-filled believers have "clothed" themselves with Christ and have rich fellowship with fellow believers, all of whom enjoy the benefits of Christ: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Baptism thus signifies the unity that believers have in Christ by the Spirit and to which they are called to "incarnate" historically, for there is ultimately "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5).

18. Beyond this shared statement, we are also aware of the fact that the struggle over the biblical formula for baptism and, ultimately, the meaning of baptism, initiated historically our division as Oneness and Trinitarian Pentecostal churches. Both sides of the divide sought originally to be faithful to the teaching of the New Testament concerning baptism. Among the issues that divide us are:

- The biblical formula for water baptism; specifically, the Oneness Pentecostal use of Jesus' name in baptism and the Trinitarian Pentecostal use of the Trinitarian formula;
- The relationship of water baptism and salvation; specifically, the Oneness Pentecostal understanding of water baptism as essential to salvation and the Trinitarian Pentecostal tendency to regard baptism as a sign of salvation that is not essential to it;
- The relationship of water baptism to Spirit baptism; specifically, the Oneness Pentecostal understanding of the two as inseparable elements of salvation, and the Trinitarian Pentecostal tendency to see water baptism as in principle separable from Spirit baptism, with neither being necessary for salvation.²

19. We are also aware that the statements above do not capture the full variety of views in existence among Pentecostal groups globally. Nor do they include all of the nuances of difference among Oneness Pentecostal groups or among Trinitarian Pentecostal groups. The above points merely represent the issues and general viewpoints that have tended to dominate the exchanges between Oneness and Trinitarian Pentecostals historically.

B. *The Meaning of Baptism: Trinitarian Pentecostal Team Affirms*

20. Concerning the relationship of water baptism to both salvation and Spirit baptism, the Trinitarian Pentecostals involved in the dialogue recognize diversity throughout global Pentecostalism on this complex issue. The churches we represent would consider baptism as distinct from salvation but as still necessary as an act of obedience in which conversion by faith/repentance in Christ is expressed and confirmed. We recognize this act as deeply spiritual (by which faith is strengthened and confirmed) and richly theological in meaning. Baptism for our churches can be seen in this sense as a "means of grace." Spirit baptism is also regarded among our churches as distinct from both conversion and water baptism, as an empowerment for the witness accepted at conversion and expressed at water baptism. Our churches have tended (though not everywhere and always) to avoid the use

² Both teams recognize that the term "salvation" in the context of these statements concerning the relationship of baptism to salvation refers narrowly to Christian initiation. Both teams recognized that the term "salvation" also has a broader, eschatological definition that would be inclusive of all aspects of the believer's incorporation into Christ and conformity to his image.

of the term “sacrament” for water baptism, because they have generally not regarded baptism as involved in the salvation of the believer. We are aware, however, that this issue requires further study and discussion among Trinitarian Pentecostals. As article 51 of the Final Report of the International Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue, *Perspectives on Koinonia* (1985-89) notes: “Pentecostals do feel the need to investigate further the relationship between baptism and salvation in light of specific passages which appear to make a direct link between baptism and salvation (e.g. John 3:5; Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).” The challenge to involve baptism as vital to salvation increases once “salvation” is recognized as an eschatological reality that spans the believer’s entire journey into Christ.

C. The Meaning of Baptism: Oneness Pentecostal Team Affirms

21. The Oneness Pentecostal team considers water baptism to be a vital part of Christian initiation, along with repentance and Spirit baptism. These three steps of faith are closely associated and often nearly simultaneous, but theologically they are distinct events. Water baptism expresses faith in God by obedience to His Word, and it specifically confesses faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. The scriptural mode of baptism is immersion in water, and only this method communicates the biblical significance of baptism as a burial. Faith in Christ and repentance from sin are necessary to its validity; thus infant baptism is not appropriate. Water baptism is part of entrance into the New Testament church. The complete experience of forgiveness/remission of sins comes through repentance and water baptism together. Repentance deals with a person’s sinful lifestyle, opening the door to a personal relationship with God, while baptism deals with the record and consequences of sin.

D. Baptismal Formula: Joint Affirmation

22. We agree together that the two baptismal texts of Matthew 28:19 (“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”) and Acts 2:38 (“In the name of Jesus Christ”) are valuable to the meaning and practice of baptism among Christians today. The former reflects the meaning of baptism in the context of the work of the one God as the heavenly Father, as Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and as the Holy Spirit among us. The latter reflects that baptism has a focus on Jesus Christ, crucified and raised for our salvation.

E. *Baptismal Formula: Trinitarian Pentecostal Team Affirms*

23. The Trinitarian Pentecostal team notes that Matthew 28:19 has Jesus commanding his disciples to make disciples of all nations "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This text is found as a baptismal formula in the *Didache* (vii), reflecting an ancient Christian usage. The interaction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit at the baptism of Jesus depicted in Matthew 3:16-17 (the Father declared love for the Son and the Holy Spirit descended on the Son in witness to this love) provides the background theologically for Jesus' use of the Trinitarian (or "triadic") formula in Matthew 28:19. Implied in part is that baptism signifies one's entry by faith in Christ into the love shared between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

24. The use of Jesus' name in baptism in Acts (e.g. 2:38) and Paul (e.g. 1 Cor. 6:11) implied a certain Christological focus to baptism, since in baptism we are buried and raised with Christ (Rom. 6:1-5).³ Properly understood, the Trinitarian formula does not eclipse this Christological focus, but rather implies that communion with Christ has the Trinitarian framework reflected at the baptism of Jesus and symbolized in Jesus' triadic baptismal statement of Matthew 28:19.

25. We thus do not see the ancient Trinitarian and Christological formulas as in conflict. But neither do we seek a harmonization between the Trinitarian and Christological baptismal formulas reflected in Scripture that collapses the former into the latter. For example, efforts to make the "name" of Matthew 28:19 the name of Jesus is not convincing to us exegetically, nor do we find any compelling reason in Scripture for this effort at harmonization. Though we agree it would be wrong to read a full-blown post-Nicene Trinitarian theology into Matthew 28:19, we also disagree with those who seek to strip this text entirely of its Trinitarian significance.

26. Though the Trinitarian formula was understandably preferred among Trinitarian Pentecostals in concert with historic Christian churches, the Jesus' name formula was also allowed originally by many Trinitarian Pentecostals, so long as those advocating it were not divisive. Some Pentecostals have sought

³ Many Trinitarian Pentecostals would not regard the Jesus' name designation for baptism as a baptismal formula but rather as symbolic of baptism in Christ's "authority." Though the Trinitarian team did regard Jesus' name as symbolizing authority, it did not wish to preclude the possibility that it may have had formulaic significance in the ancient church.

combination formulas (such as, “in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”).⁴ Of course, it is important to adopt biblical patterns. But it is our conviction that God does not bind us to precise formulas, nor is God limited by them in the divine freedom to bless us in our acts of faith by God’s grace.

F. Baptismal Formula: Oneness Pentecostal Team Affirms

27. The Oneness Pentecostal team affirms that to fulfill biblical teaching and to follow apostolic precedent, baptism should be administered by invoking the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in faith. Using the name of Jesus in the baptismal formula expresses faith in His identity, atoning work, and saving power and authority. The name of Jesus is the only saving name, the name by which to receive remission of sins, the highest name, and the name in which Christians are to say and do all things. Thus using Jesus’ name is the proper way to fulfill the purposes for baptism.

28. The Bible records five historical accounts of baptism in the New Testament church that describe a name or formula, and in each case the name is Jesus. (See Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16.) The epistles also allude repeatedly to the Jesus name formula (e.g., Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 1:13; 6:11). The threefold phrase in Matt 28:19 does not identify three names of three different persons, but it describes a singular name that encompasses the redemptive manifestations of the Godhead, and that name is Jesus. Moreover, the parallel accounts of the great commission in the other Synoptic Gospels clearly describe the name of Jesus. Thus the apostles correctly understood and obeyed the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19 by baptizing all converts with the invocation of the name of Jesus.

29. As modern translations and lexicons make clear, the Greek text of Acts demonstrates that the apostolic church invoked the name of Jesus orally in water baptism. The disciples of John the Baptist, who were already baptized unto repentance, were baptized a second time, the only difference being their new understanding of Jesus and the invocation of his name (Acts 19:3-5). We affirm the historic recognition of Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, as well as recent scholars, that the apostles baptized by invoking the name of Jesus Christ rather than the Trinitarian titles (we note F. F. Bruce’s conclusion

⁴ There were in fact efforts towards compromise over the baptismal formula early on in the controversy.

that baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ” in Acts probably referred to the pronouncing of his name by the baptizer or the baptized person).⁵

30. We have been encouraged by the scholarship concerning Matthew 28:19, which notes that the context demands a Christological formula, and we agree that these words were not originally understood as a formula. We affirm that (as noted by Karl Barth)⁶ a basic baptismal formula which invokes the name of Jesus is the most appropriate theological expression of these words, for they actually point to Jesus Christ and his saving work. Finally, we affirm the judgment of most church historians that the original baptismal formula of the Christian church simply invoked the name of Jesus Christ, while the earliest threefold formula was a mid-second-century development.

G. *Baptismal Formula: Joint Conclusion*

31. We all understand that “rebaptism” has been a sensitive issue historically between us. We also recognize that historically there have been some Oneness Pentecostals who have attributed a degree of legitimacy to Trinitarian baptism among people of genuine faith, and there are Trinitarian Pentecostals who would recognize the value of including Jesus’ name in the baptismal formula. The Oneness Pentecostal side posed the question as to whether Trinitarian Pentecostals could affirm the formulaic significance of “in the name of Jesus” in Acts, and the Trinitarian Pentecostals asked if the Oneness Pentecostals could regard one’s baptism as implicitly in Jesus’ name if the one baptized confesses Jesus as Savior during baptism (cf. Acts 22:16), even if the one baptizing does not use the formula. Neither side compromised the respective teaching of their churches on baptism but agreed to the importance of continued discussion of the significance, mode, and formula of water baptism.

⁵ Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” in *Word and Sacrament II, Luther’s Works*, Vol. 36, Abdel Wentz, ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 63; Ulrich Zwingli, *Of Baptism*, in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, trans. G. W. Bromiley, *The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. 24 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 144-45, 168, 171; F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, rev. ed. (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1984), 57 n.20.

⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 4, Pt. 1, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969), 75, 91-99.

IV. Christology and the Godhead

A. Joint Affirmation

32. We affirm together that Jesus Christ is the living Logos or Word of the Father, who became flesh in Jesus of Nazareth as he was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary (e.g., John 1:1, 14; Luke 1:35). Christ was fully divine and fully human, deity and humanity united indivisibly in one person. As Hebrews 1:3a notes: "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word." As human, Christ, the Son of God, partook of our poverty so that we could partake of his riches (2 Cor. 8:9). By the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of God on earth (Matt. 12:28), died on the cross for our sins (Heb. 9:14), and rose again for our salvation (Rom. 1:4). He ascended on high in order to pour out the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33) and he is coming again to fulfill the work of the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:11). Indeed, "he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him" (Col. 1:18-19).

33. We also affirm together that there is one indivisible God, who is one without distinctions of essence. We affirm God as one, not as a mere intellectual belief, for even the demons believe this and tremble (James 2:19). Our joint affirmation of God as one is also to be indicative of a lived devotion of undivided loyalty to God and to God's Word: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:4-5).

B. Oneness Pentecostal Team Affirms

34. The Oneness Pentecostals stress that God is absolutely one (Isa. 44:6, 8, 24) — that is, one without distinction of persons. There are no distinctions in God's eternal being, and the Godhead does not consist of three centers of consciousness (as some Trinitarians hold). Moreover, in Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

35. We affirm that God has revealed Himself as Father, in the Son, and as the Holy Spirit. The one God can be described as Father, Word, or Holy Spirit before His incarnation as Jesus Christ, the Son of God. While Jesus walked on earth as God Himself incarnate, the Spirit of God continued to be omnipresent.

36. We also affirm that the roles of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are necessary to God's plan of redemption for fallen humanity. In order to save us, God provided a sinless Man who could die in our place — the Son, in whose name we receive salvation (Acts 4:12). In foreordaining the plan of salvation and begetting the Son, God is the Father. In working in our lives to transform and empower us, applying salvation to us individually, God is the Holy Spirit. In sum, the titles of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit describe God's redemptive roles or works, but they do not indicate three eternal persons in God, just as the incarnation does not indicate that God had eternally preexistent flesh.

37. When the New Testament writers called Jesus God, they confessed Jesus to be God in the Old Testament sense. Jesus accepted Thomas's confession of him as "my Lord and my God" (John 20:28-29). Jesus is not the incarnation of one person of a trinity but the incarnation of all the identity, character, and personality of the one God. As to His eternal deity, there can be no subordination of Jesus to anyone else, whether in essence or position.

38. In eternity, we expect to see one God as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ (Rev. 22:3-4). In heaven, if we asked to see the Father apart from Jesus, the words of Jesus to Philip would still apply: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father... it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (John 14:9-10).

39. We understand the Holy Spirit to be the Spirit that was in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3:17). The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, does not come as another person but comes in another form (in spirit instead of flesh) and another relationship ("in you" instead of "with you"); the Holy Spirit is actually Jesus coming to dwell in human lives (John 14:16-18). By the presence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus fulfills his promise to dwell in our midst when we gather in his name (Matt. 18:20).

40. In our understanding, all (whether Oneness or Trinitarian) who experience a genuine work of God encounter one Spirit, not two or three. They do not experience three personalities when they worship, nor do they receive three spirits, but they are in relationship with one personal spirit being.

41. We affirm the genuine and complete humanity of Jesus. Christ's humanity means that everything we humans can say of ourselves, we can say of Jesus in his earthly life, except for sin. Moreover, in every way that we relate to God, Jesus related to God, except that he did not need to repent or be born again. Thus, when Jesus prayed, when he submitted his will to the Father, and when he spoke about and to God, he simply acted in accordance with his authentic, genuine humanity.

42. We regard the terms “Father” and “Son” in the New Testament as serving to emphasize the true humanity of Jesus, not to make distinctions within God’s being. The title of Father reminds us of God’s transcendence, while the title of Son focuses on the incarnation. Any attempt to identify two divine persons tends toward ditheism or subordinationism. Moreover, in our view, defining the Son as a second divine person results in two Sons — an eternal, divine Son who could not die and a temporal, human Son who did die.

43. Although we recognize both deity and humanity in Christ, it is impossible to separate the two in him. Humanity and deity were inseparably joined in him. While there was a distinction between the divine will and his human will, he always submitted the latter to the former. Jesus was, and remains, the one God manifested in flesh.

C. Trinitarian Pentecostal Team Affirms

44. We as Trinitarian Pentecostals wish to stress that we believe in one God and not in three gods. According to Trinitarian dogma, “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” are not three “separate” or in any way “divisible” persons but rather three distinct but inseparable persons of one divine nature.

45. This language of “nature” and “persons” is a helpful but ultimately fallible attempt drawn from centuries of valued tradition to understand both the unity and relational life of the Godhead. There are Trinitarian theologians who would question the use of this language to describe the life of the one God who is eternally distinct as “Father, Son, and Spirit,” especially in the light of the fact that “persons” in ancient Trinitarian writings did not carry the same meaning that it does today (as referring to separate and individual egos or consciousnesses). What is vital for us is to be faithful to the biblical language that supports both God’s unity (oneness) and the interrelations between Father, Son, and Spirit revealed in the story of Jesus (Matt. 3:16-17; Rom. 1:4; Phil. 2:11), expressed in the rest of the New Testament (e.g., Eph. 4:4-6) and presumed in the New Testament to be eternal in significance and, therefore, revelatory of who God is (John 17:5; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). We believe that both the Old Testament and Jewish intertestamental literature prepare us for this New Testament revelation of God’s oneness and threeness by implying a oneness to God that is complex and even involves plurality.⁷

46. When we deny that the Father or the Spirit is incarnated in Jesus, we do not mean to deny that the Father stands ultimately behind the work of

⁷ See Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999).

Jesus Christ, that Christ represents the Father in his work for our salvation, or that the Father and the Spirit participate in that work. Jesus said that the Father and the Spirit are at work in his deeds (John 14:10; Matt. 12:28). Jesus also states that the Father is in him as he is in the Father (John 14:10; and we are to be in them: John 17:21), which refers to intimate communion and not incarnation. Our desire is to remain faithful to the biblical language concerning what is appropriate to the personal relations in the Godhead: The Father sends both the Word (or the Son) as the only begotten to become flesh (John 1:14, 18; John 3:16) and the Spirit into the world to rest upon the Son and to anoint (Matt. 3:16) (the Father is not sent or begotten to become flesh; the Spirit is not begotten or sent to become flesh).

47. It is also our concern that Jesus' interaction as God's Son with his heavenly Father not be restricted to his human nature, for fear of dividing the two natures in Christ (as though Jesus as a mere man related to the heavenly Father who was incarnate within him). Jesus is inseparable from his divine self as the Word of the Father or Son of God (John 1:14, 18) and cannot act independently of his divine self. All that Jesus underwent, including the suffering and alienation of death on the cross, was experienced by the eternal Logos or Son of God. The metaphor of divine indwelling (Col. 1:18-19) should thus be complemented by the deeper language of the Word "becoming flesh" in Jesus (John 1:14), implying an inseparable union of natures in Christ. Thus, when Jesus interacted with the Father, he did so as the Word of the Father, revealing an active interrelation between the Father and the Word of the Father, an interrelation of "God with God" that has communion and love at its essence. The Spirit bore witness to this love in resting on the Son at his baptism and by participating in the Son's faithful witness to the Father (Matt. 3-4). There are texts that, if taken at face value, thus bear witness to an eternal relation between the Father and the Son mediated by the Spirit, for Jesus prayed that the Father restore to him the "glory" that he had with the Father before the worlds were made (John 17:5), a glory to which he was restored at the right hand of the Father after his ascension and from which he poured out the Spirit upon us (Acts 2:33). It was also "by the Son" that the Father created the worlds (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; cf. John 1:3).

D. *Joint Conclusion*

48. The Trinitarian Pentecostal team asked the Oneness Pentecostal team if it would ever be possible to consider as valid the 1919 statement of A. D. Urshan that *"there is a plurality in God's mysterious Being, and that this plurality is shown as a three-ness, not three separate or distinct Beings or*

Persons, but a mysterious, inexplicable, incomprehensible three-ness."⁸ The question was asked, because the language of "persons" is not sacred in Trinitarian theology. Trinitarian theologian, Heinrich Ott, for example, referred to God as "one Person" whose personhood is not limited by individuality but exists in eternal threefold self-distinction as Father, Son, and Spirit.⁹ The Oneness Pentecostals responded by expressing their concern to acknowledge three manifestations for the work of salvation, but not three eternal persons or centers of consciousness. There was not time to explore this issue further. But both sides agreed that God's nature requires additional discussion between Oneness and Trinitarian Pentecostals.

V. Salvation

A. Joint Affirmation

49. We affirm together that salvation is by the unmerited grace of God in Jesus Christ and by the new life of the Holy Spirit. For "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power" to heal all who were under the power of the devil (Acts 10:38). This work of redemption was provided for when Christ died and rose again. Christ shared in our humanity "so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Heb. 2:14-15). For "he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24). Paul could thus write about those who manifested sinful lifestyles, "And that is what some of you were, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). One day we will be clothed with the "heavenly dwelling" of the resurrected body "so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. For it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us

⁸ A. D. Urshan, *The Almighty God in the Lord Jesus Christ* (1121 S. Mott Street, Los Angeles, CA: The author, 1919), 10; Quoted in David Reed, "Aspects of the Origins of Oneness Pentecostalism," in *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, Vinson Synan, ed. (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975), 151.

⁹ Heinrich Ott, *Wirklichkeit und Glaube: Der Persönliche Gott* (Zweiter Band) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 344-348.

the Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come" (2 Cor. 5:4-5). It is our conviction, therefore, that "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (1 Cor. 5:19).

50. We thus commit ourselves to the message of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world so that all of humanity may find reconciliation and new life in Christ. Pentecost symbolizes the fact that the new life of the Spirit is meant for all peoples regardless of race, gender, or social standing. All are invited to come and to serve with equal dignity and freedom. The spiritually-gifted community of the saints dedicated to Jesus Christ thus bears witness to a life that subverts the sinful, unjust relationships and structures of the world. We look forward in hope to the day when the voice will come from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:3-4).

51. Both teams recognized that "Spirit baptism" is essential to the Christian life broadly conceived, involving the entire span of one's conformity to Christ (see #20). Besides the issues surrounding the role of water and Spirit baptism in relation to conversion/initiation (discussed earlier in section III), the issue that still concerns us in relation to salvation has to do with the role of speaking in tongues in conversion/initiation. Specifically, the Oneness and Trinitarian Pentecostals have tended to disagree over whether or not the receiving the Holy Spirit with the initial sign of speaking in tongues is part of salvation. Many Trinitarian Pentecostals would accept the evidential value of tongues in relation to spiritual empowerment for service distinct from conversion/initiation, while most Oneness Pentecostals believe that tongues accompanies the reception of the Holy Spirit at conversion/initiation.

B. Trinitarian Pentecostal Team Affirms

52. The Trinitarian Pentecostal team recognizes that there are different understandings of the "via salutis" (way of salvation) among Pentecostal groups globally. In relation to speaking in tongues, Trinitarian Pentecostals have generally refused to regard tongues as the necessary evidence of salvation for fear of narrowing the circle of salvation to tongues speakers, resulting in an unbiblical teaching and exclusivism. There is also the danger here, contrary to the intention of all Pentecostals, of shifting the emphasis from

what God has done to save us by grace to conditions that we must fulfill to qualify for salvation. This statement, however, is not meant as a denial of the value of tongues in signaling the global diversity and eschatological reach of the Spirit's work in empowering the people of God for mission and prophetic service.

C. Oneness Pentecostal Team Affirms

53. The Oneness Pentecostal team affirms that salvation is by grace through faith based on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ; that obedience to the gospel is an integral part of saving faith; that repentance, water baptism, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit are integral aspects of conversion/initiation; and that speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In this way, tongues are vitally connected to the experience of salvation, yet tongues do not have saving efficacy. Speaking in tongues is not a condition that we must fulfill, but a work of God in us according to His will. The goal is not to seek tongues in and of themselves, but to seek a relationship of faith with Jesus Christ and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. For Oneness Pentecostals, the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4), and people believe and obey the gospel by dying to sin in repentance, being buried with Jesus Christ in water baptism, and receiving resurrection life through the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-38; Rom. 6:1-4). Moreover, Oneness Pentecostals expect believers to speak in tongues as a sign of receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). The apostles identified this sign as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel (Acts 2:16-17, 33), and the early church accepted this sign as evidence that believers were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-17; 19:6).

D. Joint Conclusion

54. The Trinitarian team wondered about the distinction made historically by some Oneness Pentecostals between "salvation," that was not fulfilled experientially by baptism in the name of Jesus and the evidence of speaking in tongues, and the experience of "full salvation" according to Acts 2:38. The Trinitarian Pentecostal team saw this option as one possible way in which Oneness Pentecostals have attempted to widen the circle of salvation to other faith communities dedicated to Jesus Christ through genuine repentance and faith. The Oneness team affirmed that salvation is a process which

begins with a profession of faith and repentance and that the fullness of salvation includes both water baptism in Jesus' name and the baptism of the Holy Spirit with tongues. Thus, they acknowledged that many people have entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ based on faith and repentance but should continue in their experience to receive everything that God has commanded and provided. (See Acts 8:5-17; 18:24-28; 19:1-6). They held that most Oneness Pentecostals do not make a strong separation between "salvation" and the "full salvation" but affirm the apostolic proclamation in Acts 2:38 as the New Testament message of salvation.

VI. Holiness

A. *Joint Affirmation*

55. Holiness is to be viewed from the start as an attribute of God: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty," says Isaiah 6:3. God is to be praised in part for his awesome holiness: "Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy" (Ps. 99:5). God's holiness is without blemish or imperfection, opposing all that is evil and enabling in its power and beauty all that is good. As Exodus 15:11 notes, "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you — majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?"

56. God's holiness is revealed in the covenant established with God's people. God covenanted with Israel by grace in delivering Israel from bondage. This covenant involved obedience to those statutes and ways that are consistent with life as liberated by God's grace. Exodus 20:1-2 thus moves from deliverance by grace to a holy commitment to God by way of response: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me." Holiness in the Old Testament was holistic, involving the dedication to God of every aspect of life in accordance with God's expressed will: morality, spirituality, marital covenant, family life, business transactions, and even animal husbandry. In the social realm as well, God's holy name was profaned in the oppression of the poor (Amos 2:7). Concomitantly, holiness is expressed in a passion for social justice as well as in personal dedication to God. Holiness alters our relation to society, making the people of God peacemakers in a world dominated by violence: "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy" (Heb. 12:14).

57. Jesus Christ offered himself on the cross in order by his resurrection and impartation of the Spirit to sanctify us unto God and to enable our walk in holiness. Hebrews 10:10 notes that “we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Paul wrote to God’s people that “you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). Not only were we bought with a price, but our bodies have become temples of the Holy Spirit separated from sin and enabled to live in righteousness (1 Cor. 6:19). The love of God was shed abroad in our hearts through the gift of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5). This love is the heart of true holiness, since the love of God does not compromise with evil but overcomes evil with good. Holiness thus begins in God’s act of sanctifying us through the redemption wrought by Christ and the gift of the Spirit.

58. Holiness also involves our willful and conscious appropriation of God’s sanctifying grace, an appropriation made possible by that very grace. Becoming a Christian thus involves repentance, or a turning from sin, and faith, or a trusting and obedient relationship to Christ. Though holiness involves a conscious commitment that is often dramatic in nature, it also leads to a process of growth toward the image of Christ. The fruit of the Spirit should thus be increasingly in evidence among us in our commitment to live as disciples of Jesus in the world (Gal. 5). Jesus revealed in his life and death the true holiness of heart and life, devoted without compromise to the will of the Father and committed out of love for humanity to the redemption and renewal of the world. We thus seek in holiness to identify with Jesus in the power of the Spirit, knowing full well that this identification is a growing process and that we will never be worthy or adequate in our efforts to mimic Christ in the world.

59. All holiness is thus due to God’s power and grace, for we have been saved and made holy unto God “not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace” (2 Tim. 1:9). Yet, we are also called to live out this holiness in obedience to God: “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15-16). We are called “to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:24). In view of God’s rich mercy, we are by God’s grace to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to God to be used according to God’s purposes and will (Rom. 12:1). The eschatological goal of God’s Spirit is to present us holy and without blame before God (Eph. 5:27), for without holiness no one can ultimately see the Lord in all divine majesty and glory (Heb. 12:14). The expectation of Christ’s return encourages us toward the holy life.

60. Though there have been different notions of sanctification among Pentecostal movements, Pentecostals have in general inherited from the Wesleyan movement a deep commitment to the holy life. We have historically tended to emphasize sexual purity, modesty in dress, and forms of public life that are consistent with biblical principles of care and respect for the body as the temple of the Spirit. In our discussion of this issue, we were aware that Pentecostalism may be in danger of compromising its early commitment to personal holiness. We were also aware, however, that holiness can become trivialized if confined only to a rigid adherence to moral codes of external dress and appearance. Without underestimating the importance of such matters as modesty in dress, we would not want to exclude any aspect of the holy life, including especially compassion, purity of heart and the support of justice and mercy in relation to family and social relationships. Furthermore, though holiness is to be evident among the people of God and striven for intentionally and passionately, we are also to recognize that we are flesh, or sinners saved and sustained by God's grace and forgiveness. Only in the resurrection do we attain that perfection that belongs to Christ (Phil. 3:10-12). Until then, we are being transformed into Christ's image from glory to glory by the Spirit who sets us free (2 Cor. 3:18). This ongoing transformation allows the people of God to have significant breakthroughs and make recognizable strides toward the ultimate perfection that belongs to Christ.

B. Trinitarian Pentecostal Team Affirms

61. The Nicene Creed implicitly calls the one catholic and apostolic church to be holy as well. The apostolic heritage bequeathed to us by the Scriptures and confirmed by ancient tradition thus involves the holiness of lives consecrated unto God and dedicated to God's mission in the world. In continuity with the broader Christian heritage, we hold that holiness has a Trinitarian root and goal. It is grounded in the holy love shared among the Persons of the Trinity and is directed towards the redemptive goal of that love for all of creation. The holy life is thus a witness to the elect will of the Father, the obedient devotion of the Son and the faithful witness of the Spirit. In holiness, we participate in the redemptive strategy of Father, Son, and Spirit for the world, a strategy that allows us to become a holy temple of the Spirit shaped in the image of Christ and directed towards giving glory to the Father. In striving by God's grace for the holy life, we affirm the value that our movement has placed historically on the dignity and value of the human body and its calling to serve as a temple of the

Holy Spirit, as well as on modesty in dress and appearance. We would also want to expand holiness to involve just and liberating relationships both in the home and in the wider society.

C. Oneness Pentecostal Team Affirms

62. The Bible frequently speaks of God as "the Holy One." As God manifested in the flesh, Jesus is the Holy One (Acts 2:27; 3:14). Indeed, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament descriptions of the Holy One: "Your Maker is your husband — the LORD Almighty is his name — the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth" (Isa. 54:5). The basis of holiness is the one true God, and the supreme example of holiness is Jesus Christ. We cannot manufacture our own holiness; instead, God enables us to share in his holiness (Heb. 12:10). His Holy Spirit empowers us to live a godly life (Rom. 8:4), and his grace teaches us how to do so (Titus 2:11-12). The Bible gives authoritative, practical guidance in this regard. First and foremost, holiness is a matter of the heart — bearing the fruit of the Spirit, adopting godly attitudes, and seeking right relationships in personal life and in society. At the same time, we should implement principles of holiness in our activities and amusements. (See Ps. 101:2-3; Titus 3:3.) We should also follow scriptural teachings regarding personal appearance, including modesty, moderation, avoiding excessive ornamentation, and maintaining the distinction between male and female. (See Deut. 22:5; 1 Cor. 11:14-16; 1 Tim. 2:8-10.)

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