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Baptized in Jesus' Name: Oneness and Trinitarian Pentecostal Readings of Acts 2:38¹

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Introduction

Contemporary dialogue between Oneness and Trinitarian Pentecostals has been approached from the lens of a range of doctrines including baptism, Christology and the Godhead, salvation, and holiness. Scholarship on both sides of the conversation reveals more in common between the two traditions than generally admitted.² An examination of their respective views of baptism brings to the fore a shared theological heritage. Both traditions affirm water baptism by immersion and both emphasize the role of belief on behalf of baptismal recipient. In addition to mode and recipient, there is more agreement than commonly admitted between Oneness and Trinitarians with respect to the meaning and formula for water baptism. In the interest of ongoing ecumenical dialogue between Oneness and Trinitarians, Acts 2:38 is a seminal verse, answering the question of what is required for salvation with an eye on the role of baptism—the apostle Peter entreated on the day of Pentecost, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (NRSV).³ This verse provides the Scriptural point-of-entry into the theological impasse that has characterized the debate.

The present study employs a comparative theological approach, assessing continuities and contrasts between Oneness and Trinitarian views of baptism.⁴ In addition to Oneness and Trinitarian Pentecostal perspectives, in the third part of this paper I reflect on readings of Acts

2:38 drawn from the broader history of Christianity leading up to the twentieth century advent of Pentecostalism. By way of conclusion, I offer a constructive way forward for ongoing dialogue.

Oneness Perspectives

The Pentecostal pioneer Garfield T. Haywood served from 1925 to 1931 as the Presiding Bishop of the oldest Oneness denomination, the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World. He taught the language of “baptism” in Acts corresponded to the same experience referred to in the Gospel of John as being “born again.” In *The Birth of the Spirit in the Days of the Apostles*, Haywood underscores the close parallel between “the gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38 and spiritual rebirth. In the same way John speaks of being born again (John 3:5; 1 John 5:6), the fuller experience of baptism requires both water and the Spirit (Acts 2:28; 8:15-18; 10:45-48).⁵ According to Haywood, the preponderance of evidence in Acts depicts the efficacy of baptism as resting in it being administered *in the name of Jesus*. In addition to the weight of biblical support, Haywood’s penchant for Jesus Name baptism was informed by a prophecy delivered by a Chinese missionary in Arroyo Seco. The prophecy endorsed Acts 2:38 baptism as the means through which God was working in a powerful new way. Haywood became convinced:

This is the only name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved. If you repent deeply enough in your heart, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, I will guarantee that you shall receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost as you “come up out of the water.” If people do not believe God’s Word they never get His best. Even if you do not understand, you must believe, before you can “see” the Glory of God.⁶

Apprehending God’s glory was Haywood’s aim. He discerned the biblical path to achieving this end was through the belief and baptism in Jesus’ name.

The Persian immigrant, pastor, and Oneness pioneer Andrew B. D. Urshan, in his *Life Story* describes the difficulty he had reconciling the apparent contradiction between the

baptismal commands in Matthew and Acts. Upon reading the Great Commission, “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” (28:19), his attention was drawn to the word “name”:

The blessed Lord showed me then and there, that “The Lord Jesus Christ” is the one proper name of God for this gospel dispensation; because in Him, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, all the fullness of the God-head dwelt; and to Him, all power in heaven and earth, was given; that repentance and remission of sins should be preached everywhere in Jesus’ Name only.⁷

According to Urshan, the name of God was made known in one person, identified by the title “the Lord Jesus Christ.” This three-part designation speaks of the mysterious nature of God: “Lord,” implies the authority of the Father; “Jesus,” the one and only Son; and “Christ,” the anointing of the Holy Spirit.⁸ In this way divine singularity is emphasized alongside divine “Triunity.”⁹ This revelation became paramount to Urshan’s experience of the new birth and his own experience of baptism in water and the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

The late Oneness historian J. L. Hall, interprets Acts 2:38 in light of the way of salvation, stating, “Faith, repentance, the name of Jesus in water baptism, and the infilling of the Spirit flow together to wash away our sins, sanctify our sinful nature, and justify us before a holy God.” The apostles understood Jesus’ teaching as referring to both baptism in water and “the infilling” (Spirit baptism).¹¹ The biblical portrait of baptism Hall maintains, is rooted in confessing faith in Jesus as the Son of God, Christ, and Lord. The oral proclamation of Jesus’ name during the practice is thus essential for the forgiveness of sin and one’s personal experience of salvation.¹² According to Hall, Matthew’s trine formula—baptism into the threefold “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit”—does not have reference to proper names, but rather, descriptive “titles” identified with the “one name” of Jesus. Drawing on support from Acts as well as the Epistles, he claims the apostles interpreted Matthew in this light, laying in stone the pattern of baptism in Jesus’

name, variously expressed in Scripture as “Jesus Christ,” “Christ Jesus,” and “Lord Jesus.”¹³ The titles (or “roles”) of God Hall explains, point to the manner by which God is revealing Himself to the world in the NT economy of redemption and regeneration.¹⁴ The pattern of baptism championed by the apostles, “affirms their faith that God is one, that He was incarnate in His Son Jesus Christ, and that He now dwells in us by His Spirit.”¹⁵

According to Oneness theologian David Bernard, Acts 2:38 is a “plain, simple, unambiguous answer to a direct inquiry.”¹⁶ Bernard points to the threefold salvation pattern outlined in this verse, namely repentance, water baptism, and Spirit baptism: “The total work of salvation” (the new birth) is accomplished by “the union of the three.”¹⁷ On its own water baptism is insufficient, and implicitly so are repentance and Spirit baptism if either of the other elements are absent.¹⁸ Bernard clarifies that the order of these events is not obligatory. He does note, however, if one is baptized in the Spirit prior to receiving water baptism they must then be baptized in water. This precedent is set forth in Acts 10. It was after the Spirit was “poured out” (v. 45) on the Gentiles and they were heard, “speaking in tongues and extolling God” (v. 46), that Peter commanded them to be baptized in water (v. 48).¹⁹ While repentance may occur alongside water and Spirit baptism, Bernard maintains the general tenor of the NT conceives of repentance as occurring at an earlier stage. Repentance is, “the first step away from sin and to God, prior to baptism of water and the gift of the Spirit.”²⁰

Bernard claims baptism administered “in the name of Jesus” implies the oral invocation of the name by the baptizer during the baptismal ceremony. Use of the name signifies acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior and bears witness to the fullness of the Godhead present within Him. Bernard holds that a person’s name points to their power and authority. In his recent work *The Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ*, he writes:

Baptism “into the name of the Lord Jesus” placed recipients in a new community under the authority of Jesus. He was the head of the community, the convert had to acknowledge his headship, and the rite was performed by his authority and power. In his ministry Jesus acted by his own authority and power, but the early church acted in his name. Believers exercised power to preach and teach in his name; and to endure suffering for the sake of his name. They exalted the name of Jesus as the only name given for salvation (Acts 4:12).²¹

In the Great Commission, the only other clear candidate in Scripture for a baptismal formula, Jesus commanded the disciples to baptize into the trine name according to the authority given him (Matt. 28:18). Bernard reconciles this text by suggesting it refers to the same formula as the one given in Acts, not to a separate Trinitarian one. He notes that the Greek term for “name” (*ōnōma*) in Matthew, the same word found in parallel accounts (Mark 16:17 and Luke 24:47) appears in Acts in the singular. It therefore serves as a reference to the one name of God—the name Jesus.²²

In his work *Our God is One*, Talmadge French defends Jesus Name baptism as the practice given precedent in the early church. French points to an *ordo salutis* that begins with “sincere repentance.” This alleviates any claim of *baptismal regeneration*—the belief that water baptism itself accomplishes saving faith. French sees the formula used throughout Acts as a harmonization of the Matthean account. Moreover, he explains the command in Matthew is interpreted by the apostles, including Matthew himself, to be the invocation of the single name Jesus.²³ French claims the repeated allusion to baptism “in the name” in the Lucan account suggests a spoken formula. The name was to be invoked audibly, “over against the believer simply being baptized with respect to or appealing to the work or authority of Christ.”²⁴ The phrase “you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,” is indicative of Spirit baptism as the climax of conversion and the threefold, full salvation model of Acts 2:38. Baptism in the Spirit is an

experience of the indwelling of Christ—to possess the very “Spirit of Christ” and the divine *pleroma* (fullness)—thus preserving the Christological basis of the salvation schema.²⁵

David Norris claims the phrase “in the name of Jesus Christ” (*tō ōnōmati Iēsōus Christou eis*) as it appears in 2:38 refers to a spoken formula. The Greek construction and evidence from Jewish practice, indicate that these words were to be invoked orally during baptism.²⁶ Although the phrase may appear to contravene the trine Matthean confession, the apostles did not see it this way. The apostles who bore witness to the very words of Jesus, were “in a better position to understand the command in context than we are from this distance.”²⁷ Norris underscores the covenantal meaning of baptism. Confession of Jesus’ name and the reception of the Spirit throughout Acts, are fundamental components of initiation into covenant relationship with God. Further, the order and timing of the work of salvation, Norris claims, is not fixed. The Gentiles’ baptism into the Spirit prior to their being baptized in water (chap. 10) was a reversal of the order preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost. In addition, the Samaritan’s water baptism took place at a time separate from their baptism in the Spirit. Phillip first baptized the people in water, then after a moment of time, when news of this reached Jerusalem, Peter and John were sent to Samaria to pray for the people to receive the Spirit (8:12-17). Spirit baptism remains the necessary and expected dimension of this covenant dynamic.²⁸

Readings of Acts 2:38 by Oneness Pentecostals reveal several important points regarding the meaning and formula for baptism. First, Oneness adherents see water baptism as soteriologically essential. Though this is the case, on its own water baptism has no merit. It must be accompanied by repentance and Spirit baptism, thereby constituting the full, threefold salvation paradigm. Second, the *ordo salutis* is not fixed. It is not imperative that Spirit baptism follow water baptism or that these events occur at the same time; however, current scholarship

does point to the precedent of a prior repentance. Thirdly, the formula practiced in Acts implies Jesus' power and authority, and is to be invoked by mouth. The Oneness interpretation of 2:38 is rooted in an apostolic hermeneutic that recognizes the normativity of baptism in Jesus' name during the early church.²⁹ Further, the Acts pattern complements the trine confession in Matthew to baptize into the one divine name, underscoring the work of Jesus as Savior and Spirit-baptizer.

Trinitarian Perspectives

The Church of God (Cleveland) NT scholar French Arrington, maintains the baptismal pattern found in Acts is in fact the fulfillment of Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19. The Acts 2:38 phrase, "so that your sins may be forgiven," implies repentance and baptism follow forgiveness. According to French, use of the preposition "so that" (Gk., *eis*) indicates *result*, not *cause*—on account of being forgiven one ought to repent and pursue water baptism as the sign of a heart pledged in full obedience to the message of Christ.³⁰ The water itself does not have the power to purify from sin; however, water baptism is not a peripheral practice, but plays a central role in the proclamation of the gospel. He explains:

Water baptism is not to be regarded as an unnecessary external rite. Baptism accompanied the preaching of the gospel from the beginning of the church's mission in Acts and fulfills the Lord's missionary command (Matt. 28:18-20). It is an external sign, a public expression of the work of the Spirit in the heart, picturing in a visible way death with Christ and resurrection to a new life in him.³¹

Arrington insists that baptism is to be administered "in the name of Jesus Christ," proclaiming the authority of Jesus and affirming the *pleroma* of divine revelation in Him— "all that God reveals through his Son." The "gift of the Spirit" indeed is the baptism (the "outpouring" or "filling" of the Spirit) experienced subsequent to regeneration as the "free gift" of power to bear witness to Jesus Christ.³²

Harold Hunter, Director of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church Archives and Research Center, identifies the “gift of the Spirit” with Spirit baptism—the “charismatic work of the Spirit.”³³ Drawing from Acts 10:44-47, Hunter admits one can be baptized in the Spirit and experience the fullness of God’s work before being baptized in water. With regard to the subsequence of Spirit baptism, in light of Paul’s Damascus road experience (9:17-18), he admits the Acts narrative generally concedes a “time lapse” between the moment of conversion and Spirit baptism. Paul’s ministry in Ephesus also appears to support the principle of subsequence (19:1-6).³⁴ Yet, Hunter maintains the apostolic precedent entails some fluctuation in the *ordo salutis*, so that while there is evidence in Acts for the subsequence of Spirit baptism, he explains:

The most important contribution of Luke to this investigation is that he recounts cases where the charismatic work of the Spirit is separated from the initial salvific event. Acts 8:14-18, 9:17-19, extenuating circumstances notwithstanding, appear supportive of ecclesiastical subsequence formulas that intend to acknowledge the “pattern” in Acts is the absence of uniformity in sequence.”³⁵

As revealed in Acts 2, the first converts experienced repentance, water baptism, and Spirit baptism in one event or moment (vv. 1-4, and 38). While repentance often occurs alongside water baptism in this manner, Hunter is wary of making any “strict connection” between conversion and baptism in water.³⁶

The late Assemblies of God scholar Stanley Horton addresses the practice of baptism in Jesus’ name in his commentary on Acts. Horton suggests that the phrase “in the name” implies baptism into the authority—“the worship and service”—of Jesus. While the best response to the biblical witness is baptism into the trine name of Father, Son, and Spirit, the authority of Jesus confirmed in 2:38 stands in agreement with the very command of Jesus in Matthew 28:19.³⁷ Concerning the meaning of baptism, Horton emphasizes the purpose of water baptism as a declaration of a changed mind and heart—the answer or testimony of a good conscience cleansed

by the blood of Jesus (1 Pet. 3:21).³⁸ The *gift* of the Spirit, that is, the “promise” of the Father (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:39) imparted through Christ to the church, stands in contrast to the Spirit’s *gifts* (plural). Horton clarifies: “The gift of the Holy Spirit is, of course, the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It must be distinguished from the gifts of the Spirit which are given by the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is given by Jesus, the mighty Baptizer.”³⁹

The late AG historian and Pentecostal statesman William W. Menzies, broaches the significance of Acts 2:38 in his *Bible Doctrines*. Menzies argues the phrase “in the name of Jesus” literally means *upon* His name.⁴⁰ Believers are to be baptized (*baptizō*) on and according to His authority in line with the Matthean command.⁴¹ The emphasis on the authority of Jesus distinguishes the apostolic form of baptism from the baptism of John. Menzies admits the waters of baptism do not themselves bring about salvation, what saves is “what coming through the water represents: the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”⁴² Water baptism follows repentance and forgiveness as a pledge to live in the resurrection power of Jesus: “Baptism becomes not only a testimony but also the pledge that we will continue to live a new life in the power of the risen Christ.”⁴³ The “gift” of the Holy Spirit points to Spirit baptism—the experience of the fullness of the Spirit subsequent to the new birth, imparted to empower and produce “a more active love for Christ, for His Word and for the lost.”⁴⁴

The theologian Amos Yong, also from an AG background, in *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh* observes the connection between Christian initiation and Spirit baptism in light of Acts 2:38. The soteriological framework of initiation according to Yong is characterized by repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins. Spirit baptism occurs as the culminating experience of this pattern.⁴⁵ Yong insists baptism plays a greater role in regeneration and salvation than commonly admitted: “The claim regarding baptismal regeneration should be

rejected if understood to refer to the baptismal waters' magically washing away sins (1 Pet. 3:21), but can be accepted if understood pneumatically and mystically as an action of the Spirit (Titus 3:5) that includes the faith response of believers."⁴⁶

Yong maintains Oneness and Trinitarian Pentecostals are united in their experience of God acting for us as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Considering the total scope of the Pentecostal experience, Yong holds each side ought to make specific concessions. On the one hand, Trinitarians can admit to the singularity of the work of salvation—justification, regeneration, adoption, and sanctification, as being collectively rooted in God's gracious action in Christ on our behalf. On the other hand, Oneness followers can acknowledge a "trinitarian" experience of God in light of the threefold salvation pattern of repentance, water baptism, and Spirit baptism.⁴⁷ Finally, joined with Spirit baptism, water baptism as depicted in Acts is an "eschatological sacrament"; it must be identified with the outpouring of the Spirit which already has begun to usher in "the Lord's great and glorious day" (2:20).⁴⁸

Among the readings of Acts 2:38 surveyed in this section, a range of views are offered regarding the soteriological significance of water baptism: from it being nonessential to conversion (Horton and Hunter); to it being central to the gospel proclamation of salvation (Arrington); and in some sense even necessary (Yong). While distinction is made between water and Spirit baptism, recent scholarship highlights their relatedness.⁴⁹ The Trinitarians sampled in this section include Pentecostals from Wesleyan (Arrington and Hunter) and "Finished Work" (Horton, Menzies, and Yong) denominations. Despite this breadth of perspective, there is consensus concerning the meaning of water baptism as an outward sign and testimony of an inward state of repentance. There is also agreement that the "name" of Jesus in baptism is an

allusion to His authority (in accordance with Matt. 28:19), and consensus that the “gift” of the Spirit points to Spirit baptism as a blessing experienced subsequent to repentance/conversion.

Readings of Acts 2:38 in the Broader History of Christianity

The concerns that characterize the Oneness-Trinitarian Pentecostal debate have roots in a common theological heritage. Christian thinkers throughout the centuries have wrestled with issues resembling those pertaining to the present discussion. This section explores possible connections between the contemporary Pentecostal milieu and Christian voices from ages past.

The Cappadocian Father Basil of Caesarea (ca. 330-79) contends that baptism “in the name of Jesus” according to Acts is a valid practice. Basil affirms this form is consistent with baptism into the trine name. When the name of Jesus Christ is called upon it is representative of the entire Godhead, “The naming of Christ is the confession of the whole.” On the other hand, to invoke only the name of the Father or Spirit is insufficient. The name of Christ is inclusive and adequate on its own, referring at once to the Father “who gave,” the Son “who received,” and the Spirit “who is the unction.”⁵⁰

Ambrose of Milan (340–97) maintains that recognition of the Trinity in water baptism is important, however even more fundamental is apprehending the Trinity by faith—if faith is absent, the entire sacrament is void.⁵¹ Ambrose argues that use of the designation “Lord Jesus Christ” is suitable based on the unity of the name. In this phrase recognition of Father and Spirit are implicit (similar to the view held by Urshan). Additionally, the name “Christ” (*Christōs*) on its own implies the Father and Spirit: “If you say Christ, you have designated also God the Father by whom the Son was anointed, and Him Himself who was anointed, the Son, and the Holy Spirit with whom He was anointed.”⁵² The “gift” of the Spirit in Acts refers to the one divine grace poured out on all.⁵³ Elsewhere, Ambrose admits to the common Oneness interpretation of

“the name” recorded in Matthew 28:19, seen as a reference to the one name, “in which is one substance, one divinity, one majesty.”⁵⁴ Pope Nicholas of the ninth century follows Ambrose, insisting that baptism in the name of Christ is “one and the same thing” with the trine confession.⁵⁵

The same interpretive tradition is supported and elaborated by two leading theologians of the High Middle Ages. Peter Lombard (1096-1160) affirms the legitimacy of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, noting its harmony with the trine form. Both forms are valid, for in the naming of Christ “the whole Trinity is understood.”⁵⁶ Thomas Aquinas also affirms the use of baptism in Jesus’ name. He explains that certain conditions, however, must be in place. Baptism should be conferred in concert with the missionary command of Christ as rendered in Matthew 28. Further, the Trinity must be communicated either through words or *signs*. If verbal allusion is absent, a “sensible word” (sign) is adequate. The voice of the Father and appearance of the Holy Spirit as a dove at Christ’s baptism, for example, were both signs conveying the full presence of the Godhead. According to Aquinas, baptism in the name of Jesus is sufficient and consistent with the Matthean formula: “The whole Trinity is implied in the name of Christ, and therefore the form prescribed by Christ in the Gospel was observed in its integrity, at least implicitly.”⁵⁷

The Reformers Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) also admit to the power of baptism in Jesus’ name. In his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther defends the practice. Yet he explains the true power of baptism rests not primarily on the form used, or in the one baptizing, but in the faith of the recipient:

Baptism truly saves in whatever way it is administered, if only it is administered not in the name of man, but in the name of the Lord. Indeed, I have no doubt that if anyone receives baptism in the name of the Lord, even if the wicked minister should not give it in the name of the Lord, he would be truly baptized in the name of the Lord. For the power of baptism depends not so much on the faith or use of the one who confers it as on the faith or use of the one who receives it.⁵⁸

While Zwingli does not dismiss outright use of the trine form, he notes the apostolic precedent was baptism in the name of Jesus. The latter form acknowledges the foundation of our grace and entrance into new life: “So that ‘in the name’ means into the power, or on the power, capacity, foundation or grace of Jesus. The man who does that undertakes to live a new life.”⁵⁹

The non-conformist minister Matthew Henry (1662-1714) in his well-known *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, draws attention to the messianic meaning of Acts 2:38. Seen through this lens, the verse implies an “open solemn profession” to the grace and government of the promised Christ. He maintains the verse can be taken prescriptively as upholding a formula for baptism.⁶⁰ Henry underlines the soteriological significance of water baptism. No longer bound to the Law of Moses, but standing in a new dispensation through Christ’s grace, in baptism one is cleansed of sin and justified: “Be washed, and you shall be washed.” Henry does not specify whether this formula is to be preferred over the Matthean command; however, he does underscore the significance of the term *ōnōma*, referring to the singular “name” here as it does in Matthew 28.⁶¹

The Restorationist minister J. W. McGarvey (1829-1911) aligns Acts 2:38 with the conditions necessary to achieve salvation; specifically, repentance and water baptism. The proper way to perform baptism, he explains, is by immersion “in the name of Jesus.” This phrase refers to the outward form of baptism; that is, to the words recited during the practice thereby making explicit the “authority” into which one is immersed.⁶² Authority here moves beyond that of John’s baptism which rests on the Father, resolutely pointing to the significance of the Son, the Messiah who has inaugurated a new era in salvation history. The Christocentrism of McGarvey is also exemplified in the Holiness movement, identifiable in the work of A. B. Simpson (1843-1919) and the “altar theology” of Phoebe W. Palmer (1807-74).⁶³

In Palmer's *Faith and Its Effects*, a collection of fifty letters addressing various religious questions, she tells of a woman who came to her seeking the fullness of the Spirit. Palmer attaches immense power to confessing the name of Jesus—to bring oneself before Jesus and verbally profess His Lordship (Rom. 10: 9-10). She encouraged the woman to confess and in doing so open the door to the extraordinary baptism of the Holy Spirit. The woman finally said, “I have dared to reckon myself dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Palmer recounts what followed:

She had now joined confession to her faith. It was not enough that with her heart she had believed, because the order of God was not fully met until she had made confession with her mouth. Then she was filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Throughout body, soul, and spirit, she felt the holy fire of divine love penetrating, as it were, her entire being. So great was the weight of glory that rested upon her for several days and nights in succession, that her body could not have long borne up under it had not the Lord in measure staid His hand.⁶⁴

For Palmer, baptism in the Spirit is an inundating experience much like that resembled in the outward expression of water baptism.

Readings of Acts 2:38 in the wider history of Christianity point to evidence of the practice of baptism in Jesus' name throughout the church era. Jesus Name baptism has generally been regarded as a valid alternative to the trine formula. The majority of those cited in this section view baptism in Jesus' name as consistent with the trine formula and inclusive of the Father and Spirit. The interpretive tradition carried on by Ambrose, Lombard, and Aquinas emphasizes that when the expression “Lord Jesus Christ” (or simply “Christ”) is spoken, each the Father, Son, and Spirit are implied.

Conclusion

From this overview of the use and interpretation of Acts 2:38 by Oneness and Trinitarian Pentecostals, and other relevant readings drawn from the history of the church, the following

conclusions may be made. First, Oneness and Trinitarians generally agree that while water baptism is integral to the experience of faith and proclamation of the gospel, it does not in itself cause or bring about salvation (baptismal regeneration). Concerning the *ordo salutis*, while there is some disparity concerning the timing of Spirit baptism—some Trinitarians see it as following baptism in water—both tend to support the subsequence of the experience to repentance. Further, both Oneness and Trinitarians interpret the reception of the “gift of the Holy Spirit” as enriching the biblical portrait of baptism. Spirit baptism herein emerges as the pneumatological entry-point for dialogue, while the outpouring of the Spirit at the directive of Jesus, the Spirit-baptizer, preserves the Christological basis of the discussion.

Second, concerning the formula, both Oneness and Trinitarians point to the authority vested in the spoken “name” (*ōnōma*). Both agree Acts 2:38 is reconcilable with the Matthean account to baptize into the trine name. Oneness adherents see it as support for orally invoking the phrase “in the name of Jesus.” Readings of the text elsewhere in Christian history attest to the practice of baptism in Jesus’ name throughout the church era. Moreover, these readings indicate that the Jesus Name formula has generally been understood as a valid alternative to, and consistent with, the trine formula of the Great Commission.

This article does not suggest differences between Oneness and Trinitarian doctrines of baptism are insignificant or can simply be glossed over. The Oneness emphasis on the “oral” invocation of Jesus’ name, for example, in contrast to a variety of expressions among Trinitarians, is a disparity that warrants further consideration. Yet the profound degree of similarity cannot be ignored. Despite the charge of modalism, Oneness adherents underscore baptism into the name of Jesus as the fulfillment of a revelatory history that encompasses God acting as Father, Son, and Spirit. Notwithstanding the charge of tritheism, Trinitarians embrace

the essential unity of God.⁶⁵ Perhaps Trinitarians can find common ground with an Oneness perspective like that of Urshan, who when confronted with the one name of the “Lord Jesus Christ” acquired a true sense of the “Triunity” in Christ. Oneness and Trinitarians remain united in their emphasis on the significance of the Lucan account for an understanding of water baptism. Both traditions assent to the importance of water baptism for the fuller Christian life, and scholarship on both sides point to its significance from a soteriological perspective. Further, each tradition seeks to account for the relationship between water and Spirit baptism, and each sees the name of Jesus in baptism as indicative of His saving power and authority.⁶⁶ These areas of commonality put into perspective the problem of whether to privilege either the trine or Christological command. Drawing from a mutual embrace of the unity of Scripture, each tradition can continue exploring creative ways to integrate the accounts in an effort to avoid collapsing Acts 2:38 into Matthew 28:19, and vice versa.

The viability of baptism in Jesus’ name as an alternative formula throughout church history is further evidence that the issue of formula is one that can be overcome. The voice of Palmer resounds, bearing witness to the power of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether Oneness or Trinitarian, each are reminded of the significance attached to the words of our public worship, as we proclaim His name through the practices of the church, in the power of the Spirit, until He comes.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 41st annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Ecumenical Studies Interest Group, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA, March 2012.

² See the “Oneness-Trinitarian Pentecostal Final Report, 2002-2007,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 30, no. 2 (2008): 203, 208-13.

³ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations in English are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

⁴To date, the most significant historical treatment of Oneness Pentecostalism is by an Anglican raised in a Oneness church, David A. Reed, *“In Jesus’ Name”*: *The History and Beliefs of Oneness Pentecostals* (Dorset, UK: Deo, 2008); for a former Oneness perspective see Gregory A. Boyd, *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992); for an historical treatment by a Oneness Pentecostal see Daniel L. Butler, *Oneness Pentecostalism: A History of the Jesus Name Movement* (Bellflower, CA: International Pentecostal Church, 2004); for a pejorative treatment see Edward L. Dalcour, *A Definitive Look at Oneness Theology: Defending the Tri-Unity of God* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005); and Thomas A. Fudge, *Christianity without the Cross: A History of Salvation in Oneness Pentecostalism* (Parkland, FL: Universal, 2003).

⁵ Garfield T. Haywood, *The Birth of the Spirit in the Days of the Apostles*, in Dayton, *Seven “Jesus Only” Tracts*, 4-5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 39-40; for more on the impact of the Arroyo Seco prophecy on Haywood, see Talmadge L. French, *Early Interracial Oneness Pentecostalism: G. T. Haywood and the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (1901-1931)* (Eugene OR: Pickwick, 2014), 102-6.

⁷ A. B. D. Urshan, *The Life Story of Andrew Bar David Urshan: An Autobiography of the Author’s First Forty Years* (Portland, OR: Apostolic Book, 1967), 101.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 102; see also on the theology of the name, A. B. D. Urshan, “The Great Christian Commission and the Name of God in Jesus Christ,” chap. 4 of *The Almighty God in the Lord Jesus Christ*, in *Seven “Jesus Only” Tracts*, ed. Donald W. Dayton (New York: Garland, 1985), 46. Urshan refers to Jesus Christ as the one name of the “Three-One” God (42-44).

⁹ Urshan, *Life Story*, 102; the Greek term for “Christ” (lit., the “Anointed One”) and reference to the Spirit as “the anointing” (1 John 2:27), come from the same root word, *chriō*; see also Frank J. Ewart, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, in Dayton, *Seven “Jesus Only” Tracts*, 30-34.

¹⁰ Urshan, *Life Story*, 106-8; see Wolfgang Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010). In view of Haywood, Urshan, and others, Vondey argues Oneness doctrine does not exclude the “triadic aspect” of the Godhead, enabling acceptance of the structure of the Nicene Creed (91-92); and Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. I, part 1 of *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1960). Barth’s use of *seinsweise* (“modes of being”) to reconcile the mystery of tri-personhood is couched in language similar to the Oneness notion of divine “roles” (413-15).

¹¹ J. L. Hall, “Salvation,” in *Doctrines of the Bible*, ed. J. L. Hall and David K. Bernard (Hazelwood, MO: World Aflame, 1993), 193-94; “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4).

¹² Hall, “Salvation,” 194-95.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 195-96; see Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5, 22:16; Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 1:13; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:6-12; see also J. L. Hall, “United Pentecostal Church, International,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley Burgess, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 1161.

¹⁴ Hall, “Salvation,” 196.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁶ David K. Bernard, *The New Birth* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame, 1995), 23-24.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁸ David K. Bernard, *Understanding the Articles of Faith: An Examination of United Pentecostal Beliefs* (Hazelwood, MO: World Aflame, 1998), 15-16.

¹⁹ Bernard, *New Birth*, 96-97, 214.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 103-4.

²¹ David K. Bernard, *The Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ: Deification of Jesus in Early Christian Discourse* (Dorset, UK: Deo, 2016), 217-18; see also Bernard, *New Birth*, 163-67.

²² Bernard, *New Birth*, 172; unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the Greek NT are taken from Kurt Aland, Barbara Aland, and Universität Münster, Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung, *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; United Bible Societies, 1998); see also Bernard, *In the Name of Jesus* (Hazelwood MO: Word Aflame, 1992), 41-54; and Martin W. Mittelstadt, *Reading Luke-Acts in the Pentecostal Tradition* (Cleveland: CPT, 2010), 110-13.

²³ Talmadge L. French, *Our God is One: The Story of the Oneness Pentecostals* (Indianapolis, IN: Voice and Vision, 1999), 215-16; see also Kenneth L. Bass, “Baptism and the Canon: Can/Should We Still Harmonize the Baptismal Formulae in Matthew and Acts” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Cleveland, TN, March 2007).

²⁴ French, *Our God is One*, 217.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 224-25; Oneness Pentecostals view Acts 2:38 as the “gospel in miniature”—the foundation for the “latter Rain.” Reed, “*In Jesus’ Name*,” 188.

²⁶ David S. Norris, *I Am: A Oneness Pentecostal Theology* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame, 2009), Kindle edition, chap. 16, “The Baptismal Formula.”

²⁷ *Ibid.*, chap. 16, “Summary.”

²⁸ *Ibid.*, chap. 17, “Initiation into Covenant in Acts.”

²⁹ David Bernard, “The Future of Oneness Pentecostalism,” in *Spirit-Empowered Christianity in the 21st Century*, ed. Vinson Synan (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2011), 522.

³⁰ French L. Arrington, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 31.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

³² *Ibid.*, 32.

³³ Harold D. Hunter, *Spirit Baptism: A Pentecostal Alternative* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 88-89.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

³⁷ Stanley M. Horton, *The Book of Acts* (Springfield, MO: Gospel, 1981), 46.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Ibid., 46-47; see Stanley M. Horton, “Spirit Baptism: A Pentecostal Perspective,” in *Perspectives on Spirit Baptism: Five Views*, ed. Chad Owen Brand (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2004), 59-60, 82-83.

⁴⁰ William W. Menzies, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Logion, 1993), 55 n. 15.

⁴¹ Ibid., 115; see also William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). *Baptizō* indicates immersion (i.e., to “plunge” or “dip”). The 2:38 form *baptisthētō* is commonly used in the context of water baptism—the sacrament of baptism into Jesus’ death for, “renewing or establishing a relationship with God” (164). It is found only in Acts (e.g., 8:16; 10:48; 19:5); and Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 734.

⁴² Menzies, *Bible Doctrines*, 112.

⁴³ Ibid., 113.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 122; there are three ways Pentecostals explain full salvation: 1) An emphasis on faith through repentance; 2) the Oneness threefold salvation model; and 3) the Finished Work thesis of William Durham which stratifies full salvation across distinct experiences of regeneration and Spirit baptism. Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 134, 153-58, 195.

⁴⁵ Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of a Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 102.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 157.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 232-33; see also Amos Yong, “Oneness and the Trinity: The Theological and Ecumenical Implications of Creation *Ex Nihilo* for an Intra-Pentecostal Dispute,” in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1997), 103-5.

⁴⁸ Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 350; AG theologian Frank Macchia also underscores the sacramental meaning of baptism—the Spirit binds us to Christ through “universally valid means” by which Christ’s presence is experienced in the church. Understood this way, Spirit baptism is the divine promise of new life, signified and universally experienced by Christians through the practice of water baptism. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 72.

⁴⁹ On the inseparable relationship between water and Spirit baptism see Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, “Water Baptism and Spirit Baptism in Luke-Acts,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 38, no. 4 (2016): 476–501. Wilson, a Lutheran scholar, suggests that the one demands (“promises” and “drives”) the other. She supports a sacramental reading of water baptism and its role in the forgiveness of sins (i.e., salvation) (500-501); and Martien Parmentier, “Water Baptism and Spirit Baptism in the Church Fathers,” *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 3 (January 1998), <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj3/martin1.html> (accessed March 4, 2018).

⁵⁰ Basil of Caesarea, *De spiritu sancto* 12.28, in vol. VIII of *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd ser., ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 18.

⁵¹ Ambrose of Milan, *The Holy Spirit* 1.42.

⁵² Ambrose of Milan, *Holy Spirit* 1.43-44 (in vol. 44 of *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1963], 50). For Ambrose baptism is also valid when performed in the name of the Father or Spirit alone (1.44-45); see also E. N. Bell, “The ‘Acts’ on Baptism in Christ’s Name Only,” *Weekly Evangel* (June 12, 1915). Bell points to the thought of Ambrose as a mediating position between Oneness and Trinitarians (1).

⁵³ Ambrose of Milan, *Holy Spirit* 1.126.

⁵⁴ Ambrose of Milan, *The Sacraments* 2.22 (in Deferrari, 287).

⁵⁵ Nicholas I, *Epistolae et decreta*, c104, quoted in Peter Lombard, *The Sentences* IV dist. 3 c3 (trans. Giulio Silano [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2010], 4:5).

⁵⁶ Lombard, *The Sentences* IV dist. 3 c3 (Silano, 13).

⁵⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* IIIa, q. 66, a. 6 (trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province [Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 1981], 4:2380).

⁵⁸ Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, in *Three Treatises*, trans. A. T. W. Steinhauser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 185-86.

⁵⁹ Ulrich Zwingli, “Of Baptism,” in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (The Library of Christian Classics 24; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 169.

⁶⁰ *Acts to Revelation*, vol. 6 of *Mathew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.).

⁶¹ *Ibid*; see also Bernard, *New Birth*, 178.

⁶² J. W. McGarvey, *A Commentary on Acts of the Apostles*, rev. ed. (Lexington, KY: Transylvania Printing, 1872), <http://m.ccel.org/ccel/mcgarvey/acts.ch2.html>; for further discussion on the relationship between *form* and *authority* see Kulwant Singh Boora, *Baptism in the Name of Jesus (Acts 2:38) from Jerusalem to Great Britain* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2011).

⁶³ See Doug Hogsten, “The Monadic Formula of Water Baptism: A Quest for Primitivism via a Christocentric and Restorationist Impluse,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 17 (2008): 70-95. This Christocentrism was cross-denominational, seen in hymns, sermons, and personal letters (71); see also E. N. Bell, “The Sad New Issue: Over the Baptism Formula in the Name of Christ Only. Is the Issue Really New?” *The Weekly Evangel* (June 5, 1915), 1-3.

⁶⁴ Phoebe Worrall Palmer, “Faith and Its Effects,” in vol. IV of *Great Holiness Classics*, ed. Melvin Dieter (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1998), 137.

⁶⁵ David K. Bernard, Book Review of “*Jesus Only*” Churches, by E. Calvin Beisner, *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 4 (July 1998), <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj4/bernard.html> (accessed March 4, 2018).

⁶⁶ See Frank D. Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010). The Oneness position, explains Macchia, brings together the early Pentecostal emphasis on the sufficiency of Christ with an “awareness of the Spirit’s indwelling in all of life” (87); and Peter Althouse, “Towards a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: Participation in the Missional Life of the Triune God,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18, no. 2 (2009): 230–45. Althouse argues that Spirit baptism, like water baptism, looks back (in *mimesis*) on Christ’s death and resurrection, and forward “in anticipation of the eschatological transformation of all things”—so that salvation as well as creation and the eschaton are fused with Spirit baptism (245).