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More One on One with a Oneness - Part 1

by Tal Davis

We often get email responses from people in other faith groups who have read our articles about their beliefs. One such community that has engendered a lot of emotional responses is the Oneness Pentecostal movement. That group consists of a number of churches that advocate an unorthodox modalist theology. They contend that only one person is in the Godhead who manifests himself at different times as the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Ghost (Spirit). The largest of the Oneness organizations are the United Pentecostal Church and the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World. Some other Oneness groups call themselves "Apostolic Pentecostals" but their doctrines are all basically alike.

Those families of churches are sometimes called the "Jesus Only" movement because they believe Acts 2:38 requires baptism by immersion only "in the name of Jesus" for salvation. They also teach that salvation requires a person speak in tongues as proof of receiving the Holy Spirit and thus being saved.

(For more information on Oneness beliefs see: <http://www.marketfaith.org/the-hidden-cult-of-oneness-pentecostalism>)

Several years ago I engaged a Oneness believer in an ongoing dialog on Oneness Pentecostalism versus Trinitarianism. I called the debate "One on One with a Oneness" (see links below).

<http://www.marketfaith.org/one-on-one-with-a-oneness-part-1> <http://www.marketfaith.org/one-on-one-with-a-oneness-part-2>

<http://www.marketfaith.org/2013/09/one-on-one-with-a-oneness-part-3>

Recently I dialoged online with another Oneness reader who also challenged what we have written in our materials about his church's teachings. In this two part article we will present the full interchange between the Oneness man and me. I will call this series "More One on one with a Oneness." We have removed his name out of courtesy. The comments are presented as they were delivered without editing or corrections of spelling and grammar.

The Oneness advocate began the discussion with the following challenging comment on our MarketFaith website response page:

Oneness Advocate

You need to ask God for a revelation of who he really is. You sound confused and I feel sorry for you. Ask yourself this question If God came back today will I really go to heaven believing what I do? You are twisted in your thinking and you need to be saved because you take the word of God and try to make it to fit your perverted ideas. Now get a deep understanding of God before you open your mouth.

May you find the truth soon.

Tal

Thank you for your comment on our article on Oneness Pentecostalism. I (Tal) was the author of that piece. I realize that you disagree with my analysis as to the biblical accuracy of that faith, but what specifically in the article did I write about Oneness Pentecostalism that was factually wrong? If I have

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misrepresented that faith I will make what ever corrections necessary. However, I solidly stand behind my conclusions.

Oneness Advocate

Have you ever been apart of a true oneness Pentecostal church?

Tal

No. Why do you ask?

Oneness Advocate

Then how do you know what we believe?

Tal

I have read Oneness literature and talked to Oneness adherents. I have been studying the beliefs of religious movements for more than 40 years.

Oneness Advocate

And?

Tal

And...that is how I know what you believe.

Oneness Advocate

I don't care how much you say you've study (sic) you still don't know what you are talking about. Until you've had a true Holy Ghost experience you are as lost as lost can be. And as for calling us a cult you do err, because we are not bound we are free because we know the truth and the truth has set us free we are Gods (sic) chosen people. I hope to God that you realize how lost you are and hopefully you can see your errors.

Tal

What exactly do you mean by a "true Holy Ghost" experience? Do you mean speaking in tongues or is it something else? It really does not matter what you feel (i.e. experience) is true, but what the Bible says is true. I was saved and received the Holy Spirit when I ac-

cepted Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior (John 1:9; 3:16; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:9-10; Eph. 2:8,9). Below is a two part article I recently wrote on being filled with the Holy Spirit based on biblical teaching. I would appreciate your biblically based responses.

<http://www.marketfaith.org/four-questions-about-being-filled-with-the-holy-spirit-part-1>

<http://www.marketfaith.org/four-questions-about-being-filled-with-the-holy-spirit-part-2>

Oneness Advocate

Wow! You are way more ignorant of the truth than I thought. Its sad to see the error of your way. Just to read your articles shows me and others like myself how far off a person can go when they don't have the truth. You are deceived. You take the scriptures out of context. By the way why don't you say Holy Ghost? It sounds to me that all your years of study are for nothing. All you want to do is try to prove people wrong. Don't you think its time to grow up? I ask that you read the second book of Acts, and ask God for a true revelation of HIS plan of salvation. Repentance water baptism In JESUS NAME and the in filling Of the HOLY GHOST with the evidence of SPEAKING IN TONGUES!! ITS BIBLICAL AND YOU'LL NEVER PROVE ME WRONG. Because what you're telling me is that God doesn't know what he's talking about and you want to do what feels right to you! Wake up man you're in a very dangerous situation.

Tal

I'll try to address your issues one at a time. First, I am very careful not to take scriptures out of context. Can you give me a specific example of how I have done that?

Second, the reason I don't say "Holy Ghost" is that the Greek phrase "*ho hagios pneuma*" is better translated as "the Holy Spirit". The term "Holy Ghost", as in the King James Version,

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is archaic and is not used any modern English Bible translations, including the New King James Version.

Third, believe me, I have read and analyzed the second chapter of Acts thousands of times. I assume you are focusing on Acts 2:38 as your proof text for your position. In that case, it is you who is taking it out of context. That verse does not teach the necessity for water baptism for salvation. This is regardless of whose name you perform it in. Jesus commanded to baptize in the "name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" - Matt. 28:19. Acts 2:38 simply cannot be used to prove the need for water baptism for regeneration and salvation by whatever mode or formula used. (By the way, I have no real objection to baptizing "in the name of Jesus" as an alternative to the traditional Trinitarian formula if it is understood to have the proper symbolic meaning and does not endorse a nontrinitarian theology.)

In the Acts 2:38 passage, Luke, quoting Peter, in Greek, used two different verb tenses. The Greek text reads:

Metanohsate (Everyone of you [plural] repent) kai (and) *baptistheto ekastos humon* ([singular] each individual one of you be baptized) (in) to (the) *onomati* (name) *Ihsou Christou* (of Jesus Christ) *eis* (for) *afesin* ([the] remission) *ton* ([of] the) *hamartion* (sins) *humon* (of everyone of you [plural]).

This makes it clear that "remission of your (plural) sins" is the result of "you (plural) repenting," not of "each one (singular) being baptized." The command to repent is given in the plural number and second person; the command to be baptized is given in the singular number and third person: the sins remitted belong to "you" in the plural number and second person. It is therefore improper to refer

"remission of sins" to "baptism" as its cause, for this would mean that each individual was baptized for the remission of the sins of everyone present.

To take "baptism" here as causing the remission of sins would be to make the text say, "Let each individual be baptized for the remission of the sins of everyone of you," and "Let each individual (yet another) be baptized for the remission of the sins of everyone of you," and so on to each person in the group, so that each one would be baptized for the remission of the sins of all the people in this group.

But the grammar instead is quite clear. Remission is the result of repentance, not of baptism. All of you repent and the sins of all of you will be remitted.

Acts 2:38, therefore, does not teach the necessity of baptism for salvation. Acts 2:38 also does not teach the need to speak in tongues for salvation. It simply says that those who repent will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (i.e. be saved).

Granted, in some cases, as recorded in the book of Acts, when people were saved they did speak in tongues. These instances included the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4); Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-46); and the Ephesian followers of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-6).

However, in other instances in Acts, when people were saved there is no mention of speaking in tongues. These included when Peter and John investigated the work of Philip in Samaria (Acts 8:17); the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:36-39); and Lydia (Acts 16: 13-15). If speaking in tongues is a necessity for salvation then why is it not mentioned in these instances? In no place in Scripture, where the Gospel message is stated, is the

necessity for speaking in tongues ever part of it.

And finally, fourth, I do not base my beliefs on what "feels right" to me. Quite the contrary, my beliefs are based on a thorough-going analysis of the Bible's teachings using objective methods of biblical hermeneutics (translation and interpretation). It is you who is basing your beliefs on your personal feelings and experience, what you referred to a "true Holy Ghost experience" (whatever that means - you didn't explain it). Feelings can be manipulated and counterfeited, that is why we must look to Scripture, not experience, for our authority.

Oneness Advocate

Let me tell you something. I've experienced the plan of salvation it is real. God has filled me with the Holy Ghost. I repented of my sins and I was baptized in Jesus name. And guess what it was real just like in the book of Acts. Look Mr (sic) "scholar" let me share with you the gospel of Jesus Christ. Death, Burial and, resurrection. Death being repentance or dying out to your sins asking God to forgive you of those sins. Burial being baptism burying the old man in a watery grave because that's what you do with dead people you bury them. And resurrection being rising (sic) to walk in a newness of life. Did not Jesus himself give us that example? Don't we want to be like Jesus? Then how come you won't follow his examples? Is there not one way to be saved? When you believe on God doesn't something happen? How do you know if you're saved. If all you do is accept him as your personal saviour. What proof or what evidence do you have. Anybody can say that they believe in JESUS or say they accept him but do they really. I tell you when God filled me with his Spirit I knew it because I began to speak in other tongues (sic) as the spirit gave the utterance. That's the evidence I have that im (sic) full of the Holy Ghost. By the way where do you get the idea of a holy trinity? No where (sic) in the bible (sic) does it mention it in name or in principle. Hmmm it must be man made. Just because you're a "scholar" doesn't mean you have the truth.

Tal

So let me get this correct. You're saying that the proof of one's salvation is speaking in tongues? How does that concur with the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12: 28-31? Paul told the Corinthians that speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*) is just one of a number of spiritual gifts, none of which are manifested by everyone in the church. He asked them a series of

rhetorical questions that all require the implied answer of "no".

"28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? (NO) are all prophets? (NO) are all teachers? (NO) are all workers of miracles? (NO) 30 Have all the gifts of healing? (NO) do all speak with tongues? (NO) do all interpret? (NO) 31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." (KJV)

How can tongues be a proof of salvation if Paul says not everyone has that gift?

Also, are you saying that all of the hundreds millions of Christians who sincerely repented of their sins and put their faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, but lived before the twentieth century and the founding of Oneness Pentecostalism, were not saved? Are you saying that the hundreds of millions of Christians who trusted in Jesus as Savior and Lord but were not baptized by immersion "in the name of Jesus", but in "the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit", were not saved?

How do you square that with John 1:9 ("But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"), Ephesians 2:8,9 ("For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"), and Romans 10: 9,10 ("That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation")?

It seems to me you are trusting more in your baptism, baptismal formula, and tongues experience for your salvation than you are on the historical fact of Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. That's the Gospel in a nutshell.

Consider what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15: 1-8:

1 "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

Sir, I believe in those facts and trust completely in Jesus alone for my salvation. It is not dependent on what I feel or what I do (including baptism, tongues, or anything else). Jesus did it all for me. Thank God!

END OF PART 1- WE WILL CONTINUE THE DEBATE IN PART 2.

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