

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

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ONENESS THEOLOGY/MODULISM

It seems clear that at the beginning of the 21st century the doctrine that is most widely held concerning the nature of God is the doctrine of the Trinity. I believe however, that the doctrine of the Trinity is not Scriptural. That is to say, I do not believe that in spite of the fact that it is so widely held, the doctrine of the Trinity is what is taught in the Word of God. There are several papers on this web-site giving my views, beginning with [The Trinity: Is God Three Persons In One?](#). I will explain my view as succinctly as possible. I trust that the reader will not dismiss this view on the basis of this very short and therefore woefully inadequate explanation.

Just as Christ has one name, i.e. Jesus Christ, He has many titles including "Emmanuel", "Son of God", "Son of Man", "the good Shepherd", etc.. But all these titles are held by one Person. In other words, different titles do not mean different Persons. So too in the Old Testament God has one name, "Jehovah" (see Is. 42:8). So when we read, for example of "Jah", or "El" or "Elohim" those are titles or offices of Jehovah, not different Persons. To take this one step further, I am suggesting that "Father", "Son" and "Holy Spirit" are titles of Jehovah, not three different Persons.

Having stated my views on the Trinity I would like to share my views on the Oneness theology. My understanding of the Oneness doctrine comes from the book on the subject by David K. Bernard, J.D. . Let me quote from that book as it **seems** to suggest the same concept as expressed in my papers. In chapter 6 we read, *"...the one God can and does fill simultaneously the two roles of Father and Holy Spirit"*. So what I refer to as "titles" or "offices" Dr. Bernard calls here, "roles". The same concept is stated several times by Dr. Bernard and some of the statements expressing that concept are included in this paper.

I have shared my view so that the reader will know that I do not hold to the doctrine of the Trinity. But, although I do agree with much of the Oneness doctrine, I do not agree with a

few of its most basic points. The most basic tenant with which I disagree is that the term "God" is equivalent to the term "Father". That is to say, the oneness, which is the basis of the Oneness theology, is that the one God is the Father. There are two points that are used in conjunction with that basic tenant with which I also disagree. They are 1) that the Father is spirit, and 2) that Christ's deity comes from the indwelling of the Father Who is the Holy Ghost. This paper will discuss all these points.

IS THE FATHER SPIRIT?

That the Father is spirit is another widely held belief that is not based on Scripture. Let us consider Jn. 6:46 which reads, "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save He Which is of God, He hath seen the Father". Here we are told that no man has seen the Father, but that **Christ has seen Him**. What does that tell us in terms of whether the Father is spirit? Let us define the Greek word translated "spirit" in order that we may come to the correct answer to that question.

The Greek word translated "spirit" is "pneuma". The Hebrew equivalent of "pneuma" is "ruach". Dr. E. W. Bullinger defines "ruach" in the Companion Bible as, "The one root idea running through all the passages is invisible force.....Ruach, in whatever sense it is used, always represents **that which is invisible** except by its manifestation."

Let us consider Dr. Bernard's definition of "ruach". *"So, when the Bible says that God is a Spirit, it means that He **cannot be seen** or touched physically **by human beings**."* But, if "invisible" means "not able to be seen" then we must conclude that the Father is not spirit **because He was seen by Christ**. Or does the Hebrew word "ruach" mean, as suggested by Dr. Bernard, "not seen **by a human being man**"? Let us consider what makes spirit invisible.

Let me give an example of how "pneuma", i.e. "spirit", is used by the Holy Spirit. Let us consider the Greek word "pneuma" as it is used in Rom. 8:15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.....". The "spirit of bondage" is something that is felt, not seen, it is **unseeable**. And we read in Matt. 26:41, "...the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak". Here "pneuma" is used of a desire, in this case to stay awake with the Lord. Again, that spirit is not something that can be seen, it is **unseeable**. We read in I Cor. 6:17, "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit". What does that mean? It means that one who loves Christ is joined unto Christ to be one in spirit with Him. This spirit is that which binds the believer to Christ. It is not something that can be seen, it is **unseeable**.

The point is that "spirit" is not a visible entity, either by man or God. It simply does not fall into the category of being seeable.. "Pneuma" is invisible, and the Greek word "pneuma" and the Hebrew word "ruach" are **always used of something that is invisible**, because

“spirit” is not a seeable entity, just as feelings are not a seeable entity. That being the case, because the Father had been seen by Christ, we cannot say that “Father” is spirit.

There is another reason for my belief that “Father” is not spirit. We read in several passages, including Matt. 5:16, 5:48, 6:1 and 6:9 as well as other passages that the Father **is in** heaven. I believe the best known passage expressing that truth is “Our Father which is in heaven...” (Matt. 6:9). The fact that God is spirit is that which accounts for God’s omnipresence. That is to say, because God is spirit He is everywhere at once. But the Father, we are told any number of times, is **in** heaven. If He is in heaven, He is not everywhere at once, and therefore does not possess the attribute of omnipresence. While it is true that God as spirit is everywhere at once, including heaven, we cannot, in my opinion, argue that the Father is also everywhere else at once, because that would make the statement that the Father is in heaven not only superfluous, but also misleading.

But if the Father is not spirit, does He occupy a body? We are never told in the Word of God that the Father occupies a physical body, and neither are we ever told in Scripture that the Father is spirit. But all is clear if we see “Father” as one of the offices of God. That is to say, God manifests Himself through His many offices, one of those offices is “Father” which manifests God as a loving Parent.

Let me list the reasons for my belief that the Father is not spirit.

- 1) Christ has seen the Father. The contexts in which we find the word “spirit” will not allow an arbitrary change of the meaning of “spirit” from “invisible” to “invisible to man only”.
- 2) We are never told that the Father is invisible, only that no man had ever seen Him. Christ had seen Him, therefore, the Father was not invisible.
- 3) The Father is in heaven. But God as spirit is not confined to heaven, He is everywhere.

But some might argue that Jn. 4:24, which tells us that God is spirit, comes in the context that speaks of the Father, therefore it is the Father Who is spirit. Let us consider that passage.

Jn. 4:21-24, “Jesus saith unto her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth”.

In point of fact the argument that this passage tells us that it is the Father Who is spirit is not without merit, because the Father is mentioned three times in this passage. There would be then two options: 1) When Christ said that “God is spirit” He was saying that the term “God”

equals the term "Father" as the Oneness theology suggests, or 2) God is spirit and the godhead includes the role of Father (that "Father" is one of the roles of God is also suggested by Dr. Bernard).

Given that I can find no evidence apart from the context of Jn. 4:24 to suggest that the Father is spirit, and because there are two reasons for my belief that the Father is not spirit, I conclude that the second option (God is spirit and the godhead includes the role of "Father") is the correct one. But if Christ said that God is spirit, why would He speak of the Father in the same context? I hesitate to give a reason for the Holy Spirit's use of a particular term in a particular passage, but for the sake of thoroughness, let us consider one possible explanation of why "Father" is used in the context about God being spirit.

We have in Jn. 20:30-31 the God inspired reason that John included the signs he did in his Gospel, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; and that believing ye might have life through His name". My point is that John's Gospel presents Christ as the Son of God so that believing that, one might be saved. In other words, Christ's relationship with God as Son to Father takes on an added importance in John's gospel.

It is interesting to note that the term "Father" when used of God is used a total of 68 times in the three Synoptic Gospels together, but in John's Gospel it is used 121 times. And the term "My Father" as used by Christ is used a total of 18 times in the three Synoptic Gospels together, but 35 times in John's Gospel.

My point is that while the context of the passage that tells us that God is spirit does use the term "Father" three times, the use of that term could be for other reasons than to say that God in His role of "Father" is spirit. It could be that because John's Gospel presents Christ as the Son of God, that the office of "Father" plays a very important part in John's presentation of Christ as His Son

IS THE TERM "FATHER" EQUAL TO THE TERM "GOD"?

In chapter 6 of Dr. Bernard's book on Oneness under the heading "The Father is the Holy Ghost" we read, "The Holy Spirit is none other than Jehovah God and none other than the Father". In other words, Dr. Bernard equates the term "Jehovah God" with the term "Father". Let us consider that suggestion.

God has one Name in the sense of telling us Who He is, and that Name is "Jehovah". Isaiah 42:8 reads, "I am Jehovah, that is My Name...". Please note this verse begins, "I am Jehovah". This verse tells us much more than what God is called, which is the usual reason for a name. It is important to understand that "name" is sometimes used as a figure of speech Metonymy

of Adjunct, which is defined by E. W. Bullinger in the Companion Bible as, "When something pertaining to the subject is put for the subject itself". In this verse the phrase "My Name" is used as that which pertains to Jehovah, Who is the subject.

Figures of speech are used to enhance a truth. What truth is being enhanced by the use of the figure of speech in Is. 42:8? In my opinion, it is used to enhance the truth of Who God is. A definition of "Jehovah" might be helpful in making this point. Dr. Bullinger gives the following definition of the word "Jehovah" . "Jehovah means the Eternal, the Immutable One, He Who Was and IS and IS TO COME". So when we read "I am Jehovah, that is My Name" we are reading that I AM is "the Eternal, the Immutable One, He Who Was and IS and IS TO COME", that is Who I am".

Exodus 6:3 is also helpful in establishing how "My Name" is used as a figure of speech to enhance the truth of Who God is. That verse reads, "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by My Name, Jehovah, I did not make Myself known to them". In other words, God had appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but not as "the Eternal, Immutable One", but as "God Almighty". But when God appeared to Moses, He made Himself known as Who He is, His very essence, i.e. Eternal.

"Eternal" means that there was never a time when God did not exist. He existed as spirit (see Jn. 4:24) before the world was created. That is to say, when we read in Gen. 1:1, "**In the beginning** God created the heavens and the earth", we must understand that God existed as spirit before the beginning of creation and therefore before the beginning of time. Now the question is: Is there Scriptural evidence to substantiate the suggestion that the office of "Father" is eternal, i.e. that the office existed before time? God is the Father of Jesus Christ, He is the Father of man in the sense that man is God's creation. He is the Father of Israel, and He is the Father of believers. But God did not fulfill the office of "Father" before Israel or man was created, nor did He fulfill the office of Father of Christ before Christ was born to Mary. Can we say that the office or "role" of Father existed before creation? I can see that Jehovah, i.e. I AM, existed before creation as spirit, but "Father" implies a certain relationship. But there was no one before creation with whom God could be in a relationship to as Father.

Because the relationship of "Father" did not exist before creation and is therefore not used in the sense of God's eternal nature, we must, in my opinion, conclude that the term "Father" does not equal the term "God".

Let us consider one other statement from Dr. Bernard's book on Oneness which will, I believe, show that the logic of the Oneness theology on this point does not stand up to closer consideration. The Oneness theology suggests that the Father is the Holy Spirit (or "Ghost", it is the same word in the Greek). I will quote from Dr. Bernard's book, chapter 6. *"The one God is Father of all, is holy, and is a Spirit. Therefore, the titles Father and Holy Spirit describe the same being. To put it another way, the one God can and does fill*

simultaneously the two roles of Father and Holy Spirit". This is indeed a very interesting comment. To begin, note that Dr. Bernard does refer to the terms "Father" and "Holy Spirit" as "titles" and "roles". And of course, both titles/roles are fulfilled by God Who is one. And with that comment I agree.

However, I believe there is a problem with the logic in Dr. Bernard's thinking as expressed in the statement quoted above. That is to say, he wrote that "Father" and "Holy Spirit" are "roles" (with which I agree) and that these "roles" reveal God (with which I also agree). And he also wrote that "Father and Holy Spirit describe the same being" (another statement with which I agree). But if, as he suggests, the Father is God, it **seems illogical to say that "Father" is a "role"**. That is to say, the "role" of "Father" reveals only part of Who God is. Because "Father" reveals only part of Who God is, it is illogical to say that the Father is God. It is illogical because one of His roles cannot reveal all of Who God is. If one role revealed all Who God is then He would need no other role, but we know that God has many roles. In other words, because "Father" is a role, the term "Father" cannot equal the term "God".

IS THE FATHER THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Let me quote again part of the statement from chapter 6 that reads, *"the titles Father and Holy Spirit describe the same being"*. At the very heart of the problem with the suggestion that the Father is the Holy Spirit is the fact that the Holy Spirit is, of course, spirit. But as proved above, Scripture does not support the suggestion that the Father is spirit.

Dr. Bernard lists many examples of things that were done by the Holy Spirit that are also said to have been done by the Father. He concludes from that the Holy Spirit is the Father, i.e. one Being. But in my opinion, the reason the same acts are attributed to God in His title (or "role") of "Father" and His title of "Holy Spirit" is because one particular role is the subject of the context in which the term is used. Let me give an example in order to make that point more clear.

1) In Chapter 6 Dr. Bernard wrote, *"John 3:16 says that God is the Father of Jesus Christ and Jesus referred to the Father as His own Father many times (Jn. 5:17-18). Yet Matthew 1:18-20 and Luke 1:35 plainly reveal that the Holy Ghost is the Father of Jesus Christ. According to these verses of Scripture, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost and was born the Son of God as a result.*

The one who causes conception to take place is the father. since all the verses of Scripture in reference to the conception or begetting of the Son of God speak of the Holy Ghost as the agent of conception, it is evident that the father of the human body is the Spirit: it is only reasonable to conclude that the Holy Ghost is the Father of Jesus Christ, the Son of God".

As mentioned above, I believe that each of the titles used of Jehovah represents an office which manifests Who He is. That is to say, because Jehovah is spirit we would know nothing of Him except that which He chooses to reveal about Himself. He has revealed Himself in His many offices. For example, we read in Gen. 1:1 that "In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth". In several other Scriptures we read that the creator was Jehovah. We know from these two points that Jehovah revealed Himself in creation through His office of Elohim, Who is the Creator.

I agree with the statement, *"The one who causes conception to take place is the father"*. And, it is abundantly clear that God in His title/role of Father is the Father of Jesus Christ. God, in His role of Holy Spirit does the work of God (please see the [paper on spirit](#)), but God in His role of Father reveals Himself in the loving role of a Father, not only to Christ but also to believers. So in John's Gospel which speaks of Christ's Father in the office of "Father" the emphasis is on God's Paternal relationship to His Son. (May I remind the reader that because John's Gospel includes the signs that present Christ as the Son of God, it is perfectly consistent with that theme that Christ referred to God in His role as "Father" as His own Father.) But in those passages which speak of the office of "Holy Spirit" as Christ's Father, the emphasis is on the fact that Christ is God, rather than Christ's relationship to God as His Son.

In other words, those passages that emphasize God's role as a loving Parent of Christ, tell us that God in His office/role as "Father" is Christ's Father. But those passages that emphasize that Christ is God, the role of Holy Spirit is emphasized because it was the Holy Spirit's work in and through Mary that accounts for the fact that Christ is God.

I would like to offer the Scriptural evidence that it is Christ who fulfills the office (or role) as Holy Spirit.

As we consider Acts 5:3 and 9 along with II Cor. 3:14-18 we will see that, as is true of all the offices of Jehovah, **Jesus Christ fulfills the office of Holy Spirit**. Acts 5:3 reads, "Peter said to Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the **Holy Ghost**... ." But Acts 5:9 records Peter's comment to Sapphira, the wife of Ananias, and reads, "How is it that you have agreed together to tempt **the Spirit of the Lord**?" Note that Peter used the term "Holy Ghost" in his rebuke of Ananias but in verse 3, he used the term "Spirit of the Lord" in his rebuke to Sapphira for the same offence.

Does this passage in Acts 5 allow us to equate the term "Holy Ghost" (or "Spirit") with the term "the Spirit of the Lord"? I believe it does. Let us examine that thought. Ananias committed the same offence as did his wife Sapphira, i.e. they both lied about what they received in selling a certain possession. (see verses 2 and 8). So both Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit. Because they both lied, they both tempted the Spirit of the Lord. That is to say, one did not lie and the other tempt, they both lied to the Holy Spirit, therefore they both tempted Him. Further, because one did not sin against a different Person than did the

other, I believe we may conclude that the term “Holy Ghost” (or Spirit) is the same Person as the Spirit of the Lord. Now let us compare this with II Cor. 3:14-18.

II Cor. 3:14-18 reads, “But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; **which vail is done away in Christ.** But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it (the heart of Israel) shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now **the Lord is that Spirit (add the ellipsis “that taketh away the vail”)** and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But ye all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Let us, for the sake of clarity, consider a few key phrases. We read in verse 14, “which vail is done away **in Christ**”. And in verse 17, “Now the Lord is that **Spirit** (add the ellipsis “that taketh away the vail”). One verse tells us that it is Christ that takes away the vail and another verse tells us it is the Spirit that takes it away. There is, of course, no contradiction here. By combining the thought that the vail is done away in Christ, with the thought that it is the Spirit that takes away the vail, we learn that we may think of the Spirit, **as Christ Himself.** I believe that because the vail in question is not a literal vail (it is the vail that covers the heart or the spirit of Israel) That which takes away the vail is Spirit.

Going on, let us consider verse 17, “and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”. What is the “liberty” spoken of in this verse? That question must, of course, be answered from the context. Because the context has to do with taking away the blindness of Israel in understanding the Old Testament, the liberty, in my opinion, is the **correct understanding** of the Old Testament that comes when Christ takes away the vail that was causing the blindness. My point is that the “liberty” comes as a result of the taking away of the vail. And since we are told that Christ has done away with the vail, and that the “Spirit of the Lord” gives the liberty, we may conclude that the Spirit of the Lord is Christ’s Spirit.

We are now ready to consider the suggestion that Christ fulfills the office of the Holy Spirit. We have learned from II Cor. 3:14-18 that the term “Spirit of the Lord” is Christ’s Spirit and that we may think of Christ’s Spirit as Christ. And we learned in Acts 5 that the term “Spirit of the Lord” is equated with the term “Holy Ghost” (or “Spirit”). That means that Christ’s Spirit **is** the Holy Spirit and that Christ’s Spirit may be thought of as Christ. Therefore, we may conclude that Jesus Christ fulfills the office of Holy Spirit.

But some might object that because Christ is in a body, He cannot fulfill the office of Holy Spirit, Who, of course is spirit. But let us consider the Holy Spirit. Matt. 3:16 records the “Spirit of God descending like a dove”. In other words, the Holy Spirit took on the **form** of a dove so that He could be seen. But His **basic nature** is one of spirit. So too, because Jesus Christ is Jehovah, Who is spirit, **His basic nature is spirit**, even though He has taken on a bodily form.

In short, Christ's Spirit is the Holy Spirit. i.e. Christ fulfills the office of Holy Spirit.

DOES CHRIST'S DEITY COME FROM THE INDWELLING OF THE FATHER/HOLY SPIRIT?

I will quote from Dr. Bernard's book. In chapter 6 we read, *"The deity resident in Jesus Christ is none other than the Father"*.

I would like to approach this subject by a consideration of one of the titles of Christ, i.e. "Son of Man". Christ is often referred to as "the Son of Man" because while it is true that Christ is fully God, He was, while on earth, also fully Man. What made Him Man? What made Christ Man was the fact that He was born of Mary who was, of course, from the seed of Adam, the first man. The next question is: what makes Christ fully God? I believe logic tells us that Christ is God because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, i.e. one of the offices (or "roles") of God. So just as He was Man because He was conceived of Mary, who was of Adam, He is God because He was conceived of God. Two "seeds" were responsible for Christ's birth; one was the seed of man which made Him the Son of Man, and the second was the figurative "seed" of God in His office of Holy Spirit, which made Him the Son of God.

Christ's deity, like His manhood is His very nature. Just as His nature was that of Man (yet sinless) so too His very nature is that of God. To be sure, a believer is made a son of God by the spirit of God dwelling in him. But Christ is the only begotten Son (Jn. 3:16). Christ needed no "resident" deity to make Him God. Christ is and always has been and always will be, God. That is Who He is, that is His very nature.

But let us continue with a consideration of Dr. Bernard's comment on the subject of Christ's deity. In chapter 4 we read, *"If there is only one God and that God is the Father (Malachi 2:10), and if Jesus is God, then it logically follows that Jesus is the Father. For those who somehow think that Jesus can be God and still not be the Father, we will offer additional biblical proof that Jesus is the Father. This will serve as more evidence that Jesus is God. Actually two verses of Scripture are sufficient to prove this point"*.

1. Isaiah 9:6 calls the Son the everlasting Father. Jesus is the Son prophesied about and there is only one Father (Malachi 2:10; Ephesians 4:6), so Jesus must be God the Father.

2. Colossians 2:9 proclaims that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus. The Godhead includes the role of Father, so the Father must dwell in Jesus.

There are two phrases of Dr. Bernard's that should be noted. 1) "If there is only one God and that God is the Father" and 2) The Godhead **includes the role of Father**". As has been shown in the sections above, the term "Father" does not equal the term "God". "Father" is one of the offices or "roles" of God. In fact that is what the second quote says, "the Godhead **includes** the role of Father".

So how are we to understand the two Scriptures quoted above? I believe it is crucial to our understanding that God's name is "Jehovah", i.e. the Everlasting One. In the paper on this web-site is a paper that proves from Scripture that [Jesus Christ is Jehovah](#), Who is spirit and He fulfills all the manifestations or offices (or roles) of Jehovah. We read, for example in Is. 9:6 of "the everlasting Father" as one of the titles of the "Son that is given". In other words, because Christ is the manifestation of **all** Jehovah's offices, and one of those offices is "Father" that would make one of the titles of Christ, Who is Jehovah, "Father". In point of fact, Dr. Bernard's statement on Col. 2:9 says exactly that. Let us review that statement.

"Colossians 2:9 proclaims that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus". I agree 100%. Again, Christ fulfills **all** the offices (or "roles") of God/Jehovah, i.e. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). And in Chapter 3 of his book Dr. Bernard wrote, *"Through the name Jesus, therefore, God reveals Himself fully".* I agree, but unfortunately he went on to speak of God as Father Let us also consider this quote, from chapter 3, *"Why is the name of Jesus the full revelation of God? Simply because Jesus is Jehovah and in Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, including the role of Father (Colossians 2:9)".*

CONCLUSION

As stated several times in this paper, I agree with much of what Dr. Bernard has written in his book on the Oneness of God. But there are Scriptural and logical difficulties with this view. 1) God is spirit, the Father is not spirit. 2) The terms "God" and "Father" are not equivalent. 3) Christ's very nature is that of Man and God, He needs nothing residing in Him to make Him God any more than He needs something residing in Him to make Him Man.

This paper was written by Joyce Pollard. If you would like to respond please e-mail me at: janjoyce@aol.com

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