

Dividing the Indivisible

By Jeremy Lucas

Reasonably speaking, the idea of dividing something that is indivisible caught your attention for a variety of reasons. Most of our readers are fluent in the theology of "right division" and as such, the concept of anything being indivisible goes against the grain of our common understanding. For those readers who tend to challenge the message of "right division" on the basis that there is only one gospel throughout Scripture, you might also be inclined to focus ever so slightly on the off chance that something is said to capture your countering viewpoint.

When most of us speak of rightly dividing, we refer quickly to II Timothy 2:15 for the following instruction:

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." II Timothy 2:15

Preferably, I'd like us to zoom in toward the last six English words and note that there are only three Greek words.

Orthotomeo, which means "rightly dividing."

Logos, which means "the word."

Aletheia, which means "of truth."

The most tremendous affirmation of God's Word that could afford us an absolute assurance that it was written from a much larger pen than our own humanity is God's use of consistent patterns and numbers of significance.

For a brief and detouring point of reference, let's take a look at some of E.W. Bullinger's remarks concerning Number in Scripture.

"In all languages, it [one] is the symbol of unity... Unity being indivisible, and not made up of other numbers, is therefore independent of all others, and is the source of all others."

Essentially, the mathematical idea is that no existing number can exist without "one" as its origin of source. How would you express the following equations?

$$500 \times 1 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$400 \times 1 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$3 \times 1 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

For each, you would determine 500, 400, and 3 to be the answers, correct? For in each problem, the "1" only unites the original number to itself. How would you express the following equations?

$$500 / 1 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$400 / 1 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$3 / 1 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

For each, you would still determine 500, 400, and 3 to be the answers, correct? For in dividing "1" from each number, the original number still remains. That's the beauty and significance of "one."

One also marks, as Bullinger later writes, "the beginning" and "the first" of any particular thing. "There cannot be two firsts." Yet, the most interesting factor of a first is that it only becomes divisible when it is no longer alone. For instance, when 1 is all by itself, it cannot be divided. But when 1 becomes 2, it can be divided into 1 and 1.

"Two affirms that there is a difference--there is another; while One affirms that there is not another! This difference may be for good or for evil. A thing may differ from good and be evil...It is the first number by which we can divide another, and therefore in all its uses we may trace this fundamental idea of division or difference."

There is no division from one, but there is division from two. That's the basic theme we're going to come back to in later reading.

"In this number [three] we have quite a new set of phenomena. We come to the first geometrical figure. Two straight lines cannot possibly enclose any space, or form a plane figure; neither can two plane surfaces form a solid. Three lines are necessary to form a plane figure; and three dimensions of length, breadth, and height are necessary to form a solid. Hence, three is the symbol of the cube... Three, therefore, stands for that which is solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire.

There are three great divisions completing time -- past, present, and future.

Three persons, in grammar, express and include all the relationships of mankind.

When we turn to the Scriptures, this completion becomes Divine [as] three denotes divine perfection."

Closure. Completeness. This is the essence of three.

Now, bearing all this in mind, let's return to our observation of "Orthotomeo Logos Aletheia."

When a word is used multiple times, it no longer denotes the essence of singleness or oneness. For upon appearing more than once in Scripture, it immediately becomes capable of division. Hence, when we encounter the term "theopneustos" in II Timothy 3:16, we see that the idea of "God's inspiration" as being the single cause of the written Word. You will not come across theopneustos anywhere else in Scripture as its point of significance resides in being written once. Likewise, when we approach II Timothy 2:15 and see Orthotomeo, we would be remiss to find it anywhere else.

This is often an accusation made by those counter to dispensationalism or rightly dividing. Quite easy it is to use this as a punch line of proof regarding the likelihood that it means very little. For if it were to be of consequence, would not God, in His inspiration, have thought to convey it again elsewhere? Surely not. Note that we speak of God's inspiration of the Scriptures as one of the most valued truths to exist in our faith, yet it was only used once. Why?

One is deemed a prime number because, as already mentioned, any number multiplied or divided by it never changes. What would happen if you took the inspiration of God (theopneustos) and wrote it twice? Could it not then be divided from itself? How about three times or four? Same thing. The vitality of a thing written once is that it is much more powerful than a thing written twice. That's the essence of spiritual unity. The Body of Christ is to be united, though we are many. How can that be if indeed there ARE many? Because we are not united of ourselves, we are united in the One... the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is One.

"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments [is], Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:" Mark 12:29

Thus, when we arrive at a much more controversial term, "rightly dividing" or "Orthotomeo," we're equally at the same juncture in our thinking. How can a thing mentioned once therefore become divided? How can "right division" itself exist if its usage is indivisible? Being just one, we must return to the origin of our acceptable comprehension.

"In all languages, it [one] is the symbol of unity... Unity being indivisible, and not made up of other numbers, is therefore independent of all others, and is the source of all others."

Orthotomeo is unique in that it is the "source" of something greater than itself. What is that source?

Orthotomeo Logos Aletheia

A three-word phrase used over and over in our churches and our doctrinal presentations, but consider what may reside just beneath the eyes of our initial perceptions. Orthotomeo, being one, leads into Logos, which is also just one.

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, [even] in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Galatians 5:14

One word. That thou shalt love. Why ought love be the fulfillment of this one word?

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." I John 4:16

Because God is Love. And Love is the One Word. And the One Word is just that... One. It cannot be divided for it is both the prime and source of everything else Divine.

Orthotomeo Logos Aletheia

Aletheia follows Logos, but introduces a very profoundly different concept. Just moments after II Timothy 2:15, Paul writes:

"And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." II Timothy 2:17-18

The truth is indeed always the truth, but it can be "erred" and falsely represented so as to "overthrow the faith of some." As such, truth is divisible because, while the Logos is One, the Logos Aletheia is no longer just one... it is now two.

Alone, Logos is used 330 times in the New Testament. Alone, Aletheia is used 110 times in the New Testament. Together, Logos Aletheia is used 4 times in the New Testament.

Combined, the single and combined usage of these two words equals 444. An emphasized message of perhaps nothing at all. Or possibly, it returns our attention to the very thing that is most important. 444 is divisible by 3, the "number of divine perfection."

Single usage is as follows:

Alone, Orthotomeo is used 1 time in the New Testament. Alone, Logos is used 330 times in the New Testament. Alone, Aletheia is used 110 times in the New Testament.

Combined, the total times that these three words are used is 441. 441 is divisible by 3, the "number of divine perfection."

Perhaps you say to yourself, "Well, that's neat, but not really all that significant." Take a look at the central word, Logos. Used 330 times, what does it become when divided by 3?

330 divided by 3 (the number of divine perfection) becomes 110.

It becomes Aletheia (110)... The Truth.

Herein lies our most provocative point of reference. Orthotomeo cannot be divided because it is only one. Logos, while used 330 times, not only CAN be divided, but MUST be divided, to achieve Aletheia... the truth. Undivided, Logos (330) and Aletheia (110) combined cannot be divided by "divine perfection." Sure, they can be divided, but not Divinely.

440 divided by 3 is not a perfect number. Only when Logos (330) is divided by 3 does it become perfect. Only then does it become Aletheia... Truth.

Is this not how we comprehend Right Division on the surface? When the Word is properly divided, it becomes more and more true in our understanding of the greater whole. Interesting it is to consider that we who use this principle do so from our humanity and as a result, do not divide by 3 (the number of divine perfection), but by 2 (the number of initial division).

Why do we divide by two and not three?

Because in an effort to derive truth from the Word, we separate the two gospel messages made clear within the New Testament Scriptures. What course do we have to divide Logos Aletheia (The Word of Truth) by three? None that we can see in our scope and our view. We divide by two because that is the only dimension we're granted under heaven. We see division and we look for two.

Logos Aletheia, when built to its ultimate usage as we saw before, is 444.

444 is clearly divisible by two, but what's fascinating is that each of its split portions are divisible by 3 (222 / 3). Thus indicating that the two-fold division of the Logos Aletheia still leads to equivalent division by the number of divine perfection. From our angle of perspective, we cannot make the three-fold division because it appears illogical.

"If I'm going to divide the Word of Truth, there must then be two things with which to separate."

True indeed. But such is the two-dimensional cartoon's perception of a three-dimensional world... Seemingly impossible.

When we speak of Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth, it becomes our conscious state to simply split the Word of Truth in half. I would challenge you, however, to perceive that "splitting" the Word of Truth, while still holding divisible value, is not necessarily the only manner to which one can consider.

"But in all [things] approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and [yet] true; By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and [yet] true; As unknown, and [yet] well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and [yet] possessing all things." II Corinthians 6:6-10

In All Things

In Much Patience

In Afflictions

In Necessities

In Distresses

In Stripes

In Imprisonments

In Tumults

In Labors

In Watchings

In Fastings

By pureness

By Knowledge

By Longsuffering

By Kindness

By the Holy Ghost

By Love Unfeigned

By the Word of Truth

By the Power of God

By the Armor of Righteousness

By Honor

By Dishonor

By Evil Report

By Good Report

As unknown, yet known

As dying, yet living

As chastened, yet not killed

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing

As poor, yet making many rich

As having nothing, and [yet] possessing all things

The first list involves physical things which give witness and approval of Paul as a minister of God. The total count in this list is 11.

The second presents spiritual things which give witness and approval of Paul as a minister of God. The total count in this list is 13.

The third list gives the personal things which give witness and approval of Paul as a minister of God. The total count in this list is 6.

Together, their total count as a tally is 30. A number divisible by divine perfection.

What's more relevant to our study of Right Division is where the Word of Truth, the Logos Aletheia, stands in the company of the 13.

Count down from the top and count up from the bottom in that list. Separated by 6 and 6, The Word of Truth is at the center of spiritual confirmation.

"In whom ye also [trusted], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," Ephesians 1:13

Here we see the Logos Aletheia defined as the "gospel of your salvation." Gospel, or euaggelion, is used 77 times in the New Testament. Salvation, or soteria, is used 45 times in the New Testament. Used together in the same statement, the term "Gospel of your Salvation" only appears 1 time. Using a similar approach as we did with Logos Aletheia, $77 + 45 + 1 = 123$, which is divisible by 3, the number of divine perfection.

Consider, however, that the gospel of your salvation (123) is not divisible by 2. Significant? Actually, yes. The gospel of your salvation CANNOT be divided by human standards because it is a divine gospel. The Word of Truth, however, is the venue by which you are presented with the divine gospel message. It can indeed be divided.

How valuable is the gospel of your salvation? It ought to be the most valuable thing that you possess beyond the salvation itself. But it is the Word of Truth, the Logos Aletheia, that must be divided in order to derive at such a gospel. Remember that when we viewed the Orthotomeo Logos Aletheia, we came to 444 usages. It could not be divided divinely, but it could be divided in half. And when those halves (222) became separate, they were individually divisible by 3 and as such, were uniquely divine.

Many in our grace movement have looked across the Scriptures to the hand of the "other gospel" which we divide from and often deemed "our gospel" as a superior one to the other. I implore you to consider their equivalent value. That while one is our present application, our present life, and our present dispensation, the other is of an equally divine nature.

How do you divide the indivisible? You factor in those things which are divisible and do the math.

"Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth."

"Orthotomeo Logos Aletheia"

Three words that make up a complete and perfect statement. At the center of this divine perfection is the Word.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1

May this extreme and often imperfect presentation simply serve as a reminder that when you "rightly divide the word of truth," you are serving a cause much greater than yourself. You are serving the Indivisible Word.