

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION  
*A COVENANT WITNESS STUDY*

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A COVENANT RESPONSE TO THE THEOLOGY OF  
**DAVID K. BERNARD AND THE**  
**UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH INTERNATIONAL**

*Honoring What Is True — Correcting What Is Incomplete*

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## I. INTRODUCTION: A RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT

David K. Bernard is perhaps the most prolific and theologically rigorous voice within Oneness Pentecostalism. As General Superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church International — a body of over six million members worldwide — and as Chancellor of Urshan Graduate School of Theology, his works represent the official doctrinal standard of an entire global movement. His catalog spans more than twenty volumes: *The Oneness of God*, *The New Birth*, *In Search of Holiness*, *A History of Christian Doctrine* (three volumes), *Practical Holiness*, *God's Infallible Word*, *Spiritual Gifts*, *In the Name of Jesus*, *The Trinitarian Controversy in the Fourth Century*, *Understanding the Articles of Faith*, and *A Handbook of Basic Doctrines*, among others. This body of work constitutes a serious, dedicated, and well-researched engagement with scripture that deserves a serious, dedicated, and equally well-researched response.

I recently met a spiritual woman named Allison LeFrere who gave me the book “A Handbook of Basic Doctrines” by David K. Bernard out of a genuine act of kindness. She believes that Pentecostalism and speaking in tongues — with sincerity and devotion — that this represents the truth of the scriptures. We honor that sincerity. We also honor Brother Bernard’s scholarship and lifelong commitment. And because we honor both, we will hold everything before the standard the covenant itself demands:

***“To the Torah and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, there is no light of dawn in them.” — Yesha’yahu (Isaiah) 8:20***

That is the measuring rod. Not denominational tradition. Not council decisions. Not the sincerity of any scholar or preacher, however devoted. The Tanakh — the Torah (Instruction), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings) — is the foundational, authoritative covenant document. **Every claim — including our own — must be tested there.**

## II. THE FOUNDATIONAL QUESTION: WHAT IS THE AUTHORITY?

Before examining any specific doctrine in Bernard's catalog, the foundational question must be settled: *What is the supreme authority for doctrine?* Bernard's answer — shared by virtually all of Christianity — is the complete Christian Bible, New Testament and Old Testament together, with the New Testament functioning as the interpretive lens through which the Hebrew scriptures are read. His *Handbook of Basic Doctrines* is explicitly a compilation of scripture references — drawn predominantly from the New Testament — that it claims “teach the fundamental doctrines of Christian faith and life.”

The covenant position stands on different grounds. **The Tanakh — complete, authoritative, and in active operation for over a thousand years before a single Apostolic letter was written — is the foundational document.** It cannot be superseded, amended, reinterpreted, or overruled by later writings. The Prophet Moshe (Moses) established this in **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:2:**

*“You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of Yahweh your Elohim that I command you.”*

And again in **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 13:1–4**, Yahweh warns that even a prophet who performs signs and wonders — if that prophet leads Israel away from the commandments of the covenant — is to be refused, because **“Yahweh your Elohim is testing you, to know whether you love Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul.”** The standard of faithfulness is always: does it conform to what Yahweh already established?

Yeshua (Jesus) himself — whose teachings Bernard so earnestly attempts to follow — declared in **Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:17–18:** **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Torah until everything is accomplished.”** Yeshua did not establish a new doctrinal authority — he submitted to the one already in place.

**The Apostolic writings must therefore be tested against — not used to supersede — the Tanakh.** This is the covenant's own hermeneutical requirement. It is the standard the New Testament itself claims to honor. When Sha'ul (Paul) wrote to Timothy that **“all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction” (2 Tim. 3:16)**, the Scripture he referenced was the Tanakh (Old Testament) — the NT canon did not yet exist as a fixed, authoritative collection.

Bernard's *God's Infallible Word* asserts biblical inerrancy — a position we respect in principle — but fails to grapple with the *hierarchy* within that infallibility: the covenant established at Sinai with Yisra'el (Israel) was never revoked, modified, or replaced by any later writing.

### III. POINTS OF AGREEMENT: WHERE BERNARD STANDS WITH THE COVENANT

It would be dishonest and uncharitable not to acknowledge what Bernard gets profoundly right. In several critical areas, his scholarship is actually closer to covenant truth than much of mainstream Christianity:

#### A. THE REJECTION OF TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

Bernard's landmark work *The Oneness of God* (1983) and *The Trinitarian Controversy in the Fourth Century* (1993) make a compelling and largely accurate case: the doctrine of the Trinity — as formulated at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE and codified in the Athanasian Creed — is not found in the Tanakh, is not clearly found in the early Apostolic writings, and represents a post-apostolic theological development driven by Greek philosophical categories. This conclusion is historically and textually defensible.

This aligns with covenant truth. The foundational declaration of the entire covenant is the Shema: **“Shema Yisra’El, Yahweh Elohenu, Yahweh Echad”** — **“Hear, O Israel: Yahweh is our Elohim, Yahweh is One”** (Devarim/Deuteronomy 6:4). The Hebrew word *echad* (אֶחָד — H259) means a singular, unified one. There is no plurality of divine persons in the Tanakh's portrait of **Yahweh**. Bernard is correct to resist Trinitarian doctrine on this ground.

#### B. THE HUNGER FOR THE AUTHENTIC DIVINE NAME

Bernard's *In the Name of Jesus* and his treatment of Acts 2:38 reflect a genuine hunger to recover the *actual Name* from the substitutions of church tradition. While his conclusion — that “Jesus” is the full expression of the divine name — stops short of the covenant's full witness (addressed below), the underlying instinct is covenant-consistent: the Name matters, “Lord” and “God” are substitutions rather than translations, and the suppression of the Name is a doctrinal problem. We agree. The covenant goes further.

#### C. THE EMPHASIS ON REPENTANCE AND HOLINESS

Bernard's *In Search of Holiness*, *Practical Holiness*, and the holiness sections of *A Handbook of Basic Doctrines* reflect a serious engagement with the covenant's call to set-apart living. **Vayikra (Leviticus) 11:44** establishes this call directly: **“For I am Yahweh your Elohim; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.”** Bernard's consistent emphasis on moral separation, practical righteousness, and covenant conduct — however imperfect its Tanakh grounding — reflects a covenant-consistent instinct that most of modern Christianity has abandoned entirely.

## D. CONDITIONALITY OF THE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP

Bernard's *The New Birth* pushes back against the doctrine of “once saved, always saved” and the idea that faith alone, without ongoing obedience, is sufficient. The Tanakh consistently establishes the covenant as conditional on faithfulness and obedience (**Devarim/Deuteronomy 28; Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah 18:9–10; Yechezk'el/Ezekiel 18:24**). This places Bernard closer to covenant truth than much of mainstream Protestantism, which has collapsed the covenant into unconditional security.

## IV. WHERE THE COVENANT REQUIRES CORRECTION

### A. THE NAME: DEEPER THAN ACTS 2:38

Bernard's *In the Name of Jesus* argues persuasively that the Apostolic community baptized in “the name of Jesus” rather than in the Trinitarian formula of “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” This is an important historical argument, and it correctly recognizes that the name *Yeshua* (ישוע) encodes within it the Name of **Yahweh**. But the covenant name question goes far deeper than a water baptism formula.

**Yahweh** (יהוה — H3068) is the personal, covenant Name of the Elohim of Yisra'el, appearing 6,828 times in the Tanakh. It was deliberately suppressed: first by the rabbinic tradition's substitution of *Adonai* (Lord), then by the Christian tradition's adoption of “LORD” and “God” in English translations. Bernard's entire catalog — every page of every book — uses “God” and “Lord” as primary divine references, perpetuating the very suppression of the Name that the covenant itself forbids.

The third commandment — “**You shall not take the name of Yahweh your Elohim in vain**” (**Shemot/Exodus 20:7**) — is more accurately rendered: *you shall not carry or bear the Name as shav* (שאַׁו — H7723), meaning empty, vain, nothing. To substitute “LORD” for Yahweh throughout Scripture is precisely that: treating the covenant Name as empty, as though it were too insignificant to use.

The name “Jesus” is an anglicization of the Greek *Iesous*, itself a transliteration of the Hebrew *Yeshua* (ישוע), a shortened form of *Yehoshua* (יהושוע), meaning “**Yahweh saves**” or “**Yahweh is salvation.**” The Name of **Yahweh** is already present, already embedded, within the very name of the Messiah. Bernard's instinct is not wrong — but the root is **Yahweh**, not the Greek or English derivative. To stop at “Jesus” and not trace it back to **Yahweh** is to stop halfway up the mountain.

### B. THE NEW BIRTH: TESHUVAH IS THE COVENANT CATEGORY

Bernard's *The New Birth* centers on the Apostolic prescription for salvation derived primarily from Yochanan (John) 3:5 and Acts 2:38: water baptism in Jesus' name followed by receiving the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues. This is the doctrinal centerpiece of Oneness Pentecostalism.

The covenant does not dismiss repentance, immersion, or Spirit-indwelling — all three have deep Tanakh roots. But it requires us to test the prescription against the foundation. The Tanakh’s category for turning back to **Yahweh** is *teshuvah* (תשובה) — return, repentance), established across multiple witnesses:

*“Return to Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul.”*  
— *Devarim (Deuteronomy) 30:2*

*“Return, faithless Israel, declares Yahweh... for I am merciful.”* — *Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 3:12*

*“Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin.”* —  
*Yechezk’el (Ezekiel) 18:30*

Covenant immersion — *tevilah* (טבילה) in the *mikveh* (מקוה) — H4723, a gathering of living waters) — is thoroughly grounded in the Tanakh through purification and covenant-initiation contexts (**Vayikra/Leviticus 14–15; Bamidbar/Numbers 19**). Bernard is therefore not wrong to emphasize water immersion as covenant initiation. The problem is not immersion — it is hanging all of salvation on a specific New Testament verbal formula (“in Jesus’ name”) while bypassing the Tanakh’s own complete witness to covenant initiation through repentance and life-alignment with the Torah.

## C. SPEAKING IN TONGUES AS MANDATORY EVIDENCE: NO TANAKH WITNESS

Bernard’s *The New Birth* and *Spiritual Gifts* assert that speaking in tongues is the mandatory initial physical evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit. This is arguably the single most defining distinctive doctrine of Oneness Pentecostalism, and it requires the strongest covenant scrutiny.

The *Ruach HaKodesh* (רוח הקודש — the Set-Apart Spirit) is thoroughly established in the Tanakh. **Yahweh’s** Spirit rested upon Moshe and the seventy elders (**Bamidbar/Numbers 11:25–29**); upon Yehoshua (Joshua) (**Bamidbar/Numbers 27:18**); upon Shimshon (Samson) (**Shoftim/Judges 14:6**); upon Sha’ul (Saul) and David (**1 Shemu’el/1 Samuel 10:6; 16:13**); upon all the major and minor prophets (**Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 61:1; Yechezk’el/Ezekiel 2:2; Mikhah/Micah 3:8**). The Tanakh is rich with Spirit-endued leadership, prophecy, and covenant faithfulness.

But the Tanakh never once — in any of these accounts — identifies tongues-speech as the required evidence of Spirit-indwelling. Every prophet, every judge, every Spirit-filled servant in the Tanakh record was confirmed by the *fruit and evidence of covenant alignment, prophecy, wisdom, and power* — not by ecstatic language. The Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 standard requires two or three independent witnesses for any doctrine. The tongues-as-mandatory-evidence doctrine has no Tanakh witness at all.

To require tongues as the definitive, mandatory marker of Spirit-reception is to add to the covenant a test the Tanakh itself never establishes — in direct violation of **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:2**. The Spirit of **Yahweh** moves as **Yahweh** wills (**Bamidbar/Numbers 11:29**). The Spirit cannot be reduced to a single human behavioral manifestation as its “proof.”

## D. NT-OVER-TANAKH HERMENEUTICS: THE FOUNDATIONAL ERROR

Bernard's *A History of Christian Doctrine* (three volumes) is a genuinely impressive historical scholarship — covering the post-apostolic age through the twentieth century. It correctly identifies many places where Greek philosophy corrupted early Christian doctrine. But it consistently evaluates all of church history through a lens in which the New Testament is the doctrinal standard and the Tanakh serves as background, prophecy, or typology. This is the standard hermeneutical error of all of Christianity, including Oneness Pentecostalism.

The covenant demands the opposite direction: **the Tanakh is the measuring rod.** The Apostolic writings — produced by covenant men and women (Yirmeyahu 31:31–34 people) who were immersed in the Tanakh — were never intended to supersede, reframe, or replace their foundation. When the Apostolic writings conflict with or are used to override the Tanakh, it is the Apostolic interpretation that must yield, not the Tanakh.

Bernard's *Understanding the Articles of Faith* establishes doctrinal positions based on UPCI credal formulations — a denominational standard. But a covenant institution does not submit to denominational creed. It submits to the covenant document itself: Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim — tested by two or three witnesses (**Devarim/Deuteronomy 19:15**).

## E. THE DIVINE NAMES: PERPETUATING THE SUBSTITUTION

This point must be stated plainly: every book in Bernard's catalog employs "God" and "Lord" as primary divine references. Every scripture citation uses KJV or NKJV translations that render **Yahweh** as "LORD" and **Elohim** as "God." Despite Bernard's genuine concern for the Name — expressed in his Jesus'-name baptism doctrine — his catalog perpetuates the same suppression of the covenant Name that he rightly identifies as a problem in Trinitarian tradition.

The covenant witness calls for the restoration and regular use of **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אלהים) — not as academic curiosities, but as the actual Names by which the covenant People are called to know, invoke, and revere their **Elohim**. **Shemot (Exodus) 3:15** is unambiguous: "**This is my Name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.**" "Forever" has not expired!

## V. A WORD TO OUR PENTECOSTAL SISTER

I believe that Allison is a sincere seeker. Pentecostalism at its best is driven by a deep hunger for the living presence of the **Ruach** — the Spirit of **Yahweh** — and a holy dissatisfaction with cold, ritualistic religion that has no power. That hunger is covenant-consistent. The Tanakh itself contains its own Pentecost promise:

*“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” —  
Yechezk’el (Ezekiel) 36:26–27*

The Spirit of **Yahweh** does move. The Spirit does speak. The Spirit does transform. Oneness Pentecostalism — in its rejection of the Trinity, its hunger for direct encounter with the living **Elohim**, and its insistence that the Name matters — has recovered something that most of the church lost centuries ago. We do not minimize that. But it has built those recovered truths on a foundation — NT-primary hermeneutics, tongues-as-mandatory-evidence, Jesus’-name-only formulas — that stops short of where the covenant itself points.

I invite you to go deeper — not away from the Spirit, but into the Tanakh’s own witness to who that Spirit is, whose Name He bears, and what covenant that Spirit calls every human being, from every nation, to enter. The Spirit of Yahweh is not the private property of any denomination. He is the covenant Spirit of Yisra’el, extended to all nations (**Bamidbar/Numbers 11:29; Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 56:6–8**).

## VI. A SUMMARY TABLE: BERNARD VS. THE COVENANT

DOCTRINE	BERNARD / UPCI POSITION	COVENANT POSITION
Oneness of God	One God; rejects Trinity. Correct.	Affirmed. Shema (Devarim 6:4): Yahweh is One.
Divine Name	"Jesus" as the name for baptism; uses "God" / "Lord" throughout.	Yahweh (יהוה) is the covenant Name forever (Shemot 3:15). "Jesus" embeds Yahweh but is not the full restoration.
Authority	NT primary; Tanakh as background / fulfilled prophecy.	Tanakh is the supreme, foundational authority. NT writings are tested against it (Yesha. 8:20; Devarim 13:1-4).
New Birth / Salvation	Acts 2:38: repentance + water baptism in Jesus’ name + tongues.	Teshuvah (return to Yahweh), tevilah (covenant immersion), and Spirit-alignment are all Tanakh-grounded. No NT verbal formula required.
Tongues	Mandatory initial evidence of Spirit-reception.	No Tanakh witness establishes this requirement. Spirit-empowered figures throughout the Tanakh show no tongues-as-evidence pattern.
Holiness	Separation from worldly conduct; practical guidelines.	Affirmed and strengthened. Holiness is covenant-defined in the Torah (Vayikra

DOCTRINE	BERNARD / UPCI POSITION	COVENANT POSITION
		11:44; 19:2), not denominationally defined.
Covenant Conditionality	Rejects “once saved always saved”; obedience matters.	Affirmed. Covenant faithfulness is the consistent Tanakh pattern (Devarim 28; Yirmeyahu 18:9-10).
Trinity	Rejected as unscriptural. Correct.	Affirmed. Trinitarian theology is a post-biblical Greek philosophical construct.

## VII. CONCLUSION: TO THE TORAH AND TO THE TESTIMONY

David K. Bernard is a serious scholar, a sincere believer, and a man who has devoted his life to what he understands as truth. This witness does not dishonor that. But the covenant’s standard — established in **Devarim 19:15**, confirmed by **Yesha’yahu 8:20**, and encoded in the very Name **Yahweh** — demands that all doctrine be tested against the Tanakh foundation, not derived primarily from New Testament interpretation and denominational tradition.

**Where Bernard agrees with the covenant:** the Oneness of **Yahweh**; the reality of repentance; the call to holiness; the conditionality of covenant relationship; the rejection of Greek Trinitarian formulas.

**Where Bernard must be brought back to the covenant:** the primacy of the Name **Yahweh** over NT-derived formulas; the Tanakh-grounded framework of teshuvah and tevilah; the absence of any Tanakh mandate for tongues as mandatory Spirit-evidence; and the hermeneutical priority of the Tanakh over the Apostolic writings.

**The invitation is not a rejection. It is an elevation. To go where Bernard himself is trying to go — but to go all the way back to the Source.**

*“To the Torah and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, there is no light of dawn in them.” — Yesha’yahu (Isaiah) 8:20*

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