



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 39
Issue 971

The "Body" in I Corinthians 12

Part 1 of 2

by — Otis Q. Sellers (1901-1992)

Key Points:

From the call of Abraham to Christ's sacrifice, Israel was God's out-calling. 8185
From Pentecost, all who believed that Jesus was the Messiah became members of God's out-calling. 8185
This out-calling dominates the scene until Acts 28:28. 8185

Acts 10 marks the beginning of the work among the Gentiles. 8185
The Gentiles were allotted a place among the Israelites. ... 8188
I Corinthians 12 is about spiritual gifts, not about the formation of a new out-calling. 8192

GOD'S OUT-CALLING

In Genesis 12 it is recorded that God made the choice of Abraham and his seed after him, and began to deal with them according to His election. Faith and works filled a dominant place in their lives, but God's purpose for them according to election had to stand.



This was the *out-calling* of God, or "*the Ecclesia of God*"² (usually rendered "*the Church of God*" in most English translations).

From the call of Abraham to Christ's sacrifice at Calvary, the nation of Israel was God's *out-calling* (i.e., *ecclesia*).¹ In Matthew 16:17 the Lord Jesus announced His purpose to build a new *out-calling* upon a certain rock or foundation.

This *out-calling* was in existence before Paul's conversion, for he persecuted "*the Ecclesia of God*" (I Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13); and we have no trouble in identifying this *out-calling* throughout the entire period covered by the book of Acts. It was God's *out-calling* during that period, and there was no other *out-calling*, or *ecclesia*, during that time.

Peter had just confessed Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God. This was the foundation upon which the new *out-calling* was to be built. The Lord warned them that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Messiah, for the time of beginning this new *out-calling* had not yet arrived.

This *out-calling* dominates the scene from Pentecost until Acts 28:28, when it was superseded by another *out-calling*, "*the Ecclesia which is His Body*" (Ephesians 1:23).

A PEOPLE FROM THE GENTILES

From the day of Pentecost, all who confessed that the despised and crucified Jesus was the long-expected Messiah, the Son of the living God, became members of the *out-calling* that the Lord said He would build.

Then the tenth chapter of Acts marks the beginning of the work among the Gentiles, even though at that time it concerned only one household. In Acts 13 Paul comes upon the scene as a laborer, and by his ministry the work among the Gentiles was carried

(see **BODY**, page 8187)

1. [Editor:] English translations of the Greek word *ecclesia* (such as "church") fall far short of expressing the truth of the word. *Out-called*, or *out-calling*, is more descriptive of the true meaning.

2. [Editor:] There are eight uses of the phrase "*the Ecclesia of God*" found in Scripture: Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; II Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:13; I Timothy 3:5.



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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Romans 6; Ephesians 2:6);
- adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

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on with such vigor that many Gentiles were brought to Christ. These Gentiles were added to “*the Ecclesia of God*,” and the position they held is clearly stated in the Word of God.

We are commanded in the Word to discern the things that differ. In many things this is not easy to do, but in the case of “*the Ecclesia of God*” and “*the Ecclesia which is His Body*” it is not difficult. In many points they are the same, and many similarities can be pointed out. Yet in many vital points there is such a wide difference that it is utterly impossible to say that they are the same.

When the pseudo-scientist desires to demonstrate man’s identity with the ape, he can point out hundreds of striking similarities. These, to him, demonstrate man’s relationship to the simian; but we look at the differences, and in view of these we can honestly insist that man and the ape are not the same.

Even so it is when we make an honest comparison of “*the Ecclesia of God*” and “*the Ecclesia which is His Body*.” Many have set forth their similarities and have pronounced that they are one and the same. We recognize these, but the points of difference are enough to prove that they are two distinct *ecclesias*, or *out-callings*.

There are those who contend that “*the Ecclesia which is His Body*” began on the day of Pentecost. These see no difference between “*the Ecclesia of God*” and “*the Ecclesia which is His Body*.” Others insist that “*the Ecclesia which is His Body*” began at Acts 13 with the ministry of Paul among the Gentiles. A third group insists that no one was called as a member of “*the*

Ecclesia which is His Body” until after Acts 28:28. This writer takes his stand with the third group, and stands ready to defend it with the Word of God. To him it is the only position that is defensible.

A QUESTION OF POSITION

No matter what stand one may take as to when the present *out-calling* began, it must be admitted that the question is not one regarding salvation but position. In other words, the matter can be put in three questions. What was the position of the out-called at Pentecost? What was the position of the out-called after Acts 13? What was the position of the out-called after Acts 28:28?

Some will answer that all three positions were the same. Others will say that the out-called from Pentecost to Acts 13 had one position, and the out-called after that had another position. This writer is contending that the out-called from Pentecost to Acts 28:28 were given a position in “*the Ecclesia of God*,” and that out-called after that time have been given a position “*the Ecclesia which is His Body*.”

In view of this, it is evident that if we can find anything in the book of Acts, or in the epistles of Paul written during the Acts period,³ that tells us that the

- [Editor:] The term “Acts period” is a reference to the time-period covered by the events of the book of Acts. It begins at Pentecost and ends with Paul at Rome. This period is the “*blade*” and “*ear*” stage of the Kingdom of God (Mark 4:26-29). For more information on the stages of the Kingdom of God, see:
 - “The Five Stages of the Kingdom of God,” Otis Q. Sellers, [Bible Student’s Notebook](#) 907;
 - “The Parable of the Kingdom’s Growing Grain,” Andrew Brown, [Bible Student’s Notebook](#) 909.



58 pages

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Paul’s Priestly Ministry (A Compilation)

Prior to the revelation of the present *Secret Administration* found in Ephesians and Colossians, Paul’s ministry was a *prophetic light* “*to the Gentiles*” (Acts 13:47) under the auspices of Israel (Isaiah 49:6), Paul himself “*acting as a priest*” (Romans 15:15-16, *CV*). During his earlier ministry, by his own admission, his teaching was limited to what “*the prophets and Moses did say should come*” (Acts 26:22), proclaiming “*the hope of Israel*” (Acts 28:20). This vital key is crucial to the proper understanding of the epistles which Paul wrote prior to Ephesians, letters which were “*out of an installment*” (I Corinthians 13:9-10, 12, *CV*).

This is a collection of eight important articles, by four authors: Vladimir Gelesnoff (1877-1921), A.E. Knoch (1874-1965), Adlai Loudy (1893-1984), and Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Jews or Gentiles who were out-called during the Acts period were members of “the Ecclesia which is His Body,” then we must retract and admit that the present out-calling did begin somewhere in the Acts period.

The proper way to do this is to go to the Acts and to the epistles written in that period and examine every statement that has any bearing upon the position of those who were out-called in that period. This should settle the matter for all who permit the Word to settle things – and since it is specifically the position of the saved Gentiles that we have in mind, we will concentrate upon those passages that speak concerning their position.

GENTILE POSITION IN THE ACTS PERIOD

The only statement in the book of Acts that has any positive bearing on Gentile position during that period is found in Acts 26:17-18.

Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and in-

For more information of this time-period covered by the book of Acts, see:

- “Gentiles During the Acts Period,” David Tavender, [Bible Student's Notebook 733](#);
 - “The Acts Period and the Acts Period Epistles,” Tom L. Ballinger, [Bible Student's Notebook 604](#);
 - “The Acts of the Apostles and Paul's Acts Epistles Considered Historically and Dispensationally,” J.J.B. Coles, [Bible Student's Notebook 613](#);
 - “Before and After Acts 28,” Oscar Baker, [Bible Student's Notebook 595](#);
 - “Different Conditions Before and After Acts 28,” David Tavender, [Bible Student's Notebook 747](#);
- Also see the book,
- [The Acts Dispensation](#), Otis Q. Sellers, Bible Student's Press (on the [order form](#) under “Sellers.”)

heritance AMONG them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

In :18 the words up to the word “sins” have to do with Gentile salvation, and the words following have to do with Gentile position. The last statement could be better translated,

an allotment among those who have been separated by faith that is in me.

Here we are told that the out-called Gentiles were allotted a place among the Israelites. As Israel's blessings were not transferable, these Gentiles were partakers of that which belonged to Israel. Therefore, in the one and only statement concerning Gentile position in the book of Acts we find no word telling us that they were members of “the Ecclesia which is His Body.”

THE POSITION OF THE OUT-CALLED IN PAUL'S EARLY EPISTLES

We will now look at the position of the out-called as found in Paul's epistles written during the Acts period.⁴

We will consider a few examples of their position from these epistles, in the order in which they were written.

In I Thessalonians we find a passage that has to do with the Gentile position of those spoken to. In 2:12 we are told that God had called them to “His kingdom and His glory.”

It seems that if these Thessalonians were members of some new and glorious out-calling, Paul would have

4. For more on this theme, see:
- [Paul's Early Epistles](#), F.H. Robison, Bible Student's Press (see the [order form](#) under “Robison”).



The Acts Dispensation

by — Otis Q. Sellers (1901-1992)

A study of the unique dispensation that covered the Acts Period.

62 pages

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made some mention of it to them.

Galatians actually gives a few passages concerning Gentile position during the Acts period. Let us look at these.

*Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are **the children of Abraham** (3:7).*

*So then they which be of faith are **blessed with faithful Abraham** (3:9).*

*That **the blessing of Abraham** might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ (3:14).*

*And if ye be Christ's, then are ye **Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise** (3:29).*

***Jerusalem** which is above is free, which is the **mother of us all** (4:26).*

*Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are **the children of promise** (4:28).*

So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free [Sarah] (4:31).

These passages tell us that the Gentiles of the Acts

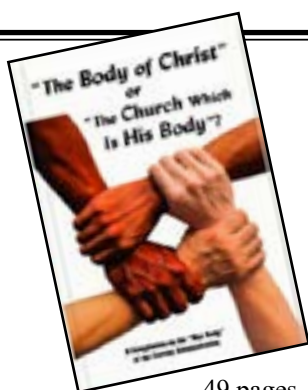
period were children of Abraham, blessed with faithful Abraham, that the blessing of Abraham had come upon them, that they were Abraham's seed, that they were heirs according to the promise that God made to Abraham, and that they were children of the promise.

In all of this there is no hint or suggestion that they were members of a new out-calling, "*the Ecclesia which is His Body.*"

When God made promises to Abraham and his seed, He included the Gentiles in those promises. They were to be blessed *through* the seed of Abraham. These passages from Galatians demonstrate that both Gentile salvation and position during the Acts period were in complete harmony with the words spoken to Abraham. Their blessings were not made known by the revelation of a secret, for they were the subject of Old Testament promise and prophecy.

1 Corinthians 12 deals with the position of the Gentiles in the Acts period, but since this chapter is the subject of this study, we will reserve its treatment until the last.

We now turn to the book of Romans, where we find more about Gentile position during the Acts period than in any other book. The question is dealt with



49 pages

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"The Body of Christ" or "The Church Which Is His Body"?

A Compilation on the "One Body" of the Current Administration

In the *Pentecost Administration*, during the Acts period, there were many *ecclesias*, in the plural – "*all the ecclesias*" (Romans 16:4, 16; I Corinthians 7:17; 14:33; II Corinthians 8:18; 11:28, CV). Each of these ecclesias were, in and of themselves "*the body of Christ*" – an integrated "*one body*," while today in the *Secret Administration* there is but one single ecclesia, in the singular – "*the Ecclesia which is His Body*" (Ephesians 2:22-23, CV). This ecclesia is universal and not local. This ecclesia of the *Secret Administration* has no bearing whatsoever on locality, and is of necessity, the only "One Body" universal (Ephesians 4:4).

This "One Body" of Ephesians and Colossians (Ephesians 2:16; 4:4; Colossians 3:15) is the *Post-Acts* "church," of which Christ *alone* is Head (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15; 5:23; Colossians 1:24; 2:19). This is the *only* Ecclesia of the *Secret Administration*.

This short compilation has works from three authors: Tom L. Ballinger, G.J. Pauptit (1889-1962), and Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.



in detail in Romans 11. The statements found in this chapter are so emphatic that it would settle the whole matter if men would only cease trying to read their own ideas into the epistles of the Acts period. Those who try to place “*the Ecclesia which is His Body*” in the Acts period usually ignore the plain statements given here.

In Romans 11:13 Paul addresses the Gentiles specifically, and tells them of their position and standing. In order to make plain the truth he uses the olive tree as an illustration. This tree had been planted in very rich soil. Into this soil God had put every good thing that the tree needed for growth and fruit bearing. This olive tree is identified for us in :24 as being “*their own olive tree*.” It was Israel’s olive tree, and this cannot mean “*the Ecclesia which is His Body*.” This olive tree represented all of Israel’s covenant blessings and privileges. To them God had given the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the law, the divine service, the promises and the Messiah. No other nation was given any of these things.

When Paul wrote the Roman epistle, some of the branches had already been cut off. It may have been that the Jerusalem branch was cut off at the stoning of Stephen, the Antioch branch at Acts 13:46, and the Corinthian branch at Acts 18:6.

The Gentiles of the Acts period are described as being branches out of a wild olive tree. These were grafted in among the natural branches and with the natural branches they partook of “*the root and the fatness of the olive tree*.”

And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree (11:17).

Paul warns these Gentile believers not to boast over the natural branches, and if they do, to remember that they do not bear the root, for the root is bearing them. He tells them that they stand by faith.

In Old Testament times there was a door open to the Gentiles by which they could enter into Israel’s blessings. In Acts 14:27 Paul announced that a door of faith had been opened to the Gentiles. These had entered into blessing *with* believing Israel by faith. Paul

warns them that their position in the good olive tree makes them subject to the same treatment as the natural branches. He then climaxes the truth by saying,

And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

This is plain. Why should we reject this testimony as to the position of out-called Gentiles in the Acts period? Paul tells where these Gentiles came from: they were out of a wild olive tree; and He tells of their position: they were grafted into a good olive tree. He then identifies the good olive tree: it is Israel’s own olive tree. Therefore, these Gentiles had their position in something that the unbelieving Jews had been cut out of. This cannot be “*the Ecclesia which is His Body*.”

THE “BODY” IN I CORINTHIANS 12

Those who appeal to this chapter for a new out-calling and position do not seem to care at all that the Lord has spoken in it. Their chief delight is found in :13, 27.

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit ... Now ye are the body of Christ,⁵ and members in particular.

These passages are wrested from their divine setting and forced to teach a doctrine that is not found when the chapter is considered as a whole.

To come to a true understanding of these verses we must give due consideration to their place in the chapter, and to the place of the chapter in the epistle. Therefore, we will consider the epistle and then the chapter as a whole.

The occasion of this epistle was a letter of inquiry from Corinth asking advice on certain questions, but

5. [Editor:] The *Emphatic Diaglott* renders this, “*You but are a body of Anointed.*”

making no reference to the sad divisions that existed among them (I Corinthians 7:1). Paul wrote this epistle in order to deal with the problems that were vexing and disturbing the Corinthian assembly. One of the major problems was the matter of spiritual gifts. The Corinthian assembly had its existence, and this epistle was written in that period of time which, for the purpose of designation, is commonly called the *Acts Dispensation*,⁶ or the *Pentecostal Dispensation*. This was a *kingdom* dispensation that had its beginning on the day of Pentecost and continued for about thirty-three years. It ended when Israel was set aside by the pronouncement, "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles" (Acts 28:28).

This kingdom dispensation was characterized by "signs following," and its unique constitution was given by the Lord in Mark 16:15-20.

And He said unto them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hand on the sick, and they shall recover." So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up unto Heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."

6. [Editor:] See the author's book:
– [The Acts Dispensation](#), Otis Q. Sellers, Bible Student's Press (on the [order form](#) under "Sellers").

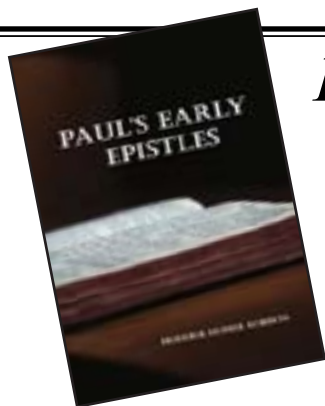
That this confirmation of the word by signs, wonders and miracles was taking place in Corinth is clearly indicated I Corinthians 1:6-7.

Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you so that ye come behind in no gift.

These gifts are listed as being the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues. Every one of these gifts were being manifested in Corinth, and they were possessed by one or more members of the Corinthian assembly.

Under circumstances so extraordinary, it was unavoidable that many disorders should arise. Some men who were deluded or imposters would claim to be voices of the Spirit; some would be dissatisfied with the gifts which they had received and envy those whom they regarded as more highly favored; others would be inflated and make an ostentatious display of their extraordinary powers; and in the assembly it seems that great confusion arose from so many persons desiring to exercise their gifts at the same time. These serious problems were included in the letter sent to Paul, or else they were reported to him by the house of Chloe (I Corinthians 1:11).

The advice and counsel of Paul concerning these problems gives us some additional light on the exact nature of the difficulties. They were acting like children about these sign gifts. Instead of using them as signs to those who did not believe (14:22), they were using them to minister to their own pride in the possession of them. For example, there may have been a man who possessed a spectacular gift like "working of



Paul's Early Epistles

by — F.H. Robison (1885-1932)

An important dispensational look at the place of Paul's early epistles in the plan of God. This is taken from the pages of Robison's classic work *Are Bride and Body Identical?*

36 pages

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miracles,” who was filled with pride and looked with something like contempt upon the one who possessed a gift totally lacking in outward show, like that of “discerning spirits.” Then again, the man who had the lesser gift was torn with jealousy and disappointment because his gift was not great and spectacular.

Among a carnal people (3:1) this situation caused many problems, and instead of these gifts being a blessing, they were becoming a curse; instead of building up, they were tearing down; instead of creating unity, they were causing division. Paul’s burden is to get these gifts functioning, each in their proper place, so that they will be used for the glory of the Giver, and not for the personal glory of the possessor.

This is the situation that caused I Corinthians 12 to be written. From beginning to end it is a treatise on spiritual gifts and their proper use. It begins with the words, “Now concerning spiritual gifts,” and it ends with the words, “covet earnestly the best gifts.” Its one subject is gifts, and every verse in the chapter deals with the matter under consideration. It does not deal with the formation or character of a new out-calling, “the Ecclesia which is His Body.”

(abridged & edited)

(to be continued)

— The Word of Truth
January-February, 1940

[Editor:] Terms such as “Acts Period” (or “Pentecostal Period”)

and “Acts Dispensation” (or “Pentecostal Dispensation”) should be viewed simply as efforts to identify God’s operations contained within the time covered by the book of Acts. However, it is important to recognize that these actions were nonetheless a subset of the “Kingdom of the Heavens.” This kingdom was first proclaimed by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2-3) and Jesus Christ (4:14), and later by the 12 Apostles (10:7) and the Apostle Paul (i.e., “none other things,” Acts 26:22) in his early epistles. This offer was at first *only* for the nation of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6; 15:24), yet later in the book of Acts it was expanded to include Gentiles (Acts 10; Romans 11:17). Spiritual gifts were used throughout the book of Acts to confirm the genuineness of this offer, and were given to the multiple local bodies of Christ (I Corinthians chapters 12-14) without Jewish/Gentile ethnic distinctions (Galatians 3:28). These gifts were withdrawn when God ended the offer of the “Kingdom of the Heavens” in Acts 28:28, prior to the revelation of the Secret Administration in Ephesians. It is essential to recognize that the pre-millennial “Kingdom of the Heavens” was continually being offered from John the Baptist (Matthew 3:23) to the end of the book of Acts (28:28).

The idea of a so-called “transition period” within the time covered by the book of Acts is simply a misnomer, suggesting a progressive revelation of “the Mystery” given to Paul. However, the doctrine of the “Acts period” is nothing less than the “Kingdom of the Heavens,” or in other words, “none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come” (Acts 26:22). It was not until after Acts 28 that it is given to Paul to write Ephesians and Colossians which reveal the absolute secrets of our Celestial allotment, the universal One Body, the Secret Administration, and the Pleromas of God (Colossians 2:9) and of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23), which are NOT revealed in any of Paul’s earlier epistles (i.e., those epistles written PRIOR to Acts 28:28).

TOPICS:

Major: I Corinthians 12; Acts Period; Ecclesia: One Body; Paul’s Early Epistles

Minor: Acts 28:28; Colossians; Ephesians; Gifts; Israel; Mystery; Paul; Signs



107 pages

I Am! Who and What God Says I Am!

The Divine Reckoning of the Renewed Mind; Daily Thoughts on Divine Life

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

People are always talking about their attempts to discover their true selves – of trying to “find themselves.” The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ needs to find out who they *really* are. This doesn’t need to be such a difficult search. All that is really needed is a careful look at the Scriptures, and a simple faith in the words of who and what God says we are. God knows who we are; all we need to do is to *believe Him*. This book catalogs the Divine Record of who and what God says that you are. It is a short encyclopedia of faith – the truth about you. It is the truth about you, simply because it is *God* Who has said it. God has spoken these truths concerning you – the *real* you. Believe His record! Refuse to be the shell of a person, pushed into a mold of Adamic conformity. Be the real you that God has uniquely designed you to be. Refuse to be bullied out of your divinely designed identity that our Father has given you.

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