



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume 36
Issue 883

How the Word of Truth May be “Rightly Divided”

by — Ray I. Psalmonds (1909-1984)

Bible students are admonished by God in II Timothy 2:15 to “*rightly divide the Word of Truth*.” In order to obey this admonition, one must determine what is meant by the term “*rightly divide*.” The Greek word for “*rightly divide*” is *orthotomeō* and [in the Greek “New Testament”] occurs only in II Timothy 2:15. The Greek lexicon gives as a definition: “To cut straight or dissect correctly.”

In the *Septuagint* of the Old Testament, this word is used in connection with the portioning and right positioning of the sacrificial offerings on the altar; the same principle applies to “*rightly dividing*” the Word of Truth. The overall, as well as immediate context of a passage of Scripture must be kept. Comparisons or applications of Scripture may be made, but the fact of *application* in contrast to *interpretation* should be stated. To phrase it another way, all the Bible is for our learning, but not all of the Bible is addressed specifically to us. This is the reason for obeying the admonition to “*rightly divide the Word of Truth*.”

The charge of deleting portions of the Bible will arise. This is only a false presumption. The fact should be obvious that any given portion of Scripture must be kept in its own context and related to its proper time, place and people. This is a far cry from an act of deletion or rejection of Scripture, for all Scripture is inviolate.

In order to have the Scriptures always convey truth, it may be necessary at times to “*rightly divide*” in the

middle of a verse, as the Lord Jesus Christ did in Luke 4:16-21. The Lord stopped reading in the middle of a sentence, and, if one will look up the passage being read from the Old Testament (Isaiah 61:1-3), it will be discovered that there is no break in the verse – but had He continued to read, words like these would have been heard, “*and the day of vengeance of our God*,” which was NOT compatible at that time with the “*Acceptable Day of the Lord*” being then offered to Israel. That Christ Jesus chose to “*rightly divide*” the sacred Scriptures should be an incentive for the believer to do likewise.

The key to the *right division* of the Scriptures is found by identifying and distinguishing *administrations* of God as they are revealed. The principle of applying and interpreting Scriptures which are addressed to a specific *administration* and related only to that *administration* are a must in order to alleviate problems that may arise in Bible study.

The reason for insisting that the *households*, or *administrations*, of God should be distinguished is in the fact that the word *administration* is so closely related to the word translated “*dispensation*.”

The word translated “*dispensation*” is most nearly expressed by the English phrase, “an administration

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and its management.”¹ Taking this into account, if the *administrations* of God in Scripture are distinguished relative to the people, places and promises involved in each (as, for instance, Abraham and Israel in contrast to the Gentiles in the post-Acts letters of Paul), then the *dispensations* of God are definable, understandable and distinguishable one from the other.

A workable method of attaining to dispensational “right division” is to begin with the present *administration* of God (in Ephesians and Colossians), and to compare or contrast it with what has been revealed concerning the family of Abraham and all that relates to his varied administration affairs. It should be noted that the great, wonderfully complex family of Abraham is the subject of most of the Scriptures, from its origin to its vast consummation in the New Jerusalem.

Specific truths directed to one administration should not be applied to another. This does not mean that there are not certain general truths common to all

administrations, such as God's attributes, the person and perfections of Christ Jesus, the Lord, His sacrificial death, salvation, the believer's walk, etc.

The Administration of Abraham was not any less God's administration than the present one, nor will God's purpose in establishing that program fail of accomplishment in God's due time, but the application of *right division* would forbid wholesale stealing or weakening of the great truths given to Abraham in order somehow to force them into the present pattern of truth. It is strange that much is said by some today of inheriting the promises made to Abraham; but the promises themselves are hardly ever enumerated or explored so that one can see them objectively and in their fullness.

Right division, as it applies to dispensational truth, has to do with God's *households*, or *administrations*, and their management. Which administration is being considered must be determined by the context.

Before considering the characteristics of the present dispensation it should be remembered that the word translated “*dispensation*” is compounded of two

1. [Editor:] For this reason, throughout the original article, the author used “household” for the synonyms of “dispensation,” or “administration.” We have chosen instead to use “administration” for better overall *Bible Student's Notebook* consistency.

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 “preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past” (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the Body of Christ (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.”

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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see index after the [order form](#).

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Greek words, *oikos* (household), and *nomos* (rule or government). Ezekiel 43:10-11 illustrates this concept thus:

Thou son of man, show the house, to the house Israel, show them the laws thereof, and all the ordinances thereof – behold, this is the law of the house.

As mentioned above, the context of the passage will show which element in this compounded word is being stressed, *i.e.*, (1) the management or government of a household, (2) the character of that management, as in Ephesians 3:2 where God's present mode of management with believers is one of pure grace. The term, as used by God in the post-Acts epistles of Paul, embraces the revelation of this dispensation and its out-working, pre-dating Genesis on the one hand and going beyond the scope of Revelation on the other.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION

In order to identify God's present administration in Scripture it is imperative that some of its characteristics be recognized.

1. The present administration as related to time and people is "*the mystery hid in God*" (Ephesians 3:9), "*the mystery hid from the ages and generations*" (Colossians 1:25-26).
2. "*The unsearchable riches of Christ*" (Ephesians 3:8), *i.e.*, unsearchable, untrackable, untraceable – in the "Old Testament" or anywhere else.
3. "*The Dispensation of the Grace of God*" is a special

revelation committed only to Paul, the Apostle, and having grace as its *ruling factor* – "*How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery*" (:2).

4. "*The Dispensation of the fulness [plērōma] completion*" (1:10).
5. The present administration of believers is called a "*joint body*" (Ephesians 3:6), "*one new man*" (:15), and, shares the headship of Christ in the heavenlies (:23; 4:15-16; Colossians 1:16-18; 2:10).
6. The present administration is not related to any covenant, new or old (Ephesians 2:14-15; Colossians 2:14), nor to human merit or rules (Colossians 2:8), ordinances, holy days, etc. (Colossians 2:16).
7. Abraham is not mentioned in the post-Acts epistles of Paul which reveal this Sacred Secret.

Suffice the above to illustrate a few characteristics of this present administrative household of God.

The great dispensational boundary line in Scripture lies in those books given by revelation from the ascended Christ to the Apostle Paul AFTER the Book of Acts.

The Book of Acts and the other books of that period, including Paul's earlier writings and those of the other apostles, included the offer of the New Covenant to Israel, of which Paul was an able, competent minister (II Corinthians 3:6), and of which the Hebrew epistle is a record. During this period salvation was offered to Gentiles premised on the promise made to Abraham (Galatians 3:6-9, 14) aside from the Mosaic Law (Romans 4:12-16), but leaving Abraham the father of all (14:16). The Gen-



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tile believer was likened to a wild olive tree engrafted into Israel's olive tree (Romans 11:17-24). "To the Jew first" was the order of the day throughout the 30 years-plus Acts period.

Gentiles' being saved in the Acts period were meant to provoke Israel (Romans 11:11) to jealousy, to emulation (:14). The saved Gentiles' dispensational position during this time was subject to change if and when Israel attained her rightful position (:19-24). This is NOT true today!

MAJOR CONTRASTS OF THE ADMINISTRATIONS

1. There is no indication in all of Scripture that Abraham's household is raised and seated with Christ in the heavenlies, as is true concerning those of God's present administration (Ephesians 2:4-6).
2. There is no reference to a citizenship in the super-heavens (*epouranios*) for the household of Abraham.
3. The household of Abraham is never linked to that time "BEFORE" the overthrow of the world, but to that time designated "SINCE" the overthrow of the world

According as He hath chosen us in Him before the overthrow of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love (1:4).

4. The household of Abraham is never referred to as a "joint body" (3:6).
5. The household of Abraham holds forth Abraham as head and father (Galatians 3:29) and Sarah as mother (4:3).
6. The household of Abraham is not related to the "One New Man" (Colossians 3:10), but has its relationship with the Bride, the Lamb's wife.
7. All of the covenants are related to the household of Abraham, whereas the present administration has no covenant relationship (Romans 9:3-5; Ephesians 2:12).

8. The household of Abraham is referred to as "all the seed" of Abraham (4:16-17), whereas the present administration has no relationship to Abraham.

These are only a few of the major differences between the present administration of God and the prior administration with the household of Abraham.

Abraham's household of faith was interrupted and set aside temporarily at the close of the Acts period. The Scriptures that were written before the close of the Book of Acts are related to the household of Abraham and must not be appropriated by the present administration. This is the reason for establishing the point of "rightly dividing the Word of Truth" with respect to God's households, or administrations.

Application of Scripture from another administration is permissible only for the sake of its lesson value. To do otherwise we make the Word of God a hodge-podge of confusion and contradictions and the admonition to "rightly divide the Word of Truth" a mockery. **BSN**

— *Scripture Research*, Volume 1 Number 2 (1964) (edited)

Psalmonds was an associate of [Russell H. Schaefer](#) (1919-1999), [Howard N. Bunce](#) (1879-1954), Robert A. Hadden, and [William B. Hallman](#) (1903-1985).

TOPICS:

Major: Administrations; Right Division

Minor: Abraham; Ecclesia



Bible Proofs of Universal Salvation

by — J.W. (John Wesley) Hanson

137 pages, PB (*see order form*)

This work presents Bible proof of universal salvation, containing the principle passages of Scripture that teach the final holiness and happiness of all mankind. The author attempts to present the prominent considerations that are contained in the Bible in support of the final redemption of all souls. *See [order form](#) under "Hanson."*



Editor's Desk

Ken Ehrenfeld



Last fall, as things subsided briefly with COVID restrictions, Ken Ehrenfeld paid us a very endearing visit. He was an absolute joy to have, and we relished the mutual fellowship. His passion for God and His Word has led him on an intense, life-long journey toward the truth – to a place of embracing God's sovereignty, right division, and the salvation of all. More importantly, His spirit bears the unmistakable fruit of God. In [Bible Student's Notebook #879](#) we shared with our readers a short, encouraging article entitled "Priority" by Ken concerning legalism and our freedom in Christ.

Raised in the northeast, he now, in what he likes to call "the winter of his life," lives in TX, and conducts an aggressive ministry of supplying books to the libraries of Christian Colleges and Universities. His

current distribution is our book [The Church in Ruins](#), with plans to do so with [Nothing Will Be Lost](#) next. We are grateful that he allows us to be a part in his daring endeavor.

While he was here, we slipped over and made a visit to the small borough of Ehrenfeld, which is only 12 miles from our place. Just a small community of about 200. We now like to joke with Ken that we live in the suburbs of Ehrenfeld.



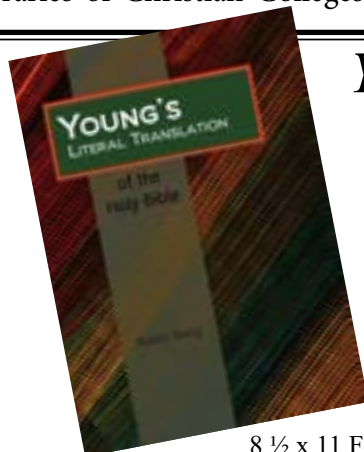
My son Nathan, Ken and me.

Clyde

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.
The Pilkington Abbey
Paint, PA

TOPICS:

Major: Editor's Desk; Ehrenfeld, Ken



Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible

Robert Young (1822 – 1888)

First published in 1862, this is the 3rd and last edition of Young's translation (1898). It is a literal translation of the Old and New Testaments, making it a perfect study tool. The 9-point print is larger and easier to read than those published in the past. Young was also the compiler of Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible.

8 ½ x 11 Format

864 pp., PB

See [order form](#) under "Bibles."



Tidbits of Truth #22

“Tidbits” is a column dedicated to short comments, thoughts, studies and excerpts.

Fellowship Among “Outsiders”

[To M.S.:] I am very thankful for your spirit of unity with other believers. This is touching and rare. I can appreciate your desire for communion with them. Today true scriptural fellowship is individual, not institutional. Possibly there may be other called brothers and sisters in your hometown of Bergen, Norway. The challenge will be locating them, especially within the confines of the myriad of “churches.” These denominations are, as a rule, constructed to be sectarian, with the design to preserve specific creeds and traditions, to which we are actually a threat.

This does not mean that there are not those within these organizations who, just like you, regardless of doctrinal differences, desire true open fellowship; but these individuals may be extremely hard to locate there, since we are, by our calling, the “outsiders,” and thus the system is designed to keep us out, or to keep us quiet.

So, if you are set on pursuing a course of looking within these systems for fellowship, my word of advice is always to be open and transparent as to what you believe – not being pushy and arrogant,

but gracefully authentic. This is the only means of any real fellowship. Those who have a genuine desire to endeavor “to keep the unity of the spirit with the tie of peace” will not be offended by your honesty, but will be encouraged by it, even if it does not mirror their own beliefs, just as you would not be offended by them for openly sharing their understanding.

However, again, please realize that if the called have been present within these organizations, they most likely have already left, or have been forced out (since, after all, they are the “outsiders”), with only the silenced ones remaining. This will mean that your stints with such experiences will probably be very brief and limited. It will not be easy, so be ready for that.

Finally, remember that for the outsider, this is a lonely road, and take rest in the fact that God is in complete charge of all of our interactions and fellowship.

— Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.



Studies in the Gospel of Matthew

by — Vladimir Gelesnoff (1877-1921)

In taking up a study of the Gospel of Matthew, our prime concern is to divest ourselves of a deep-rooted idea which is apt to preform our ideas and predetermine our conclusions with regard to its teaching. The recognized division between Old and New Testaments is purely arbitrary. It is founded on the fact that the one is written in Hebrew and the other in Greek. However, in seeking light on this point, we must be guided by weightier questions than those of language: stress must rather be laid on such matters as divergence of theme, or change in the Divine attitude and method.

102 pp., PB

See [order form](#) under “Gelesnoff.”

Reconciliation of All that Is Alienated

[To D.R.:] Yes, indeed, God is going to reconcile all things to Himself. However, the word “all” is always defined by the context. In this case the “all” demands *alienation*. So, the “all” that are reconciled to God are of necessity living creatures who are alienated from Him. This of course, does not include inanimate things, such as you have suggested: “rocks” and “TVs.”

“All” is absolutely all, unless limited by context. God is operating absolutely all in accord with His will. Absolutely all is out of God, through God and to God.

God will be absolutely All in absolutely all – and for all of these statements to be true it is necessary that all that is currently alienated from God be reconciled back to Him.

God does not “save” inanimate things, because they are not “lost” in the sense that living creatures are. Nonetheless, they are out of Him, and are being operated through Him, and are returning to Him – even “rocks” and “weather” included, as you have suggested.

— Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Administrations

An economy or administration (usually called a “dispensation”) has been defined as that practical adjustment or organization of affairs which is calculated to affect a desired end. It includes the thought of a dispensation, but is not confined to giving or dispensing.

The leading thought is that of *administration, management, stewardship*. ... Changes in administration are much more frequent than the grand constitutional convulsions attending a change in eons.

— A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)
[*The Divine Calendar*¹](#)

1. See [order form](#) under “Knoch.”

The Number of Administrations

That there are administrations in Scripture there is no doubt. As to their number, this is a subject for deliberation and diligent study. How general or technical one may approach the theme will determine how many administrations one will likely enumerate. What often accounts for this diversity is that there are administrations that clearly can be viewed as subset administrations within major administrations, as well as administrations spanning over multiple other administrations. As Charles H. Welch (1880-1967) has written,

Some may overlap, and more than one can run together at the same time.²

As few as two³ and as many as eighteen have been offered by Bible teachers. For example, C.I. Scofield (1843-1921) tallied seven,⁴ J. Edwin Hartill (1909-1981) listed eight,⁵ Clarence Larkin (1850-1924) totaled nine,⁶ William B. Hallman (1902-1985) listed ten,⁷ A.E. Knoch (1874-1965) and Adlai Loudy (1893-1984) counted twelve,⁸ and Charles H. Welch (1880-1967) wrote of eighteen.⁹

I here propose seven basic administrations. At a later date I will expand this list with their subsets, as well as their interrelationships.

The Administration of Dominion
The Administration of Promise
The Administration of Law
The Administration of Pentecost

2. [Alphabetical Analysis](#) (see [order form](#) under “Welch”).
3. Russell H. Schaefer (1919-1999), in his article “What is a Dispensation?” *Scripture Research*, Volume 1, Number 1 (1964), suggests “there are two vast Bible dispensations.”
4. Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Promise, Law, Grace, and Reign. [Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth](#) (see [order form](#) under “Scofield.”)
5. Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Promise, Law, Grace, Judgment, and Kingdom. *Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics*.
6. Edenic, Antediluvian, Post-Diluvian, Patriarchal, Legal, Ecclesiastical, Judgment, Messianic, and Perfect. *Dispensational Truth*.
7. Edenic, Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Pentecostal, Secret, Tribulation, Millennial, and Fullness. [Biblical Hermeneutics](#) (see [order form](#) under “Hallman.”)
8. Innocence, Conscience, Government, Promise, Law, Incarnation, Pentecostal, Transition, Secret, Wrath, Kingdom, and Fullness. [The Divine Calendar](#) (see [order form](#) under “Knoch.”) [God's Administrations](#) (see [order form](#) under “Loudy”).
9. [Alphabetical Analysis](#) (see [order form](#) under “Welch”).

The Administration of the Secret
The Administration of the Kingdom
The Administration of the Pleroma¹⁰

— Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The Administration of the *Plērōma*

The Eon of the Eons, the last Eon, will be all about the glorified Complement of Christ moving about the Universe ministering the message of the Grace of God to *all* of the Celestial beings in need of Divine reconciliation, fulfilling the mandate of Christ's Universal Headship as revealed in the Secret of Christ so that Father will become "*the All in all*"!

The Administration of the *Plērōma*¹¹ – of that which

10. "To have the **Administration of the *Plērōma*** of the seasons, to head up all in the Christ – both that in the Heavens and that on the Earth" (Ephesians 1:10, BSV). Our research also has found the translation, "*The Dispensation of the *Plērōma**,"* as well as "*the Economy of the *Plērōma**."**

*"The heading up is to occur in the dispensation of the *Plērōma* ..." – John Rucker, *Scripture Research*, Volume 4, Number 6; "The Dispensation of the Fulness – *Plērōma* – Completion" – Ray I. Psalmonds (1909-1984), *Scripture Research*, Volume 1, Number 2 (1964); also E.A. Knox (1847-1937), *The Church in the Epistle to the Ephesians* (1926), R.A. Markus (1924-2010), "*Plērōma* and Fulfillment," *Vigiliae Christianae*, Volume 8, Number 4 (1954).

**Alan Burns (1884-1929), *Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 4 (1913); R.A. Markus (*ibid.*); G.R.S. Mead (1863-1933), *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (1900) E.H. Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul*, Fortress Press (1975); Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, Stanford University Press (2005); Luigi Speranza, *Thesaurus Griecianum* (2020).

11. Simply placing Ephesians 1:10 and 3:2 in a vertical alignment will demonstrate the validity of the phrase "*the Administration of the *Plērōma**." This is especially made clear by the Greek words of the *Emphatic Diaglott* (the parentheses are mine).

Eis oikonomian tou pleromatos (ton kairon) (1:10).

completes, of the Fulness, of the Complement, of the Fulfillment, of the piece that Fills Up – is the message that needs to ring clear today, drawing the focus of *His Body Complement* to things above, to their divine position, allotment, present and future ministry, maturity, divine union and oneness with Christ and our Father!

We are Celestial Royalty! Today! This divinely given awareness – the spirit of wisdom and revelation – of the Administration of the *Plērōma* will *turn on the lights* to "*the glory which will be revealed in us*": glorified *with* Christ, glorified *as* The Christ, glorified as the Complement of the Christ, just as Christ is glorified as the Complement of the God and Father of the Universe!

— Mark Peters

BSN

TOPICS:

Major: [*Fellowship Among "Outsiders"*]: Fellowship; Outsiders; [*Reconciliation of All that is Alienated*]: Consummation; Reconciliation; [*Administrations*]: Administrations [*The Number of Administrations*]: Administrations [*The Administration of the Pleroma*]: Administration of the Pleroma.

Ten oikonomian tes charitos (ten Theou) (3:2).

If one is called "*The Dispensation of Grace*" the other should surely be called "*The Dispensation of the *Plērōma**." A.E. Knoch (1874-1965) agrees with this concept,* because he named his twelfth dispensation "*Fulness*" (i.e., *Pleroma*) on his "*The Divine Calendar*" chart. (See [order form](#) under "Knoch.")

*[**Editor:**] as also do Adlai Loudy (1893-1984) and William B. Hallman (1902-1985).



I Choose! Living Life to Its Fullest

Forty-Eight Daily Thoughts on Divine Life

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

You are alive! Yet not just alive, but alive with the very life of God! Don't allow your "What if ..." imaginations of the past or the future to lay claim to the present that God has given you. Allow the objective, unchanging truth of who God has made you in the Lord Jesus Christ to transform your mind and life as you take this spiritual journey of "*I Choose*."

185 pp., PB

See [order form](#) under "*Clyde Pilkington*."

These "choices" are not to be confused with so-called "free will." At the close of the book the author will reveal that our "choices" are nothing short of God's sovereign decree in our lives.