

Saturday, April 27, 2013—Grace School of the Bible STS Meeting—Origins of the Grace Movement in America: J.C. O’Hair 1920-1940

Introduction

- Let me begin by saying that what we are going to do over the next hour or so is only scratch the surface of O’Hair’s thought development between 1920 and 1940. When all is said and done we will have spent over 10 hours meticulously documenting O’Hair thought development as part of the *Grace History Project*. Anyone interested in the complete analysis is encouraged to check out our online classroom at GRACEHISTORYPROJECT.BLOGSPOT.COM
- Mr. O’Hair presents a couple of unique challenges for the aspiring historian. First, aside from a tape recorded personal testimony (1955) and occasional personal accounts spread throughout his writings, much of what we know about Mr. O’Hair has been handed down either audibly or in written form by others. Second, Mr. O’Hair dated very few of the over 200 works that comprise his voluminous writing ministry. This makes it very difficult to lay Mr. O’Hair’s writings on the table and read them in their chronological order and evaluate how his thinking changed over time. The following is a short summary of the unique challenges to historically analyzing O’Hair’s thought development.
 - Few of the works are dated.
 - No clear chronology.
 - Reliance on oral history.
 - Possible tampering with some of O’Hair’s writings that have been reprinted.
- This of course means that step one was to try and piece together a timeline of the order in which O’Hair’s booklets were written. The *Grace History Project* believes that the only sure way to establish this chronology was to rely on the written documents. Oral histories while interesting pose major challenges: they are not precise, and cannot be documented. As a student at Grace Bible College in the late 1990s and early 2000s, I spent a considerable amount of time in the archives room in the Bultema Library. As a result, I had firsthand knowledge of the boxes upon boxes of O’Hair’s writings and their completely unorganized state.
- My goal with this lesson is to tell two stories at the same time. First and most importantly will be the story of O’Hair’s thought development from 1920 to 1940. Second will be the story of my research and the methods I used to arrive at these conclusions.

Early Research and Conclusions

- I began my research by searching the Online O’Hair Library located on the Berean Bible Society’s webpage for any works that were clearly dated. While this did yield some results the early on picture hazy.

- One of the first books to grab my attention was *The Accuser of the Brethren*, which was written in 1945 based upon the internal evidence. One of the functions of *The Accuser of the Brethren* was to answer the charges of “Bullingerite” and heretic leveled at Pastor O’Hair by W.A. Haggai (Pastor of Brookville Baptist Church, Brookville, Mass.) and David Otis Fuller (Pastor of Wealthy St. Baptist Temple, Grand Rapids, MI) in their booklet *O’Harisim! Under the Searchlight of the Word*. In answering what he feels to be unfair characterizations, O’Hair sets forth some of the early history regarding his ministry and the resurgence of Pauline truth.
- According to O’Hair, he had already rejected water baptism for the dispensation of grace when he accepted the pastorate of the North Shore Congregational Church in July 1923.
 - “In July 1923, more than twenty-two years ago, I was called to be the pastor of North Shore Church, 1011 Wilson Ave., Chicago. When I was considered at the congregational meeting, Dr. John C. Page, formerly of Moody Bible Institute, then a member of the North Shore Church, told the members in very plain language that Mr. O’Hair did not believe in, or practice, water baptism. I received the unanimous vote of the congregation, including the vote of Dr. Page. No one has been baptized by me during these years. I have not changed my mind during these twenty-two years. On the contrary, I am more thoroughly convinced than ever before, that what I have believed for more than twenty two years is in harmony with the Word of God rightly divided.” (*Accuser*, 1-2)
- Later in *The Accuser of the Brethren*, O’Hair informs his readers about how he became convinced that water baptism is not for the church during the dispensation of grace. This conclusion was arrived at during 1920 according to the clues left by O’Hair.
 - “More than two years before (1920) I became pastor of North Shore Church (1923) I was teaching the Bible for several weeks in the old Empire Theater in Indianapolis. The work there had been almost wrecked by the Pentecostalists and their fanatical teaching. The pastor asked me if I would give a series of messages on the Book of Acts, the dispensational place of “tongues,” “miracles,” “sign healing,” “visions,” “angelic visitations,” “laying on of hands,” “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” “the sign-gifts” of I Corinthians 12:8 to 11. . . The pastor of the assembly where I was teaching announced that I would speak on the subject, “Why Tongues and Signs and Visions Ceased After Paul Reached Rome.” The Holy Spirit used that message to deliver many of the Pentecostalists, including two of their preachers. One of them the following night said, “Brother, I am completely delivered from that fanaticism; but I was just thinking that the same dispensational explanation you gave for the elimination of these sign miracles would do away with water baptism for the dispensation and age of grace.” At first, I said “I do not agree with you.” But, after I searched and studied the Scriptures diligently and saw that in every chapter in the Bible where water baptism is mentioned there is a Jewish feast, holy day, a miracle, or sign-gift, or healing, or tongues, I came to the conclusion that water baptism stands or falls with “tongues, signs, and visions.” Any intelligent exegesis that rules out one must rule out the other. A few nights later, I stated my conclusion to the congregation where I was teaching. A gentleman came forward and

said, “Brother, you believe very much the same that is taught in this pamphlet published by the Moody Bible Institute.” He handed me a pamphlet, entitled “Tongues, Signs; Not God’s Order For Today.” (*Accuser*, 2)

- According to Mr. O’Hair’s testimony in *The Accuser of the Brethren*, after the close of his ministry in Indianapolis, where he first came to understand the issue of “one baptism,” he moved on to Grand Rapids, MI where he taught the same thing.
 - “Shortly after I was in Indianapolis I went to Grand Rapids, Mich., and taught there what I taught first in Indianapolis. I made many return trips to Grand Rapids and always taught no water baptism in the dispensation of grace. But never once did I there or anywhere teach anything like the dispensationalism of Dr. E.W. Bullinger. Dr. Fuller and Mr. Haggai knew this when they wrote “O’Hairism” and they know that after I began to teach in Grand Rapids, I never stepped aside from what I was teaching when they first heard of me. They know that I am teaching today dispensationally what I have taught for many years.” (*Accuser*, 3)
- At this point in the research (November/December, 2012) my chronology had J.C. O’Hair teaching mid-Acts Pauline dispensationalism from his *Indy Insight* in 1920 till he wrote *The Accuser of the Brethren* in 1945.
- About this same time (November/December, 2012) my father notified me during a phone conversation that a former professor of mine (Dr. Dale Dewitt) from GBC was going to be giving a talk on J.C. O’Hair at the March, 2013 GGF Leadership conference in Grand Rapids, MI. In late December, just prior to Christmas and only days before my first lesson on O’Hair, I acquired Dr. Dewitt’s email address from the GGF office and send him a message. I explained what I was doing with the *Grace History Project* and sent him my research on O’Hair up to that point. Dr. Dewitt and I quickly realized that we had come to many of the same conclusions about O’Hair independent of one another and this touched off an extensive, productive, and ongoing conversation regarding J.C. O’Hair theological development.

New Information Leads to New Insights

- Early in our correspondence, Dr. Dewitt shared with me the contents of an article he was drafting for *Truth Magazine*, the periodical of the GGF titled: *The Origins of the Grace Movement: The Early Theology of John Cowen O’Hair*. Three points from this article revolutionize the course of my research and are absolutely necessary for the information I am presenting this afternoon. By adopting these points into my research grid and applying them, I was able to make a significant enough contribution to Dewitt’s article that he included me as a research consultant when it was printed in the Spring edition of *Truth Magazine*.
- Until this point, I had only been using the electronic versions of O’Hair work from the Online O’Hair Library. In contrast, Dewitt had been working with the actual pamphlets themselves and was able to establish a general chronology as well as date some of the booklets. Dewitt’s

methodology focused on identifying clearly dated booklets and then looking at what other works were already available for sale in the back. This allowed for a general chronology and publication order to emerge.

- See PowerPoint *Salvation The Elect or Whosever Which?* (1925)
- Using this method of dating, Dewitt was able to determine that after his Indy Insight of 1920, O’Hair did not go immediately on a crusade against water baptism. It was not until the end of the 1920s that O’Hair began to write extensively on the subject of water baptism.
 - See PowerPoint *Jesus Christ the Minister of the Circumcision and The Twelve Apostles and Paul* (1927)
 - *Holy Spirit Baptism—True and False*
 - *Divine Sonship and Water Baptism*
 - See PowerPoint *Have Ye Received the Holy Spirit Since Ye Believed?* (1929)
 - *Seven Questions About Water Baptism*
 - See PowerPoint *Unscriptural Cathedrals* (dates from after January, 1929)
 - *Have Ye Received the Holy Spirit Since Ye Believed?* (1929)
 - *The Great Blunder of the Church*
 - *Seven Questions Concerning Water Baptism*
 - *Buried With Him by Baptism*
- All of this proves that water baptism did not become a prominent theme in O’Hair’s writings until the end of the 1920s.
- Thirdly, Dewitt’s essay pointed out that the 1920s were time of theological transition for O’Hair. He did this by quoting clear Acts 2 statements found in *Unscriptural Cathedrals*.
 - **“I have always believed and taught that the Church began at Pentecost, and while I know with that view there arise many questions and problems; the same is true, if we postpone the beginning of the Body of Christ to the time that Paul reached Rome.”**
(*Unscriptural Cathedrals*, 26)
- While Dewitt had not clearly dated *Unscriptural Cathedrals* as of December, 2012 his research was enough to prove that my initial thoughts about O’Hair’s thinking being unchanged from his Indy Insight in 1920 till he wrote *Accuser of the Brethren* in 1945 were wrong. *Unscriptural Cathedrals* was written after 1920 but before 1945 which means that for a time after embracing a no-water position on baptism, O’Hair still held that the church began in Acts 2.

- Using Dewitt’s methodology, I was able to date *Unscriptural Cathedrals* and thereby place O’Hair’s Acts 2 statements into the chronology. This in turn allowed Dewitt to amend the dating of *UC* in his article for accuracy. We have already seen that *UC* was written sometime after the dated letter of January 1, 1929 found in *Have Ye Received the Spirit Since Ye Believed* because it is not listed in the back as being available for purchase.
 - See PowerPoint *An Epistle to Mr. Albertus Pieters* (December 1, 1931)
 - Speaks of *UC* as already being in print: “That was a thought-provoking question, even provoking, me to write my booklet entitled, “Unscriptural Cathedrals or “Are We Children of the Covenant?” (19)
- This means that *UC* was written after January 1, 1929 but before December 1, 1931. I believe it was written in late 1930 or early 1931. O’Hair was still holding a traditional Acts 2 view as late as 1931 more than ten years after his *Indy Insight*.
- Before leaving the 1920s it is important to note that during this decade O’Hair also came to understand some things about the difference between Peter’s gospel of the circumcision and Paul’s gospel of the uncircumcision. The distinction is noted but not fully developed in *The Twelve Apostles and Paul* (1927). It is not until the first edition of *The Blunder of the Church* (1929/1930) written before *UC* 1930/1931 that the distinction received more extensive treatment and development.
- In summation of this point, the 1920s were a time of maturation and development in O’Hair’s dispensational thinking. The following is a summary of his views from 1920-1930.
 - Water baptism, tongues, signs have no place in this dispensation.
 - The church/dispensation of grace began at Pentecost.
 - The Great Commission is not for this dispensation.
 - Difference between the gospel of the circumcision committed to Peter and the gospel of the uncircumcision committed to Paul.

1930 Through 1935

- As we have seen above O’Hair entered the 1930s holding the traditional view that the church began at Pentecost. The years between 1930 and 1935 would prove to be very tumultuous times for O’Hair as the baptism controversy of the 1930s broke out in full force. It was also during this time period that O’Hair began to question his traditional Acts 2 position.
- On March 6, 1933 J.C. O’Hair addressed the President and Secretary of Illinois Christian Fundamentals Ministries’ Association concerning the baptism question in letter titled *Much Water—Little Water—No Water*.
 - See PowerPoint *Much Water—Little Water—No Water*

- In this dated letter from 1933, O’Hair is still very unclear about when the church the body of Christ began. He questions the traditional belief that the church began in Acts 2 but does not offer and definite alternatives.
 - “Were not all the apostles baptized before Christ said, “upon this rock I will build my church?” **Were they not saved several years before they became members of the Body of Christ, if they became members of that Body on the day of Pentecost?** According to I Corinthians 12:13, they became members of some body.” (*Much, Little, No Water*, 9)
 - “I am quite sure that most of us, who claim to be Dispensational Fundamentalists, realize that there was a transition period beginning with the Day of Pentecost, whether we believe that Gods’ dealing with the Nation Israel were suddenly cut off with the message of Stephen, recorded in the seventh chapter of Acts, or that the withdrawal of God’s Kingdom offer to that people was gradual and not terminated until the close of the Book of Acts. But we ask the question, **what right has any one to say that we are living in the dispensation that began at the Day of Pentecost, and then qualify that statement by saying we should not observe the order of the second chapter of Acts or the eighty chapter of Acts, but go on to the tenth chapter of acts, and forbid some other Christian to carry that progress, by the same principle, on the close of the Book?**” (*Much, Little, No Water*, 17)
- Also in 1933, O’Hair wrote *Bullingerism, Pentecostalism, and the Plymouth Brethren (BPPB)* in response to James M. Gray’s series of articles in *Moody Monthly* titled “Dispensationalism Running Wild.” (O’Hair, *Vagary*, 38) *BPPB* is critically important in terms of understanding the charges of “Bullignerism” that were leveled at O’Hair during the 1930s and thereafter. Foremost in O’Hair’s mind during this period was developing a consistent dispensational position that would answer the Pentecostal fanaticism affecting the body of Christ. In *BPPB*, O’Hair summarizes the beliefs of what he calls Plymouth Brethren Dispensationalists who follow the general teaching set forth by C.I. Scofield in his *Reference Bible* and Bullingersim or those who follow the dispensational teachings of EWB.
- Generally O’Hair views himself as having more in common with the dispensationalism of JND (Acts 2): “Except in one or two points I would agree with Mr. Darby’s Dispensationalism rather than with that of Dr. Bullinger.” (*BPPB*) While O’Hair did reject much of Bulligner’s teaching he did agree with EWB on the following point, “I cannot accept much of the teaching of Dr. Bullinger, but I do accept this most important truth which both Dr. Bullinger and Dr. Scofield accepted as God’s truth, which every student of the Word of God must accept or cease to condemn and criticize Pentecostalism namely, that a Dispensational change took place with the close of the Book of Acts.” O’Hair viewed this aspect of EWB’s dispensationalism as the only corrective for the plague of Pentecostalism consider the following statement found in *BPPB*:

- “If we have the curative for this menace, shall we withhold it because of the fear of controversy? Where would we be today, if men like Luther and Calvin and Darby had kept silent for fear of controversy? Fanaticism is just as much a menace to God’s truth for this age as is Ritualism. . . **So-called “ultra-dispensationalism” is the only such explanation. Therefore our choice is between the so-called Ultra-dispensationalism and Fanaticism.** If as a Dispensational student of God’s Word, you must take your choice between no water baptism or Pentecostalism, what is your choice? . . . **Israel was not set aside until Paul pronounced that final judgment recorded in Acts 28:25 to 28. . . even if we agree that the Church or Body of Christ began on the Day of Pentecost— we must admit that there was the overlapping of the Kingdom dispensation continuing beyond the death of the King until Israel was finally set aside. Right on to the close of the Book of Acts there is the mixture of Kingdom truths with the Grace of God. . . We must bear in mind that Paul had a peculiar two-fold ministry, different in several respects from the ministry of the Twelve. This two-fold ministry was fulfilled by him until Israel was finally set aside with the close of Acts. After that time Paul gave forth a message which was different from any message God had ever revealed to and through any of his servants. With this new revelation Paul never again became a Jew to the Jews, for his new message had chiefly to do with a mystery among the Gentiles, and the proclamation of the unsearchable riches among the Gentiles, the foolish nation by whom God was to anger Israel.” (BPPB)**
- These statements combined with O’Hair’s rejection of water baptism it is easy to see why O’Hair was being called a “Bullingerite.” Much of what he says at this point in his ministry shares commonalties with the teachings of EWB. The *Grace History Project* believes that the publication of *BPPB* in 1933 is what promoted H.A. Ironside to write *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* in 1935.
- The first edition of *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* by H.A. Ironside dates from early 1935. On May 20, 1935, J.C. O’Hair addressed a letter to H.A. Ironside that he titled, *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren*. The opening line reads, “I have just finished reading your new book, “Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth,” the reprint of your “Serving and Waiting” articles, concerning ultra-dispensationalism.” (*Wrongly Deriding*, 4)
- When I first read *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* I could not understand why O’Hair responded so harshly to what appears to have been a critique of Acts 28ism not the mid-Acts view. It has only been in the past four months (since late December, 2012) that I have come to understand why. When O’Hair began to question the traditional Acts 2 position he gravitated for awhile towards Acts 28ism. During 1935, both in *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren* and in the issues of *Bible Study for Bereans* that began in August, O’Hair makes many comments that resemble the thinking of Acts 28ism. This would explain why O’Hair took such offense to Ironside’s publication. In short, when *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* is read in its historical context, rather than in isolation, a new understanding of the thought history emerges. O’Hair believed that Ironside was addressing his brand of dispensationalism, in *Is Water Baptism a Watery Grave Witness* O’Hair states:

- “When “the archbishop” was writing a series of articles in “Serving and Waiting,” which he later printed in his pamphlet, “Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth,” **I heard that he remarked the book was written against my dispensationalism.**” (*Watery Grace*, 3-4)
- On May 20, 1935 O’Hair addressed a letter to Dr. H.A. Ironside titled, *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren* in which he voiced his many objections to the dispensational teaching found in *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*. As a general rule, the reason why the two men disagreed dispensationally was because of their different views of when Israel was set aside.
 - “As I have said to you before, our differences as to water baptism, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Dispensation of the Grace of God and the Dispensation of the Mystery, are because we do not agree as to when the Nation Israel was set aside.” (*Wrongly Deriding*, 11)
- In the following quotations O’Hair makes statements in his response to Ironside that are very consistent with Acts 28 theology. Specifically he speaks of the dispensation of the mystery not having been revealed until the close of the book of Acts.
 - “I cannot definitely fix the time when the risen Lord revealed the mystery of Ephesians and Colossians to the Apostle Paul but I do know that there is no statement concerning the “Dispensation of the Mystery” during the “Acts” period. There must have been some reason, in the mind of God, why He withheld the writing of Ephesians 3:8 and 9 until after He pronounced His judgment upon the Nation Israel in Acts 28:25 to 28. I believe that there is a very definite turning-point with the close of the “Acts” period, **whether or not we call it the close of the transitional period or the beginning of a new dispensation.**” (*Wrongly Deriding*, 15-16)
 - “I believe that the “Times of the Gentiles” politically or governmentally began with Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem about 606 B.C., **and the “Times of the Gentiles” religiously or spiritually began after God’s judgment upon Israel pronounced in Acts 28:25 to 28.**

There is such a radical change in the program of the Church after the close of the “Acts” period that it might as well be considered a different Church or a different dispensation. The close of Acts certainly closed a “transitional” period, which was in the mind of the Lord as well as in the mind of the apostles, **or it marked the beginning of a new dispensation.** From my Bible study it is difficult for me to make the New Testament (Covenant) dispensation and the “Dispensation of the Mystery” one and the same: To my mind I Corinthians 9:20 to 22, Acts 20:16, Acts 21:20, Acts 23:4, Acts 23:6, Acts 24:6, in the light of Philippians 3:6 to 12, **proves that Israel was before God as a nation until the quotation of those significant words from Isaiah 6:9 and 10 after Paul reached Rome. That marks either the end of a transition period or the beginning of new dispensation, with the revelation of truths theretofore unknown.**” (*Wrongly Deriding*, 17-18)

- These pro-Acts 28 statements are not an aberration. O’Hair continued to make such statements as well as promote similar statements made by others. Beginning in August of 1935, O’Hair began publishing a monthly Bible study magazine titled *Bible Study for Bereans*. The magazine was issued from August, 1935 through July, 1937. For the historian these magazines are a God send

because they allow us to see month by month over a two year period how O’Hair’s thinking changed. Furthermore, they are dated so there is no question as to where O’Hair stood theologically within any given month. Lastly, an analysis of the contents of these documents reveals a time of great changes in O’Hair’s thinking. In general we have observed the following periods of progression in O’Hair’s thinking throughout the years covered by *Bible Study for Bereans*:

- Towards Acts 28 (August, 1935—December, 1935)—this period is characterized by pro-Acts 28 statements from the pen of O’Hair and his companions as they seem to be wading through their options after having largely rejected the traditional Acts 2 position.
- Anit-Acts 2 and Anti-Acts 28 Period (January, 1935—June, 1936)—during this time period O’Hair and his companions are clearly against the traditional view of the church beginning at Pentecost. Likewise it becomes clear that O’Hair and his companions have read and rejected the teachings of Welch and Bullinger. Beginning with the January, 1936 issue an abrupt shift is observed as O’Hair takes a decided anti-Acts 28 tone.
- Towards Mid-Acts (July, 1936-July, 1937)—having rejected much of what Welch and Bullinger have to say, during this period O’Hair begins the process of transitioning away from Acts 28ism towards the Mid-Acts position.

Towards Acts 28 (August, 1935—December, 1935)

- The following is a sampling of the pro-Acts 28 statements that appeared in the magazine between August, 1936 and December, 1935.
 - **“For the “Dispensation of the Mystery” special Divine choice was made of the instrument for the revelation and this peculiar ministry was committed to the Apostle Paul. But it was not made known until the crisis was reached, in Acts 28, by the setting aside of Israel. . . In this dispensation “hearings”, “tongues” and other sign-gifts have ceased. These passed away with the setting aside of the people Israel (Acts 28:25 to 28) and connected with this distinct message, we are enjoined to keep the sevenfold unity, Ephesians 4:4 to 6. . . It is a great blunder to have Israel set aside before Acts 28:25 to 28 or to confuse the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5 with Israel’s water ceremony. Water could never add a sinner to Christ.”** (Vincent Bennett, “The Dispensation of the Mystery” October, 1935)

“NINTH—IN EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS WE LEARN THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAKS OF THE MYSTERY IN CONNECTION WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST. THE WORD “MYSTERY” MEANS “SECRET”. IT IS APPARENT THEN, THAT UP TO THE TIME THAT PAUL WROTE EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS, GOD HAD KEPT THE TRUTH CONCERNING THE BODY OF CHRIST A SECRET. IT WAS GOD’S SECRET.” (J.C. O’Hair, “Some Simple Thought Concerning Body Truth” November, 1935)

- **“Paul’s later Epistles have a distinct message for this age. In them is found truth for us concerning the Church which is His Body, as distinct from kingdom truth for Israel. May God reveal to us what is the hope of our calling, character and destiny! To this end we are going to study the Epistle to the Ephesians which was written by the Apostle Paul during his imprisonment at Rome, after the final rejection of Israel and the judicial sentence in Acts 28:27 and 28.”** (Vincent Bennett, “Brief Studies in Ephesians” December, 1935)
- The October issue all contains extensive reprints from *Do We Wrongly Divide the Word of Truth: An Open Letter to Harry A. Ironside* by Otis Q. Sellers. O’Hair quotes the following sections from the Sellers letter in the October, 1935 issue of *Bible Study for Bereans*: “Did Israel Fall at the Cross,” “Concerning the Actual Words of Christ,” “Concerning Mark 16 and the Present Dispensation,” and “Concerning Miracles in Acts.” Presently we have on our desk a complete copy of Brother Sellers’ letter to Ironside. An examination the Sellers letter reveals that it is very Acts 28ish in its thinking. Brother Sellers maintains the following positions: the dispensational boundary should be drawn in Acts 28, defends Bullinger’s postscript theory with respect to Romans 16:25-27, and argues that the revelation of the mystery concerning the body of Christ was not made known during the Acts period. (Sellers, 16-26)

1936 Through 1940

- As noted above, the January, 1936 edition of *Bible Study Bereans* contains a monumental shift away from the Acts 28ism that O’Hari promoted the previous year.
 - **“I have tried to see a new Body beginning after that important climax in Acts 28:25 to 28; but I have seen too much spiritual disaster result from unsound exegesis and fanciful speculation of well meaning brethren, who have not only distinguished between things that differ, but between imaginary differences.** Many of them begin by eliminating all that pertains to the New Covenant and they proceed to eliminate some things that they imagine are exclusively associated with the New Covenant, dropping the Lord’s Supper, the rapture of I Thessalonians 4:13 to 18, the judgment seat of II Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10, the believer’s need of a high Priest, Intercessor, or Advocate. These eliminations are only stepping stones toward other eliminations. . . Beginning the Body of Christ, of which we are members, this side of Acts 28:25 to 28, it leaves it optional with the individual member, according to his judgment or inclination, as to what orders he accepts from Romans, Galatians and Corinthians. The selections and rejections may be according to the peculiar fancies of the different individual Christians. By such an unwise, unsound and unscriptural procedure many unconsciously and unintentionally use the pen-knife of so-called dispensationalism joining with Jehudi. I am satisfied that the Enemy is responsible for these “extremists” to hinder the progress that has been made in recent years to uncover the glorious message of salvation by grace so long covered up in denominational creeds and religious traditions, and recover the blessed truth of the One Body.” (O’Hair, “Is the One Body of Romans the One Body of Ephesians” January, 1936)

- “To teach that all that the Holy Spirit wrote by the pen of the Apostle Paul in Romans and II Corinthians was known to Moses and the prophets and is mentioned in their writings, is certainly not the mark of intelligent and careful Bible searching. **And likewise, to agree that the mystery refers to that which was “unprophesied” but revealed by the risen Christ, and then teach that that mystery is not found in some of Paul’s Epistles, written during the “Acts” period, is teaching wholly unworthy of any Christian who passes for a competent and spiritual Bible teacher. On the other hand, to teach that there are not glorious truths presented in Paul’s prison Epistles, not found in his other Epistles, regardless of the time he received the revelation of these truths is just as absurd.**” (O’Hair, “Is the One Body of Romans the One Body of Ephesians” January, 1936)

- **“That the Church of Christ, which existed before Paul reached Rome, was called “one Body”, no intelligent person would think of denying; for no language could be more simple than this statement found in Romans 12:4 and 5; “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one Body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” But these brethren, who fix the date of the beginning of the Body of Ephesians and Colossians after Paul’s arrival at Rome, state that the Body of Romans is a different Body, although it was the Church of God in Christ.**

No student should deny that in Ephesians and Colossians there is a position; that there are possessions; that there are glories; that there is a ministry belonging to the Body of Christ, not mentioned’ in Paul’s pre-prison Epistles. **But let us show, by stating the blessings which are common to the Body of the “Acts” period and the Body of the later period, that the two Bodies are identical; at the same time agreeing with the “later-date” brethren that there is a new administration and order in the “Post-Acts” Church. This is quite different from teaching that there are two separate, different, or distinct Bodies.**” (O’Hair, “Is the One Body of Romans the One Body of Ephesians” January, 1936)

- This article represents a drastic change in thinking when compared with the statements O’Hair was making in 1935. O’Hair concluded this article by including a list of twenty reasons that prove that the body of Romans 12:4-5 and Ephesians 4:5 are the same body.

- From January, 1936 till the publication ceased in July, 1937 O’Hair and companions argued against Plymouth Brethren Dispensationalism and Acts 28ism. Beginning in about July, 1936 they began a process of refinement in an attempt to answer the following general questions: If the church did not begin in Acts 2 (to early) and it did not begin in Acts 28 (to late) then when did it begin?

- When circulation of the magazine ceased in July, 1937 clear mid-Acts statements had not yet been written. Major advancements had been made but the eventual conclusion had not yet been reached.
 - See PowerPoint: *Bible Study for Bereans* (July, 1937)
 - See PowerPoint: *God's Reign of Grace For the Human Race* (Published after July, 1937)
 - See PowerPoint: *The Dispensational Razzle-Dazzle* (Published April, 1938)

- This of course means that *God's Reign of Grace* was published during a roughly nine month window between the final issue of *Bible Study for Bereans* (July, 1937) and *The Dispensational Razzle-Dazzle* (April, 1938). The *Grace History Project* believes that *God's Reign of Grace* contains the first clear Mid-Acts statements available in print. Consequently, it was not until sometime between July, 1937 and April, 1938 that O'Hair finally came to a definitive position on when the body of Christ began.

- On page nineteen we find our first clear mid-Acts statement. It is here that O'Hair argues that a dispensational change took place between Acts 5:30 and Ephesians 1:19 to 22. Israel was set aside according to Romans 11:15 pave the way for Paul's ministry of reconciliation outlined in I Corinthians 5:16 to 21, according to O'Hair. Therefore, the body of Christ began before Paul wrote I Corinthians.
 - "When we acknowledge that there is a great difference between Christ exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and Christ above all principalities in the heavens, Head of the Church which is His Body, this question must follow: "did a dispensational change take place between Acts 5:30 and Ephesians 1:19 to 22?" The answer must be an emphatic "Yes".

It is absurd to say that Israel had been set aside when Peter proclaimed the message of Acts 5:30 and 31. It is also equally absurd to say that Israel had not been set aside when Paul wrote Ephesians. Therefore, Israel was set aside some time between the time these two messages were given. The casting away of Israel brought the reconciling of the Gentiles. Romans 11:15. This reconciliation ministry is proclaimed in II Corinthians 5:16 to 21. Therefore Israel had been cast away before that Epistle was written. Although the final doom was not pronounced until Acts 28:25 to 28." (*God's Reign of Grace*, 19)

- Ultimately O'Hair teaches that divine judgment fell upon Israel between the day of Pentecost and the year Romans was written. In short, the body of Christ began during the Acts period before Paul wrote Romans (Acts 20).
 - "Romans tells the story of the casting-away of Israel by God. It first tells the story of the casting-away of the Gentiles by God. We quote part of these two stories:

"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves." "For this cause God gave them up

unto vile affections.” “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” Romans 1:24, 1:26 to 28. “God gave them up”—“God gave them over.” This is what happened to the nations. God cast them away.

Now let us note what happened to Israel. “God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear; unto this day.” Romans 11:8. “Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back away.” Romans 11:10. “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” Romans 11:15. “For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee.” Romans 11:21.

This awful Divine judgment fell upon Israel sometime between the day of Pentecost and the year Romans was written.” (God’s Reign of Grace, 24-25)

- By 1939, thanks to the efforts of O’Hair, Baker, and others the mid-Acts dispensational position had been identified and was in the process of being ironed out. It is important to note that O’Hair did not immediately begin the church in Acts 13 but before Paul wrote Romans or sometime before Acts 20.
- In 1939 Mr. O’Hair called an organizational meeting at North Shore Church for the purpose of supporting these (F.E. Holland and F.P. Pickett) and other missionaries who had or would take a stand for the Grace Message. The name chosen for the new mission board was *Worldwide Grace Testimony*, a missionary society for the furtherance of the Pauline gospel. (Reich, 8)
- Shortly after the formation of Worldwide Grace Testimony (WGT) in 1939, Pastor O’Hair drafted a booklet titled, *Pentecostalism, Bullingerism and the Worldwide Grace Testimony* (probably 1940). The purpose of this pamphlet was to address charges being leveled against mission by H.A. Ironside and others that the WGT were Bullingerites. In defending the WGT against their attackers, O’Hair clearly outlines the dispensational beliefs of the Mission and its supporters. An analysis of these statements clearly indicates that the WGT was a Mid-Acts institution organized around a Mid-Acts dispensational approach to Scripture.

- “The World Wide Grace Testimony teaches that the dispensation of the grace of God did not begin with Peter and Pentecost, but with the Apostle Paul after Israel had rejected Christ in resurrection, as well as in incarnation; **but they teach that this was before Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, therefore before the close of the Acts period.** .

The World Wide Grace Testimony . . . differ in their dispensationalism from other Fundamentalists who say that “the dispensation of the grace of God” began with Peter and the Eleven on the day of Pentecost and with Dr. Bullinger who taught that it did not begin until after the close of Acts. They agree with the Fundamentalist leader, referred to as “the archbishop of fundamentalism,” that it began after Israel rejected Christ in resurrection. Every Premillenarian is a dispensationalist and they all believe Romans 11:30, Romans 11:11 and Romans 11:15, that the gospel of grace was sent to Gentiles by

Paul when and because of Israel's unbelief and fall, when and because Israel was cast away. They differ as to the date of Israel's fall. **The World Wide Grace Testimony teaches that Acts 3:12 to 26, Acts 5:29 to 32, Luke 23:34, Acts 13:29 to 36, and Acts 13:45 and 46 prove that the fall of Israel did not take place until after the ministry of Peter and the Eleven to Israel and the household of Cornelius, recorded in the first eleven chapters of Acts, that during the years covered by those eleven chapters the Twelve were using the keys of the kingdom of heaven.** Certainly Acts 10:28 and Acts 11:1 to 4 and 19 prove that the Twelve had not received the dispensation mentioned by Paul in Ephesians 3:1 to 4. (*Bullingerism, Pentecostalism, and the Worldwide Grace Testimony*)

- Such was the beginning of the organized Grace Movement in the United States. J.C. O'Hair was teaching no-water baptism for the body of Christ for almost 20 years before he was able to articulate a clear mid-Acts dispensational position. O'Hair entered the 1930s holding a traditional Acts 2 view. As he became convinced that Acts 2 was not the beginning of the body of Christ he migrated toward Acts 28ism for a time. Eventually after much study, O'Hair became convinced that Acts 28ism was also wrong and began a lengthy process of refinement. As O'Hair moved backwards from Acts 28 toward the middle section of Acts he first taught that the church began before Paul wrote Romans i.e., Acts 20. Later after further refinement, O'Hair came to believe and teach that the body of Christ began in Acts 13, however, this insight lies beyond the confines of the 1930s.

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