



by Dr. Dale DeWitt and Bryan Ross

# The Origins of the Grace Movement

The Theology of John Cowen O'Hair into the Nineteen Thirties



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As printed in GGF’s *Truth Magazine* in three parts, Jan-Mar, Vol. 63, Issue 4 (2014), Apr-Jun and Jul-Sep, Vol. 64, Issues 1 and 2 (2014). Footnotes appear here as endnotes.

## *Into the 1930s*

J. C. O’Hair’s theology in the 1930s developed from the distinctive details of the 1920s. He probably heard accusations of “Bullingerism” over his views of miracles, the origin of the church, and baptism well before 1930. Tensions increased on these views through forceful public critiques of traditional baptism practices, Pentecostalism, and the Pentecost origin of the church, although he held positive views of the latter until the mid-1930s. He clearly thought he could dispel the “Bullingerism” charges with bold pamphleteering. Although he thought of himself as a twentieth-century reformer, he could not have anticipated the tensions developing in his own thought as the storm peaked in 1935. Still, he never wavered from his sense of God’s call or from the view of miracles, church, and baptism gained in 1920 at Indianapolis. This article discusses O’Hair’s developing theology and issues leading to the theology of the grace movement by 1944.

## Perspectives on the Decade

By the early 1930s O’Hair had read Sir Robert Anderson’s *The Silence of God*—certainly by 1935 and probably by 1933 as far as we can document. By 1935 he was following Anderson’s thinking about “the Pentecostal dispensation” and Israel’s possible repentance extending to the end of Acts, even using at times Anderson’s own words and phrases. The *Silence of God* went through at least eight editions between 1897 and his death in 1918. These many editions show its popularity during the period from O’Hair’s conversion (1899) to his entry into full-time ministry (1917). Widely read during this period, the book seems to have been discussed quietly by millenarian and prophetic conference speakers, and other teachers and evangelists. O’Hair reports that he saw a portrait of Anderson on the wall of President James Gray’s office at Moody Bible Institute. One reason for thinking he read *Silence of God* during this period (but not proof) is that his host at Indianapolis in 1920, James Nipper, seems to have been acquainted with O’Hair’s view that the sign-gifts ceased when Paul reached Rome—a view explicitly stated by Anderson. *The Silence of God* may also have influenced A. E. Bishop’s pamphlet, *Tongues, Signs and Visions, Not God’s Order for Today* (early 1920), which O’Hair says opened his eyes,<sup>1</sup> and which he cited repeatedly in the 1930s and after.

One issue he had not resolved in 1930, or even by 1935, was the time of the church’s origin. In *Unscriptural Cathedrals* (ca 1931) he still believed the church began at Pentecost, even though he had raised questions about this view in the 1920s. During at least part of the two years he published the monthly magazine, *Bible Study for Bereans* (August 1935 July 1937), O’Hair was still not only unresolved over the beginning of the church, but was also entertaining the Acts 28 view, thus supplying fodder to critics’ cries of Bullingerism. A related issue was the time of Israel’s fall and judgment, often discussed by contemporaries as a single moment rather than a process. Calling the whole of Acts a “transition period” also kept the question open and unresolved. By the time of *Bullingerism, Pentecostalism, and Worldwide Grace Testimony* in the early 1940s (probably 1945), he had firmly decided that Israel’s fall and the beginning of the church occurred before Paul wrote Romans. (When organized in 1944-1945, the Grace Gospel Fellowship stated that the church began “before Paul wrote his first epistle.”) In this form the church-origin issue was resolved and stabilized.<sup>2</sup>

Another distinctive issue of the 1930s was his call to the churches to abandon water baptism as a divisive, confusing and ill-defined practice. This call began about 1928 with the very assertive pamphlet, *Seven Questions Concerning Water Baptism*. Then *The Great Blunder of the Church* appeared. O’Hair produced more pamphlets on water baptism, including *Much Water—Little Water—No Water; When is a Baptist not a Baptist?* (1942), and *Is Baptism a Watery Grave Witness?* and several others. The repeated argument in these and other pamphlets was the New Testament linkage of water baptism with miracles, the tie of both with Israel’s potential realization of its kingdom, and then its fall and judgment. He argued that both signs and baptism ceased as Israel fell from God’s favor in Acts’ later chapters, giving his teaching a Bullinger-like look and suggesting the church of this dispensation may not have begun until Acts 28. Thus the stage was set for the events and theology of the mid-1930s.

## Subjects of the 1930s Pamphlets

The pamphlets of the 1930s total about eighty-five—more than the output of the 1920s. In 1945 O’Hair spoke of one hundred thirty-four “books” (pamphlets) he had written;<sup>3</sup> we do not know how he derived this number. Most pamphlets were published alone. Several were reissued with another pamphlet; sometimes two or three were issued or reissued under one cover; still others were first articles in *Bible Study for Bereans*, concurrently or later issued as stand-alone pamphlets. The increase in quantity during the 1930s reflects the intensity of controversy and its main themes. This summary and the article’s Appendix pamphlet registry cover the 1930s, even though the controversy continued into the 1940s with new critics. The subject distribution is about as follows:

- 18 on dispensational ideas and study
- 13 on the church, Bullingerism and related issues
- 13 on baptism, Bullingerism and related issues
- 7 on books of the Bible
- 7 on varied topics
- 6 on cults and denominations
- 5 on America, world issues and the Jews
- 4 on Christ, salvation and grace
- 4 on Second Coming or eschatology
- 4 on charismatic issues or Pentecostalism
- 2 on Modernism

The two categories with thirteen items respectively (baptism and church) contain many parallels and repetitions. With his thought focused on baptism and church-origin issues and with charges of Bullingerism over both, O’Hair struggled his way through a decade of attacks and controversy. Strangely, Pentecostals seem to have mostly ignored his rejection of signs and wonders. On the other hand, he did not abandon his lifelong evangelism preaching or teaching on Christ, salvation, grace, the Second Coming, cults and denominations, and Modernism and Pentecostalism—all of which are represented in at least a few pamphlets through the decade.

## *The Controversy of 1930-1940*

Entangled in theological controversy and several derived theological issues of the 1930s, O’Hair wrote in 1935:

. . . I did not bring this subject [water baptism] to open controversy. As pastor of North Shore Church for the past twelve years I have never baptized anyone. . . . For nine years I never preached sermons on water baptism. I taught people of this assembly in Bible classes. We had 2,500 sinners walk down the aisles to accept Christ since I have been here.<sup>4</sup>

By 1945 O’Hair reported 5,000 conversions to Christ at North Shore Church (1923 to 1945), and a Sunday School ten times the size of what it was in 1923.<sup>5</sup> The balanced perspectives in this summary tell us how he apportioned his preaching and teaching activities at North Shore Church; they also dispel the idea that he was a “faddist” consumed in the pulpit with his opposition to water baptism. The controversy he refers to was, however, occasioned by his writings of the 1920s, especially *Seven Questions Concerning Water Baptism*, *The Twelve Apostles and Paul*, *The Great Blunder of the Church*, and *Unscriptural Cathedrals*. The first of these pamphlets stirred immersionists; the second and third challenged Fundamentalists on the origin of the church; and the fourth aimed at Reformed covenant theology and infant baptism.

Chicago and Grand Rapids were major backdrops for teaching and preaching activity. O’Hair’s church was in Chicago, but he made frequent trips to Grand Rapids—a distance of about 175 miles. Some preaching and teaching venues were Mel Trotter’s City Mission, the newly formed Calvary Udenominational Church in Grand Rapids,<sup>6</sup> and Maranatha Bible Conference in Muskegon. The opponents in West Michigan became Albertus Pieters of Western Theological Seminary (1930-1931) and David Otis Fuller, Pastor of Wealthy Street Baptist Church (from 1934). In Chicago, the critics were President James Gray of Moody Bible Institute and Pastor Harry Ironside of Moody Memorial Church. Gray and Ironside were once friendly Fundamentalist colleagues, so too, the evangelistic millenarian Reformed Pastor Harry Hager of Chicago, and Grand Rapids millenarian Martin DeHaan. O’Hair’s friendship with Muskegon millenarian Pastor-scholar Harry Bultema outlasted these early contacts of the 1920s.

An article (or two) in the Reformed Church paper, *The Leader*, by Albertus Peters (about 1931),<sup>7</sup> would have been a sign that a heated controversy was building. Adding to the fire were two articles by James Gray in *Moody Monthly* on “Dispensationalism Running Wild” (1933) and “Water Baptism and Signs” (1935). Although Gray said O’Hair was not in mind,<sup>8</sup> the titles and content were provocative. Then Harry Ironside threw gasoline on the flames with *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (1935). Shortly after the Ironside booklet appeared, David Otis Fuller began speaking of “O’Hairism” (alluding to Bullingerism) in his pulpit and in the *Grand Rapids Press*. Fuller then induced his friend, W. A. Haggai, pastor of Brookville Baptist Church in Massachusetts, to use his (Fuller’s) sermons and Grand Rapids Press articles on O’Hairism to create a pamphlet of the same title under Haggai’s authorship.<sup>9</sup> His pamphlet, *O’Hairism*, appeared about 1940 with four more editions through the 1950s.

In replies, O’Hair often expressed wonderment that his Fundamentalist colleagues should make themselves his enemies when he was only repeating biblical interpretations already in place in several of their writings. They themselves had voiced views like O’Hair’s on Israel, the kingdom, the great commission, the kingdom preaching of the gospels and early chapters of Acts, the transitional nature of Acts, and the uniquely Pauline origin and revelation of the church. Pieters—not especially interested in these ideas (1931)—rather thought O’Hair’s views threatened infant baptism and Reformed covenant theology with its view of the identity of Israel and the church. Gray and Ironside were most concerned over ideas that sounded Bullinger-like.

### Publications of the 1930s Debate in Sequence

Since both public and private writings shaped O’Hair’s theology, it is worthwhile to set out O’Hair’s related writings, the opposition’s writings, and O’Hair’s responses, in order (notes added, along with relevant pamphlets from the late 1920s and the post-1935 period for context):

1928

- O’Hair, *Seven Questions Concerning Water Baptism*. His first pamphlet aggressively engaging immersionists.

1929

- O’Hair, *The Great Blunder of the Church*. This pamphlet provided some basic concepts for W. A. Haggai’s later criticism.

1930

- O’Hair, *Unscriptural Cathedrals*. Engages Reformed covenant theology, the covenant of grace and infant baptism. See below at 1931.
- Ironside, *Baptism: What Saith the Scripture?* Third Edition. Appears to allude to O’Hair on p. 21.

1931

- O’Hair, *A Letter to Mr. Albertus Pieters*. Pieters had written one or more articles against O’Hair and DeHaan’s premillennialism, and against their anti-infant baptism views.

1933

- Gray, “Dispensationalism Running Wild,” in *Moody Monthly* (Feb.).
- O’Hair, *Much Water—Little Water—No Water: A Letter to the Illinois Christian Fundamentals Ministers’ Association* (Mar. 6). Asks the Association to discuss his views on baptism. Presents a tightly reasoned argument for his baptism view.
- O’Hair, *Bullingerism, Pentecostalism and the Plymouth Brethren* (written late 1933 or early 1934, shortly after *Much Water*. . .). Outlines three basic positions on the origin of the church.
- Gray, “Water Baptism and Signs.” Explicitly anti- O’Hair.

1934

- O’Hair, *Berean Bible Conference*. A pamphlet-length invitation to a Bible conference to be held May 7-11 at North Shore Church. Mentions the Gray articles of 1933 and raises questions for thought in preparation for the conference.

1935

- O’Hair, *When is a Fine Piece of Exegesis a Vagary?* Reply to Gray (1935).
- Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*. A now famous booklet aimed at Bullingerism, but with O’Hair in mind, thus inflaming Bullingerism fears.
- O’Hair, *Art Thou He that Troubleth Israel?*, (May 15). An open letter to Ironside answering *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*.
- O’Hair, *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren*, (May 20). Another letter to Ironside about problems with *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*.
- O’Hair, *Purile and Childish Diatribes: Water Baptism and the Scriptures*, (May 20). Yet another letter to Ironside calling attention to more inconsistencies in *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*.

1935-1937

- O’Hair (et al), *Bible Study for Bereans*; a periodical with articles by O’Hair, Baker, Bultema, Bennett, Sellers and others. Very important since it provides a window on O’Hair’s month-by-month thinking during its two-year publication.

1937

- David Otis Fuller’s Grand Rapids sermon and newspaper article on O’Hairism.
- O’Hair letter to Fuller and his church board on the abusive sermon, bulletin, and newspaper articles under the title, “O’Hairism.”

1939

- Haggai, *O'Hairism! Under the Searchlight of the Word*. First Edition. Fuller induced Haggai to write the pamphlet. Haggai isolates eight “pillars” of O’Hairism—some fair, some unfair including Bullingerism accusations.

1942

- O’Hair, *Is Baptism a Watery Grave Witness?* Questions this claim of Ironside about the meaning of baptism in Ironside’s 1930 edition of the pamphlet, *Baptism: What Saith the Scripture?*

### Personal Aspects of the Debate

From 1920 on, O’Hair argues that both signs and baptism were always part of Jesus and the twelve apostles’ message of Israel’s available messianic kingdom, and that both diminished during the later chapters of Acts and ended when Paul reached Rome (Acts 28). By 1936, the debate with Gray and Ironside is waning in intensity, but also enters a new stage and form with Fuller and Haggai. His reasons for aggressively responding to criticisms and accusations are not hard to find. He states he did not intend to start a new denomination, create theological novelties, or devise a new view of baptism.

O’Hair’s concern was the divisive dispute inflicted on the churches by Pentecostal fanaticism and fraud, and the chaotic water baptism controversies among the denominations—over both its practice and meaning. He also spoke of his calling, his duty to recover lost dispensational truth, and of God’s grace. He likened his calling to that of the Reformers, especially Luther. Much of the hurtful criticism was the false label of Bullingerism. Many pamphlets were about the bottom line of what he really believed, the interpretation of basic biblical texts, and his own and his opponents’ consistency. The decade of controversy was tense and troubling, but he never lost his sense of God’s call, grace and truth, or of the appropriate allotments of ministry energy to its several functions.

### *Bullingerism and Baptism*

Late in the 1920s, O’Hair issued his first pamphlet aimed at engaging and challenging all forms of immersion baptism: *Seven Questions Concerning Water Baptism*. Earlier he had published *Buried with Him by Baptism*—the first substantial non-water baptism pamphlet after the Indianapolis insight of 1920. *Buried with Him* . . . was more or less cautious; *Seven Questions* . . . was remarkably aggressive in challenging the thinking and practice of immersion theologies (chiefly Baptist and the Christian Church). In it he embraced Bullinger’s view that baptism belonged only to Israel’s remnant of the Acts period; he never embraced Bullinger’s view of the same for the Lord’s Supper. This modest resemblance to Bullinger created massive problems for a man who persistently distanced himself from other eccentric details of Bullinger’s thought. The problems were largely due to O’Hair’s opponents’ attempts to pin the whole of Bullinger’s dispensational scheme on him by using the generalizing Bullingerism label.

O’Hair’s appearances in West Michigan (especially Grand Rapids) in the 1920s, along with the circulation of *Unscriptural Cathedrals* (1929-1930), provoked criticism from Reformed theologian Albertus Pieters, a professor of theology at the Reformed Church’s Western Theological Seminary in Holland.<sup>10</sup> Pieters writings in the Reformed Church in America paper, *The Leader*, expressed alarm about O’Hair’s views of infant baptism and his form of premillennialism. O’Hair’s *A Letter to Mr. Albertus Pieters* (1931) discussed four themes of Pieters’ *Leader* articles: his appeal to historic Christianity to support infant baptism; the form of continuity between the Abrahamic covenant and the new covenant; the identity of Israel and the church; and covenant theology’s view that infant baptism is to the new covenant what circumcision was to the old. The reply seemed to have ended the discussion with Pieters, although certainly not because Pieters was convinced.

The 1930-1935 writings include two articles by James Gray of Moody Bible Institute, the second of which is explicitly anti-O’Hair. In 1930, Harry Ironside of Chicago’s Moody Church issues the Third Edition of *Baptism: What Saith the Scripture?* and in 1935, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*. Although the latter is ostensibly aiming at Bullingerite teachers in America, there is reason to think he also has O’Hair in his sights. O’Hair fires a salvo of two letters in Ironside’s direction—publishing them later as *Art Thou He that Troubleth Israel?* (May 15, 1935), and *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren* (May 20, 1935). Both letter-pamphlets argue vigorously against Ironside’s simplistic and inconsistent interpretation of key biblical texts. The same letter-pamphlet process happens in response to James Gray’s second article, “Water Baptism and Sign Gifts.” O’Hair’s letter to Gray becomes the pamphlet, *When is a Fine Piece of Exegesis a Vagary?*—this title because Gray earlier commends O’Hair’s exegesis in explaining his view of baptism and signs, but then in “Water Baptism and Signs” two years later, calls the same exegesis a “vagary.” Although about Bullingerism, baptism is mostly the touch-point of these engagements.

O’Hair persistently sought to distance his teaching and ministry from aspects of Bullinger’s later-years teaching. Still, O’Hair’s views of baptism, signs, and related themes did in some respects resemble Bullinger’s thought: a sharp distinction between Israel and the church; Jesus’ kingdom mission to Israel; the continuation of the same mission by the twelve apostles in Acts; the original twelve apostles’ commitment to “the circumcision” in continuing to keep Israel’s identity rituals and other laws; the twelve apostles’ unawareness of any Gentile Mission mandate from Jesus; the twelve’s early-Acts ignorance of the mystery-church revelation before its disclosure; and the crucial centrality of Israel in Acts. Most of these likenesses O’Hair discovered for himself and for several years without any knowledge of Bullinger’s writings.<sup>11</sup> About 1940 or 1941, O’Hair published *Bullingerism: The Preachers’ Scarecrow* as an explanation of why the charge of Bullingerism was unfair, dishonest, overwrought, and a kind of smoke-screen—a “scarecrow.” O’Hair repeated over and over his complaint about the unfairness of the Bullingerism label in the 1930s. His more famous Fundamentalist opponents were unwilling to retract or modify. Bullingerism and ultra-dispensationalism thus became favorite “scarecrow” names for O’Hair’s theology by this cadre of opponents throughout the 1930s and beyond.

Those points of agreement with Bullinger’s thinking were offset by other significant details on which O’Hair was not in agreement with Bullinger. These latter points were substantial and supported O’Hair’s repeated denials that he was a follower of Bullinger: He had not decided in favor of Bullinger’s Acts 28 view of the church’s origin; he had not opted for Bullinger’s view that only the prison and pastoral epistles were the true church epistles (Bullinger thought Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans belonged only to Israel’s kingdom remnant church, not to the present church.); O’Hair did not believe there were two Bodies of Christ in the Pauline epistles (For Bullinger, the early epistles’ Body of Christ consisted of Israel’s kingdom remnant, while the later epistles’ Body of Christ consisted of the joint Jew-Gentile church.); nor did O’Hair believe both water baptism and Lord’s Supper were Israel’s kingdom remnant symbols. His closest resemblance to Bullinger was their common view that Israel’s signs and water baptism ceased at or after the end of Acts. And yet, these probes and tendencies could sound like Bullingerism. And, O’Hair thought (up to late 1935) that Bullinger’s views were the only possible consistent answer to Pentecostalism. (The resolution of these issues is discussed later in this article.)

### The Water Baptism Issue

Together, the pamphlets arguing against continued water baptism practices number about a dozen for the 1930s, along with several more on Bullingerism and its baptism issues—a remarkable concentration on the subject. Two motivations for this concerted writing effort, beside the counterattack impetus, are visible in O’Hair’s pamphlets, i.e., his *sense of the church* and his *sense of his own calling*. These coalesced from O’Hair’s realization during the Indianapolis meetings of 1920 that if signs, wonders and tongues seemed like a plague on the churches, so did water baptism. That is, the denominations were in a chaotic contest amongst themselves over conflicting baptismal practices and meanings, and were unable to explain to inquirers the welter caused by so many different views and practices. O’Hair was even more concerned that mainline churches were full of baptized members who may have thought or actually did think they were believers because of their baptism, and thus within the circle of eternal safety, but in reality were not. O’Hair’s concerns were similar to those expressed by Basel University’s Karl Barth in his famous booklet, *The Teaching of the Church about Baptism*, and later by Fuller Seminary’s Paul King Jewett in, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*. These circumstances suggested to O’Hair that the church was in need of a further stage of reformation left unfinished by sixteenth-century Reformers—Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Bucer; of these, O’Hair speaks of Luther most often. As he told the Illinois Fundamentals Association in his 1933 letter to them on baptism, he placed great meaning in his sense of call to this task.<sup>12</sup>

## *O'Hair and the Illinois Association of Fundamentalist Ministers*

In 1933, O'Hair requested the ministers of the Illinois Fundamentals Association to consider the issues he raised on baptism, that his thinking be given ample time for full discussion at their scheduled March 13, 1933 meeting, and that he be allowed to present his views to them personally.<sup>13</sup> About the same time, he also published this letter as a pamphlet under the title, *Much Water—Little Water—No Water*. In it he argued that Fundamentalists need unity, that there was difference among Plymouth Brethren expositors (whom many members respected) in how they interpreted scriptural baptism texts, and that differences existed on baptism texts among such Fundamentalist leaders as A. C. Gaebelien, W. L. Pettingill, D. Barnhouse, T. T. Shields (a Canadian), and H. A. Ironside. He believed water baptism to be the cause of serious divisions in the church, with millions of baptized but unsaved persons making up what the Fundamentalists viewed as an apostate church. With Modernist apostasy progressing, more and more of the Lord's true people still in apostate churches would be looking for an orthodox haven for fellowship. They should not be discouraged by a doctrinal statement siding with only one among many theories and practices of baptism. He asked that the Association make no statement on baptism, and suggested the best possibility would be a statement that the "baptism" of Ephesians 4:5 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 is the Spirit's baptism of believers into Christ's Body at salvation, and thus the only necessary baptism for the true church.

O'Hair argues biblically that the New Testament everywhere links water baptism with Jesus' and the apostles' signs and wonders, with the apostles' mission to Israel, and with the presence and availability of Israel's promised messianic-Davidic kingdom. The link is clear in the list of apostolic powers and practices of Mark 16:15-18, and appears in every water baptism passage in the New Testament, whether directly or more remotely.<sup>14</sup> And, perhaps as his primary concern, how will Fundamentalists retain water baptism while trying to answer and fend off Pentecostals (as he believes they would like to do)? If water baptism is relinquished as a remnant of Judaism along with other Jewish practices, what remains is the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5 which many Fundamentalists either explicitly or implicitly recognize as the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:12-13) into Christ at salvation.

To implement his request, O'Hair suggested a "Resolution" which read in part:

. . .Whereas. . . be it resolved that we unanimously agree that members of the Body of Christ should not rely upon denominational church creeds for their knowledge of the how and why of water baptism, but upon the Word of God.<sup>15</sup>

Nine "Propositions" followed. Proposition One (as an example) stated that Christ's baptism could not be used as an example because if Jesus' actions were a correct principle for Christian practice, then we should have to imitate the whole of his other Jewish practices;<sup>16</sup> neither could John's baptism be used as a model for the meaning of Christian church baptism since he died before there was any mention of the church; nor could the twelve apostles have received "Christian baptism" or "New Testament baptism" as a symbol of his death and resurrection, since their baptism was prior to Jesus' death and resurrection and at a time when they had no understanding of these event or of their baptism having this meaning. Proposition Five (to give another example) stated, "if the so-called Great Commission . . . is the program for the Body of Christ in this dispensation, the twelve apostles did not so understand it, neither did they obey it. The apostle Paul did not obey it."<sup>17</sup>

This pamphlet (and letter) is remarkably bold. Its arguments seem unanswerable; perhaps their forcefulness pushed the Association to respond emphatically and totally, "no" without serious consideration, since the strength and logic of the arguments may have created a sharp take-it-or-leave-it position for the Association—nothing negotiable here.

### *The Exchange with James Gray and Harry Ironside*

The pamphlets of 1933-1936 engage O'Hair's two main Chicago critics, James M. Gray and Harry Ironside. With both, O'Hair took to personal letter-writing, but again circulated the letters as pamphlets. The letter to Gray, entitled in its pamphlet form, *When Does a Piece of Fine Exegesis Become a Vagary?* (1935, spring), replies to Gray's *Moody Monthly* article, "Water Baptism and the Sign Gifts." O'Hair was offended by Gray's suggestion that at the beginning of O'Hair's movement, the seed of his rejection of water baptism fell on fertile soil, suggesting that O'Hair may have already decided against water baptism, even before 1920. The offense seems to have been that Gray claims to know things about O'Hair which are not in fact true, since, as O'Hair says in his own accounts, he was actually practicing water baptism at the time of the 1920 event. Elsewhere he remarks that he always wondered what a tank of water could add to the grace of God and Christ's finished work. He knew "grace preachers" (salvation-by-grace-alone-Fundamentalists) all said it added nothing to salvation.

A special feature of this piece was O'Hair's comment on Gray's use of second century church history to argue that signs ceased by the middle of that century. O'Hair was critical of this kind of argument because it moved the discussion away from Scripture. Gray's main resource was Benjamin Warfield's famous book, *Counterfeit Miracles*—a church history study against signs and wonders and already a standard Reformed treatment of the subject. O'Hair instead sought a biblical discussion, and faulted Gray for shifting the format. Gray did argue more biblically, however, that O'Hair's claim of an offer of the kingdom in Acts 3:14-22 had no basis; that no basis existed for the theory of the sign gifts being only for the Jews, or that they ceased when the Jews finally rejected the "second offer" of the kingdom in Acts, as he called O'Hair's view. Gray also argued (as did Ironside) that Acts was not a "transition period."

O'Hair answers from Gray's *Christian Workers' Commentary* (p. 317) that Gray agrees with him (O'Hair) on the kingdom offer in Acts 3:14-22 and on his (O'Hair's) view that Matthew 28's commission is the apostles' kingdom commission, not the church's.<sup>18</sup> O'Hair assembles about fifteen texts on signs and wonders with water baptism to show how the contexts steadily refer to Israel, Sabbath, synagogue, temple, Jews, law, Moses, and Israel's fathers—all Jewish connections. He concludes the letter-pamphlet with another consistency argument: The Bishop-Scofield-Moody pamphlet, *Signs and Wonders Not God's Order for the Church*, and Sir Robert Anderson (author of, *The Silence of God*, and a prominent and highly respected British dispensationalist), were in agreement that Acts is a transition period from the kingdom for Israel to the church, with miracles abounding and then diminishing as the gospel goes to the Gentiles apart from Israel. In other words, the dispensationalist tradition had already broached this view. If he is worth attacking on these points, where, O'Hair wonders, is the consistency in Moody Bible Institute keeping the Bishop-Scofield-Moody pamphlet in print all these years and in dispensational Fundamentalists venerating Robert Anderson with his British prestige, all without a word of criticism?<sup>19</sup>

Harry Ironside had already entered the baptism discussion in 1930 with the Third Edition (1930) of *Baptism: What Saith the Scriptures?* He no doubt knew of O'Hair's baptism views at the time of this edition. Ironside invited "a careful comparison of my statement . . . with the unerring guide, the Word of Truth." O'Hair, first engaging Ironside's *Baptism* in the pamphlet, *Water Heretics* (1936), later gave fuller treatment to Ironside's Baptism in the pamphlet, *Is Baptism a Watery Grave Witness?*, although not until 1942.<sup>20</sup> Noting the fairness of Ironside's invitation to deal with the matter scripturally, he examines two of Ironside's claims: (1) water baptism's meaning is a "watery grave witness"; and (2) in baptism, sins are "governmentally washed away." He asks where in the Bible Ironside gets such descriptions, concluding these assertions are biblically and theologically meaningless and made up to please Ironside's several Fundamentalist denominational constituencies.<sup>21</sup> In addition, O'Hair challenges Ironside's statement, "Christian baptism began with resurrection," by citing John the Baptist's clear statement that Christ was baptized that he might be manifest to Israel (Jn 1:31). The pre-resurrection baptism of the apostles recorded in the gospels also runs counter to this claim since they were not re-baptized after the resurrection to update their baptism to this meaning. Nor could this have been the meaning they attached to their original baptism, since before the resurrection they understood neither Jesus' death nor resurrection.

O'Hair also wanted to know—if there is no transition in Acts, how would one explain the varied applications to believers of faith, Spirit and baptism in the book. For Peter, Philip at Samaria, and even Paul with *Jewish converts* in one case at least (Acts 19:1-7) the order was faith-baptism-Spirit (Acts 2; 8; 19); but for Peter with the *Gentile convert* (Cornelius, Acts 10) the order was faith-Spirit-baptism. If there was no transition, and we are to follow the apostles' examples and practices on church order, which do we follow? For repentant Israelites, other Jewish practices and order are associated with baptism and signs: laying on of hands, and sale of possessions, lands, and houses. Why would Ironside not wish to follow these practices associated with baptism as a pattern of church order derived from the chapters in Acts where the church began? O'Hair also wanted to know how Ironside thought Peter's baptizing became the ordinance of initiation into Christianity,<sup>22</sup> since Ironside had taught in *The Mysteries of God* (First Edition, 1908) that Peter was to open the door of the kingdom to Israel, not the church.

## *Bullingerism and the Church*

Another group of pamphlets, though frequently overlapping in thought and argument with the baptism pamphlets, is devoted to thought about the church. These pamphlets discuss Bullingerism because of both O’Hair and his detractors’ ambivalence about the extremist dispensational scholar’s views.

### **The Influence of J. N. Darby**

Like all reformers, O’Hair concerned himself with the nature and health of the church. His thought in the church pamphlets, as with those on baptism, is limited to only a few issues. The more significant issues are the *uniqueness of the church* as a Pauline revelation and the consequent issue of its *point of origin* in the book of Acts. These points are the subjects of pamphlets like, *Are We Ultra-Dispensationalists?* To accent his interest in the uniqueness of the church, O’Hair frequently cites the church’s freedom from Israel, Jewish law and ritual, the Jewish calendar, and food regulations. These themes are also the substance of *God’s Grace Program*, wherein he raises nineteen questions about Jewish rituals and practices like animal sacrifice, circumcision, stoning, miracles and ritual washings.<sup>23</sup> The baseline is that the church is not the biblical Israel of either Testament, but an independent entity with its own order, constitution, and goals in an era freed from the Mosaic law.

O’Hair and the Fundamentalists were deeply influenced by Plymouth Brethren founding era teacher, J. N. Darby, although Darby’s thought had reached them partly through Scofield’s filter—changes Scofield made in Darby’s theological schemes. Darby’s most influential theme was his view that the visible, *earthly church is apostate* while the true church of real believers gathered in fellowship is a *faithful heavenly* people. In his own concern over apostate churches and denominations, O’Hair continued writing pamphlets against Protestant Modernism like, *Is the Modernist a Criminal?* Another influence of Darby and the Plymouth Brethren on the Fundamentalist leaders was Darby’s dispensational premillennialism—especially the form it took in C. I. Scofield and H. A. Ironside, with their sharp distinctions between Israel and the promised kingdom on one side and the un-prophesied church of the Pauline epistles on the other. This distinction raised the issue of the point at which the true, heavenly church began. In *Bullingerism, Pentecostalism and the Plymouth Brethren*, O’Hair was searching for middle ground on the origin of the church, against Bullinger’s Acts 28 view of its origin as well as the Pentecostal and Plymouth Brethren view of the church beginning in Acts 2; this pamphlet outlined the views of these groups on the church, baptism, and signs and was apparently driven by O’Hair’s pursuit of consistency.

### **The Origin of the Church in the Apostolic Age**

In the later 1920s, O’Hair had begun offering sharp critiques of the popular view that the church began at Acts 2 with the Pentecostal descent of the Holy Spirit. In 1935, Harry Ironside’s booklet *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* added new issues to O’Hair’s critique. Ironside argued against O’Hair that there was no transition in Acts from Israel to the church (with some qualifications). He said the church did begin at Pentecost—with which O’Hair agreed at the time—and that Israel’s crisis of unbelief as the occasion for the church’s origin *had already occurred* in Matthew 12 and was confirmed in Mathew 23:37-39. Ironside explained as did other Fundamentalist teachers that Israel’s fall occurred *at a point*—in a major event, after which the church began. For Ironside (as for Scofield), the new church revelation *began in concept* in Matthew 13, immediately after the judgment of Matthew 12, but not *actually* until Acts 2.

In his later writings, Bullinger and his followers thought Israel’s fall did not occur until Acts 28. Apparently, an earlier Bullinger’s Acts 13 view went unrecognized.<sup>24</sup> In the Acts 28 view, the church of the later Prison and Pastoral Epistles could not have been formed until Israel was set aside in 28:25-28. Accordingly, the Acts 28 view *split the Pauline epistles dispensationally*, the earlier epistles (Gal; 1-2 Thes; 1-2 Cor; Rom) being for the Israel-kingdom remnant and its “body of Christ,” while the remaining later epistles were for the Gentile, law-free “body of Christ” of the present dispensation. In *Bullingerism, Pentecostalism and the Plymouth Brethren* (1933), O’Hair outlined the views of each group and critiqued Plymouth Brethren and Fundamentalists for clinging to the Acts 2 Pentecost view while rejecting virtually all the *practices* of the Pentecost church. This pamphlet probably led Ironside to write *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, since in *Bullingerism, Pentecostalism and the Plymouth Brethren* O’Hair makes several Acts 28-like remarks. Until late 1935, O’Hair was unsettled on which view of the church’s origin he would finally take, holding for the time being, to its Acts 2 origin. Except for Bullinger’s earlier, obscure Acts 13 view, these were the only living options for the church’s origin—with Pentecost and Peter at Jerusalem (Acts 2; Darby), or with Israel’s fall and Paul at Rome (Acts 28; Bullinger). O’Hair was critical of both.

Ironside’s *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* sharpened this dilemma in 1935. The booklet was aimed at Bullingerism generally; but O’Hair was also in Ironside’s scope. The indications are (1) a not very veiled allusion to O’Hair on p. 66, and (2) a private communication from a mutual friend that Ironside had mentioned to him that he (Ironside) did have O’Hair in mind.<sup>25</sup> The poorly camouflaged aim of *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* makes the booklet relevant in this study. If the booklet had aimed only generally at “Acts 28” Bullingerism, its relevance to O’Hair would be merely a guess. But the opposite is the case: it was consciously anti-O’Hair, even while speaking more generally to the main points of Bullingerism.

Ironside’s *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* pleased concerned Fundamentalists; but serious omissions weakened its argument: (1) only repeating Scofield’s view of Israel’s fall in Matthew 12 without engaging the Bullinger-O’Hair view of the kingdom’s continued availability in Acts 1-8 (O’Hair) or until Acts 28 (Bullinger); (2) not engaging the important role of the Bishop-Scofield-Moody pamphlet on the end of signs in Paul’s later ministry; (3) ignoring significant points on which the Fundamentalist-dispensationalist flow—including his own stated views in other writings—was already feeding O’Hair’s critique of the Acts 2 position. (His only effort on this point was trying to link the “baptism of the Spirit” in Acts 2 with similar language in 1 Cor 12:13 as a supposed proof of the church’s Pentecost origin.); (4) failing to deal with the crucial Acts 3:13-26. O’Hair must have noticed these glaring omissions. In the end, Ironside’s *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* reassured his Fundamentalist readers, but failed to deal with most of O’Hair’s main points.

On the other hand, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* scored one major point against consistent Bullingerism. Ironside showed that aspects of the newly revealed church of the Prison Epistles, especially Ephesians, were already in existence during the Pauline mission of Acts 13-28, and were visible in the related (early) epistles. He did this by citing several key Ephesians texts (2:11-3:13) alluding to these aspects of the newly revealed church already at work historically in the readers *before* the epistle was actually written. He also showed that major elements of Ephesians’ doctrine of the church were also present in the earlier epistles. In fact, it was only a short time until—despite the justifiable bluster over other of Ironside’s arguments—this argument began to affect O’Hair’s thinking. Ironside could not effectively answer O’Hair’s critique of the Acts 2 view, or his arguments on signs from the Bishop-Scofield-Moody pamphlet. But O’Hair could not answer Ironside’s demonstration in *Wrongly Dividing* . . . that aspects of the mystery church were visible in the earlier epistles and in Acts 13-28. This impasse produced the most important developments in O’Hair’s thinking in the 1930s, and led to stabilizing the grace movement’s doctrinal platform in 1944 on the origin of the church.

### **Toward “Acts 28”**

In the summer and fall of 1935 (August-November), O’Hair was inching closer to the Acts 28 view of the church’s origin. Perhaps this seemed like the way to deal with Ironside, and the only way to gain consistency in his arguments against signs and baptism. We think Sir Robert Anderson’s several references in *The Silence of God* to the whole of Acts as “the Pentecostal Dispensation,” and his citing of Acts 28:23-28 as the point of Israel’s fall—even though speaking several times about the newly revealed mystery of the church in the Pauline epistles—influenced O’Hair toward the Acts 28 view. Anderson’s prestige and the rhetorical elegance of *The Silence of God*, on top of his theological arguments, had to be influential.<sup>26</sup> The tendency toward Acts 28 thinking appears strikingly in his spring 1935 letter to Ironside and published in the pamphlet, *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren*; the first of several letter-pamphlets to Ironside during 1935. Therein he asks Ironside:

— If Paul was giving out the Mystery of Ephesians and Colossians when he was at Berea, how could the Bereans have searched the Scriptures to see whether these things were true?<sup>27</sup>

Or again in the same pamphlet:

— You [Ironsides] must also believe that the Nation Israel is to be the One Flock and Christ the Shepherd. So there is a “Body” Flock and a “Kingdom” Flock, two separate bodies. Then if someone speaks of a “Body” Church and a “Kingdom” Church, why such a vigorous protest?<sup>28</sup>

And to the same effect:

— Again may we ask you the question, if Paul in his Acts ministry was proclaiming the mystery that was not in the Old Testament Scriptures (which Ironsides too said he was), how was it that the Bereans searched the Scriptures to check up on him? They certainly couldn’t find in the Scriptures that which was a secret in God when those Scriptures were written.<sup>29</sup>

These remarks to Ironsides are rhetorical and must be understood in the context of stiff argument and debate in which opposing positions were developing. O’Hair was seeking to make clear the newness of the Pauline church revelation and its relation to Israel’s fall, against Ironsides’s tendency in *Wrongly Dividing* . . . to blur many dispensational distinctions which he himself (Ironsides) had already made—all this in order to deliver a decisive blow to Bullingerism and O’Hair. O’Hair’s remarks above suggest that at this point he could sound as if he were making arguments for the Acts 28 origin of the church, even though he was still not fully committed to this view. He seems to have been at the Acts 28 border, pushed there, so to say, by Ironsides’s arguments: the more Ironsides blurred dispensational distinctions, the harder O’Hair pushed to affirm them. What appear as Acts 28-like statements were the result of this double push-back of the two men against each other.

Articles in *Bible Study for Bereans*, a monthly periodical published by O’Hair, August 1935-July 1937, provide the more detailed evidence for this stage of O’Hair’s thought. The first issue appeared about the same time the comments cited above appeared in *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren*. From August through November 1935, O’Hair and colleagues were making increasingly strong statements favoring Acts 28 theology in *Bible Study for Bereans*. The logic of these statements is clearly a follow-on of O’Hair’s answers to Ironsides in *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren* (1935). These issues of *Bible Study for Bereans* allow us to follow O’Hair’s thought in a monthly sequence from August through November of 1935.

In the *Bible Study* article, “Test the Things that Differ,” he said:

— After Paul declared God’s judgment upon Israel, in Acts 28:25 to 28, about 63 AD, there was a new order, ushering in the sign-less age of grace.<sup>30</sup>

What he means by this “new order” is clearer in, “The Program of the Book of Acts, Lesson 1”:

— Granted that the Bible teaches clearly that there was a new beginning of the Church of God on the Day of Pentecost with the opening of the Book of Acts, can we not state with Scriptural authority that there was a new beginning of the Church of God with the close of the Books of Acts?

Or in another absolute-sounding contrast:

— Until students of the Word of God are willing to advance from 33 AD to 63 AD with the desolation of Israel, they cannot see the difference between the Pentecostal Church of Acts 2 and 3 and the Body Church of Ephesians 1:19 to Ephesians 2:21.

These examples are only a few of many similar such statements in articles from August through October 1935.<sup>31</sup> The logic of mutually exclusive categories (Israel and church) guides much of O’Hair’s thought in statements like those above.

The most moderating influence among O’Hair’s associates was probably Charles Baker and perhaps with him, Harry Bultema. Writing in *Bible Study for Bereans*, Baker made carefully qualified statements more consistent with the transition period idea than with the categorical contrasts of Israel and church more characteristic of O’Hair and other colleagues at the time. For example, in September 1935, Baker wrote in “The Commission of Christ to the Eleven: ‘Preach the gospel to Every Creature,’” the following more moderate description of what was happening within Acts:

It was during the course of this ‘Acts’ period [Baker’s quotation marks] that God called another Apostle, Paul, and *began to unfold* and to *lay the foundation* for a secret purpose about which He had never before spoken [our italics for emphasis]. This secret dispensation *was made known first* in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, after the Book of Acts was completed. . . .<sup>32</sup>

The same distinction as noted above between Acts and after-Acts is here; but our italicized words in the passage, especially Baker’s wording, “began to unfold” and “lay the foundation for,” set the new revelation in the broader flow of events before Acts 28. This way of putting it acknowledges certain obvious aspects of Ephesians’ teaching about the mystery of the church (Gentile mission, Gentile converts, Jews and Gentiles together) already in operation in Acts without any reference to the new revelation language of Ephesians. This was Ironsides’s point in *Wrongly Dividing* . . . , Chapter 4, in appealing to Acts’ and the early epistles’ references to the newly revealed church. The italicized wording (our italics) was not a mistake by Baker. In fact, similar moderate language is also visible in an October 1935 article, “The Gospels, the Kingdom and the Church,” where Baker states:

God has nowhere definitely stated when the Body of Christ began, but we do know that it was not before Pentecost, and that the full revelation of truth concerning the Body was when Paul reached Rome as a prisoner.<sup>33</sup>

Neither is this a verbal slip by Baker; nor is it a denial of the uniqueness and newness of the church revelation in Ephesians. The (our) italicized words suggest intentional moderation. He is qualifying O’Hair’s more harsh logical distinctions, which he nonetheless embraces in principle while quietly suggesting a more moderate direction. That new turn begins to show in the December 1935 issue of *Bible Study for Bereans*.

### Emergence of the Middle View

Beginning in December 1935 and early in 1936, O’Hair began retreating from his attraction to the Acts 28 view. By this time he had (during 1935-1936) firmly rejected the Acts 2 view and was moving toward a central Acts view of the church’s origin; this included embracing what may fairly be called a new “anti-Acts 28” view. We do not know how this reversal occurred. O’Hair may have run head-on into a jarring discussion of the Lord’s Supper. Perhaps some of his colleagues had fallen over the Acts 28 cliff and were moving toward other extremist thinking—universalism, soul sleep, or at-death annihilation of the soul; or, it may have been the stabilizing influence of the theologically well-educated Charles Baker who had no doubt also been reading Ironsides’s *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*.

The first hint of a major reversal came in the December 1935 issue of *Bible Study for Bereans*. In this issue O’Hair begins a series of articles on the Lord’s Supper, which continued in the January, February, and April 1936 issues. Here, O’Hair questions and begins a decisive break with the Acts 2 view (which he had held since 1920), but more stunningly and decisively with the Acts 28 view as well. In the next issue (January 1936), O’Hair introduces an article entitled, “Is the One Body of Romans the One Body of Ephesians?” with these words:

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 of spiritual disaster result from unsound exegesis and fanciful speculation of well-meaning brethren . . . eliminating some things that they imagine are exclusively associated with the New Covenant, dropping the Lord’s Supper, the rapture of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 18, the judgment seat of 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10, [and] the believer’s need of a high priest.<sup>34</sup>

Just who the “brethren” are he never says, even though he refers to them by this term repeatedly in the next several issues. The allusions suggest the “brethren” are earlier acquaintances or even fellow-ministers who have adopted Acts 28 views; but it is hard if not impossible to identify them from the sources. We may confidently say the wayward “brethren” did not include either Harry Bultema or Charles Baker. In fact, as the first year of the magazine finished out and the second year developed, it became more and more dominated by Baker and O’Hair until by May 1937, fully nine articles in thirty-three pages are Baker’s, while the remaining ten are short pieces by O’Hair. Several contributors to the first volume seem to have disappeared.

In the last passage cited above, O’Hair’s phrase, “tried to see,” is more than rhetoric. It is rather an honest statement of his wrestling with the issue, since his thinking from 1920-on was steadily making for an alternative to the Acts 2 origin of the church, and the only available alternative was Bullinger’s Acts 28 view. In “The Lord’s Supper” article O’Hair works his way through an agenda of theological issues on the Lord’s Supper: its character as a remembrance rather than an ordinance; its lack of connection with baptism; and its connection with the gospel,<sup>35</sup> with Christ’s death, burial and resurrection, and with the atoning blood of the new covenant and the reconciliation of the world.<sup>36</sup> He also notes “till he come” (1 Cor 11:26) in the Lord’s Supper passage, and the identity of this Lord’s Supper phrase with the “day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:7-8) and the “day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:19-20)—all expressions of the Coming<sup>37</sup> spread through both early and later epistles. He even coordinates the Lord’s Supper for Gentile Christians with the Abrahamic covenant.<sup>38</sup> This chord-like tie of a many-note harmony is a new sound compared to the harsher Acts 28-tending comments of the previous several issues of the magazine.

The logic of this agenda of Pauline topics is simply that if one says “no” to the Lord’s Supper because of its Jewish origins, he is also saying “no” at the same time to the gospel and a Gentile world mission since these provisions have roots in the Old Testament, in the prophets, or in Jesus’ ministry. The tragedy of this logic, embraced by “Acts 28” thinking is that nothing is left, especially no gospel for anyone because the gospel is Jewish in origin and character. This implication of “Acts 28” thinking is discussed throughout the extended article. The Lord’s Supper was thus itself the corner where O’Hair made a U-turn some time in late November or early December of 1935.

In the January 1936 issue of *Bible Study for Bereans*, O’Hair argues inductively that the mystery is in fact found in Paul’s Acts-period epistles—a striking agreement with certain of Ironside’s arguments in Chapter 4 of *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*. A tiny, obscure pamphlet entitled *Light from Philippians on the Theory of Two Bodies* (1936)<sup>39</sup>—a pamphlet version of a *Bible Study for Bereans* article of June 1936—also argues inductively rather than deductively. In it he gathers and correlates texts of similar content rather than depending so heavily on the logic of contrasting categories like Israel and church.<sup>40</sup> The pamphlet discusses the absurdity of the Acts 28 thinking about two simultaneous bodies of Christ at Philippi, one the (Jewish-kingdom) Acts body, the other the (Gentile-church) post-Acts body, since Paul refers in Philippians to their earlier conversion. O’Hair examines Paul’s language about himself and God’s work in them “from the first day until now” (Phil 1:5-6), and the thought that this work will continue in them “until the day of Jesus Christ” (1:10). He observes:

The work begun in 52 AD was continuing in the same believers in 64 AD and will continue until the Day of Jesus Christ . . . the believers at Philippi obeyed both during Paul’s presence with them and during his absence from them. These are the same “beloved” who had fellowshipped with Paul from the first Day right down to the Day he wrote this ‘Mystery’ Church Epistle.<sup>41</sup>

In other words, there is only one *continuous* work of God in one continuous church at Philippi beginning with Paul (Acts 16), which there *should not be* if the “Acts 28” theory is correct—that is, two bodies of Christ representing Acts and post-Acts believers. There is no separate “kingdom church” at Philippi, nor a church divided between “kingdom saints” and “body saints.” There is but one single unified church recognized by Paul as existing since its beginning with him, and projected by the same continuous work of God to exist until the Day of Christ. This kind of inductive thinking sounds more like Baker and Ironside’s thinking than like O’Hair’s normally deductive thinking—his logic-of-contrasting-terms found in most of his pamphlets. If we try to account for the sudden shift in O’Hair’s thought in December-January of 1935-1936, we shall probably be not far from the mark by attributing it to a combination of alarm over some followers drifting into Acts 28 and worse ideas, Baker’s theologically well-educated influence probably stemming from live or phone conversations, and the significant fourth chapter of Ironside’s *Wrongly Dividing*. . .

In the same issue of *Bible Study for Bereans* (June 1936), Baker, contributing to the reaction, argued there was no “gospel of the kingdom” proclaimed in the early epistles like Galatians, Thessalonians, Corinthians, or Romans as required by “Acts 28” theory. O’Hair too, states in the 1937 pamphlet, *God’s Reign of Grace for the Human Race*, in one of his early principled statements of the mid-Acts view of the church:

. . . Israel was set aside some time between the time these two messages [Acts 5:30-31 and Ephesians] were given. The casting away of Israel brought the reconciling of the Gentiles (Rom 11:15).<sup>42</sup>

Hence, as 1936 and 1937 unfolded, both O’Hair and Baker were stabilizing the gains of O’Hair’s critique of the “Acts 2” view, and O’Hair was openly breaking with his attraction to the “Acts 28” view. In the 1940s, after the Worldwide Grace Testimony mission was formed, O’Hair wrote in *Pentecostalism, Bullingerism and The World Wide Grace Testimony*:

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 . . . the [World Wide Grace Testimony mission teaches] that this was before Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, therefore before the close of the Acts period.<sup>43</sup>

In 1945, this statement was further modified to say the church “began before Paul wrote his first epistle.”<sup>44</sup> This became the grace movement’s view of the origin of the church; it remains so today.

### *Further Expansion and Integration of Dispensational Ideas*

Amid the controversies of the 1930s, O’Hair slowly expanded the details of his dispensational theology—a trend that continued and grew in the 1940s. The expansions, clarifications and integrations of this period were toned or suggested by the dialogue with Gray and Ironside. It may not be too much to think of these enlargements as climbing to new high ground to which O’Hair was carried by the controversies. O’Hair sometimes used Bullingerism to exemplify how dispensational theology should not think and work, and how it must think and work. Some later 1930s pamphlets continued the paper war against Bullingerism and with Ironside, Pettingill, Barnhouse and others who once spoke of the mystery of the church as a Pauline revelation, but then seemed to retreat. The pamphlet themes noted below come from a group of pamphlets in which O’Hair moved from the controversies of the mid-1930s toward increasing enrichment of his dispensational theology with few mentions of his attackers. The more interesting pamphlets and article are *God’s Reign of Grace for the Human Race*; *The Beginning and the End*; *The Little Word ‘Now’*; *Progressive Revelation*; “The Out-Calling of the Gentiles”; *The Kingdom of Heaven and the Body of Christ*; and *The Kingdom of God*.

### **The Reign of Grace**

A pamphlet with expansions and integration is *God’s Reign of Grace for the Human Race*. The pamphlet is a study of grace and what is involved in a “reign of grace.” O’Hair thought certain crucial events had to happen before the random references to “grace” in the Old Testament could become a “reign of grace” in the current dispensation.<sup>45</sup> For one thing, certain powers had to be removed or replaced such as law and the “first man” (Adam). For another, Israel had to be “set aside” before a reign of grace could be inaugurated, not as a counterpoint to salvation by works under law, but because Paul links grace-to-the-Gentiles with Israel’s fall from divine favor (Rm 11). The “reign of grace” is the era of God’s kindness to the undeserving Gentile world. O’Hair identifies its point of origin as identical to that of the church: “To begin the dispensation of the grace of God of Ephesians 3:13 before Acts 13:46<sup>46</sup> is to greatly err and not know the Scriptures.” His thinking in the 1930s led him to this text and its context as the point of the church’s origin, and led to a new view of Peter’s mission to the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10).



O’Hair saw grace in parts of Scripture which his theology could have logically obscured. He took note of grace in the Old Testament—the word itself and many texts of God’s compassion, mercy and kindness. Against “ultra-dispensational” Bullingerism, he stressed the reign of grace in *all* Paul’s epistles, not just the Prison and Pastoral Epistles. In John’s Gospel, the power of grace is visible in scenes featuring the limits and replacement of Israel’s institutions, festivals and rituals, with Christ. He noted the linkage with Israel’s fall in repeated scenes of Jews turning away from Christ to keep to their law—a parallel to Paul on law and grace: “. . . the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17).” In John, while the Jews as a whole reject, a few turn to Jesus. In its most pronounced form, the reign of grace is tied to the unmerited salvation of “the others,” just as in Paul the church is formed by a few *believing* Jews and many Gentiles while unbelieving Israel turns away. O’Hair discussed these and other Pauline-like connections of the Gospel of John again in *A Comparative Study of the Four Gospels* (later 1930s), and in more detail in *The Gospel of John* (1954). This view of the Gospel of John steps over the logical limits of some dispensational theology, including his own.

### Biblical Terms for Time

Two pamphlets from this period discuss examples of biblical language and ideas for time and periods—an obvious interest of dispensational theology—but not in detail or coverage even remotely close to a study like non-dispensationalist Oscar Cullmann’s *Christ and Time*. Still, these pamphlets are aware of the terms. The pamphlets are *The Beginning and the End* and *The Little Word ‘Now’*. In *The Beginning and the End* O’Hair identifies some samples of biblical period or era divisions. For example, “. . . from Adam to Moses (Rm 5:14)” is identified by Paul as a period when there was no Mosaic law in operation, but in which nonetheless sin reigned. Another case in point is the beginning and end of circumcision—a period spanning Genesis 17 to the beginning of the Gentile mission (Acts 13). Circumcision ended when Paul released his Gentile converts from the rite along with all other ritual elements of the Mosaic law. Needless to say, many more terms and concepts for time are found in Scripture, especially the New Testament. Those O’Hair discusses are only selected examples.

*The Little Word ‘Now’* examines Pauline texts using this term in its temporal sense, identifiable mostly by the use of Greek *nun* or its emphatic form *nuni* meaning “now.” This adverb of time occurs in Pauline mystery texts as “but *now*,” in texts on Israel’s new situation, in phrases like “the Gentiles have *now*” obtained mercy (Rm 11:31),” and in texts where the term is unexpressed but which refer to a singled-out span like “the times of the Gentiles (Lk 21:24).” At least one reconciliation passage uses “*now*” for the beginning of “the reconciliation (Rm 5:10),” while another uses “*now*” for the new revelation of God’s righteousness (Rm 3:21). Such language devices identify advances or changes in God’s plan in history and thus are of interest to dispensational theology. There are many more such passages. O’Hair made a small beginning in discussing a few of these terms. Biblical terms for time, time spans, and time frameworks deserve further study and integration into dispensational theology.

### Progressive Revelation

*How to Study the Bible Dispensationally: Progressive Revelation* (c 1930) was among O’Hair’s earliest pamphlets on the subject. The study is mostly general at the beginning:

Christ had confirmed many of the statements made by the prophets. He had also stated many new truths, and after His death there were many additional truths to be revealed. . . Can you study the Sabbath, or sacrifices, or the priesthood, or circumcision, or sign healing of the body, or tongues, without the recognition of different dispensations in the Bible?<sup>47</sup>

Examples include the Mosaic law added after the pre-law era (Gn 1:1-Ex 18), the Mosaic law abolished by Christ who fulfills it, and animal sacrifice ended by Christ’s sacrifice. Progression also appears from Jesus to Paul, within Paul’s mission itself, as well as from Paul to the Apocalypse. The pamphlet is at or close to the start of a trend in which O’Hair, though concentrating on distinctions, affirms basic cross-dispensational continuities: salvation is always by grace, and believers of all dispensations are responsible for good works. Scofield’s first three dispensations do not figure despite the subtitle, “Dispensational Changes.”

In a later pamphlet (c 1936-1938), *Progressive Revelation and the Dispensations of the Bible*, examples are mostly from the New Testament. Progressive revelation is visible in Paul’s thoughts on prophecy and mystery: in its newness, the mystery reveals more than Old Testament prophecy. While stressing the mystery of the church as unknown to the prophets, O’Hair recognized what he called Paul’s “confirmation ministry.” By this he meant the gospel promised in the prophets (Is 52:7-53:12), is fulfilled in Christ, and proclaimed for salvation by both Paul and the Twelve. He based the apostles’ common preaching from prophecy on 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. This theme appeared in the article-pamphlet, *Progressive Revelation* (1936); in related articles in *Bible Study for Bereans*;<sup>48</sup> and in at least two articles in “Unsearchable Riches of Christ”<sup>49</sup> (1941). The theme is another example of continuity across the dispensations of law and grace.

Beside Paul’s “confirmation ministry”—still following *Progressive Revelation*—is what O’Hair calls “Paul’s revelation ministry”—the body church of the newly revealed mystery (Eph 2:11-3:13; Col 1:24-27). Among the “mystery” passages cited is 1 Corinthians 2:6-8, where Paul speaks of the mystery revelation *before* it appears in Ephesians 3:1-13, but without mentioning the church or body of Christ, similarly omitted in Romans 16:25-27. The 1 Corinthians text is seldom cited as parallel to other Pauline the mystery passages. This way of understanding the passage is based on its nearly identical wording to the revelation language of the Ephesians and Colossians parallels, which—unlike 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 and Romans 16:25-27—*does define the mystery as the body-church*.

Another case of integration in *Progressive Revelation*. . . is Peter’s preaching to the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10) and James’ later comment on it (Acts 15). He argues that the prophecies and the gospels included Gentile subjection to Israel, as in Jesus’ words to the Phoenician woman about Gentiles being “dogs” while the Jews are “children” to be fed first (Mk 7:27-28). When James (Acts 15:13-18) refers to Peter’s Cornelius mission (Acts 10), he appeals to this prophetic order in Amos 9:11-12: first the Davidic tabernacle is restored (Christ); then the believing Israel “remnant” enters; and finally in consequence the Gentiles are included—a sequence also visible or implied in Acts 3:17-26. This order of events is not how Paul describes the way of Gentile salvation and freedom from the law in his mission. Amos’ prophecy is about Israel’s latter days, not about the founding of the church. For O’Hair, Acts saw the Cornelius event as a miniature symbol of how Gentile salvation through Israel first would work. O’Hair repeats this explanation of Peter and James on Cornelius in “The Out-Calling of the Gentiles.”<sup>50</sup>

O’Hair also felt compelled to explain how Jews, and one Gentile (Cornelius and his people) converted under the “gospel of the kingdom,” could possibly become the Jews of the Pauline Jew-Gentile church once it began in Acts 13. He could not accept two separate churches in Acts (as did Bullinger)—a Jewish kingdom church existing before, separate from, and alongside a Jew-Gentile body church. He sees that the Philippians letter thinks of only one church at Philippi from its beginning. The answer—perhaps his earliest use of such terms—is by a “transfer from one church to another,”<sup>51</sup> although he does not explain how such a *transfer* worked. He takes this possibility in turn from Plymouth Brethren writers who thought Jewish believers were transferred into the body church at Pentecost (where they believed it began). This “transfer” idea became a discussion in the grace movement: Were the Twelve and other Jewish believers before Paul “transferred” into the body of Christ when it began with Paul? Or did two separate churches, one Jewish, the other Gentile, continue until the former simply died out or continued in some other form?

### The Pamphlet, *The Kingdom of Heaven and the Body of Christ*

Another case of progress in revelation is discussed in *The Kingdom of Heaven and the Body of Christ*. Matthew’s record is about Jesus’ mission to Israel and what Matthew calls “the gospel of the kingdom.” The kingdom of heaven is not Paul’s body of Christ, and Jesus did not address the church since it had not yet come into existence. Jesus’ mission and teaching were under the law (Gal 4:4) and included special cases of healing and resuscitation. Again, in Matthew, Jesus orders the disciples not to go in the way of the Gentiles. Later in a vision, he orders Paul to do the opposite. In Jesus’ mission to Israel there was no permanent presence of the Holy Spirit as yet, while in Paul’s, the church’s evangelism among the Gentiles is carried out with the permanent presence and power of the Spirit.

But yet again, and despite the sharp contrasts, O’Hair says good works are expected of believers in every dispensation. In the Sermon on the Mount—although under the law and an expression of the law—the values of the Beatitudes closely resemble the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5), and Paul speaks of “. . . the righteousness of the law” as “fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”<sup>52</sup> For Paul the Christian person is “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph 2:10). And at the beginning of the pamphlet

O’Hair says it is “reckless and unwise” for dispensationalists to ignore Matthew and the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>53</sup> This leads us to O’Hair’s discussion of the kingdom of God—brief, but highly significant.

## The Kingdom of God

Understanding the New Testament sense of the kingdom of God is important to dispensational theology’s interests. In “What Is the Kingdom of God,” a brief piece from the later 1930s appended to *The Salvation—The Baptism The Dedication of Little Children*, O’Hair appears to have started over with a fresh study of the biblical texts rather than merely repeat Scofield’s summaries of both the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. He sees in the texts these basics: (1) “kingdom of God” has “different aspects,” and “no one definition is adequate . . .”;<sup>54</sup> (2) at times “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” are synonymous; (3) when not synonymous, “kingdom of God” has “phases” not defined by “kingdom of heaven”; (4) in Luke the “kingdom of God” is “at hand,” is preached by the disciples, and includes healing; (5) at times “the kingdom” is the sphere of salvation (Jn 3:3ff; sometimes Paul); (6) one phase of the “kingdom of God” is not “at hand” except when Christ is on earth; (7) the kingdom was not within unsaved Israelites, but among them while Christ, the King, was in their midst (Lk 17:21); (8) the kingdom will be given to Israel in the future;<sup>55</sup> (9) one phase of “the kingdom of heaven” is “the kingdom of Christ, Israel’s King, on this earth, promised by Jehovah to David”;<sup>56</sup> (10) Jesus “offered” the kingdom to Israel both before and after his death; (11) the kingdom is not the church, and yet “God has a kingdom today.” O’Hair’s thought reveals a potential new synthesis, both similar to and different from Scofield.

A short but important piece (also a stand-alone pamphlet?) appended to *Much Water—Little Water—No Water*, and related to both the kingdom in the New Testament and O’Hair’s interest in John’s Gospel, is *The King and the Kernel of Wheat*, based on John 12:12-31. The piece speaks to an issue raised by point (11) above about two offers of the kingdom to Israel. In the passage, Jesus first speaks of his kingship, then of himself as a corn of wheat falling into the ground (death) only to bring forth fruit (resurrection). O’Hair wants to know:

If Christ’s death was inevitable, and if, according to the Jewish Scriptures, the Jews had to reject Him, so that he might become the Savior of the world, we again ask the question, ‘was Christ born to take the throne of David?’<sup>57</sup>

He answers the question—yes, but then says, “. . . had Israel received the Heir, there would have been a mutual reception.”<sup>58</sup> Yet the prophecies and Christ’s own words speak of God’s fixed plan as Christ’s rejection and death for sin. O’Hair raises the question, answers it partially, but does not resolve it. What is important is that he saw the difficulty and raised the question. He could only affirm that both were true. The kingdom and the question quoted above are still discussed.

## Conclusion

Through the process discussed in this article [in three parts], the grace movement’s thorough-going and consistent dispensational theology was developing into its permanent form. In the struggles of the 1930s, O’Hair’s opponents only partially understood him and filled in what they could not deal with by making caricatures and parodies of his thought which unfairly set his thinking in its worst possible light. They seem to have seen him as a threat to the standing orders of the denominations. A fair, fulllength assessment remains to be published, although some assessments by non-sympathizers do exist, including academic theses or dissertations. The new reformation of the church envisioned by O’Hair did not come to pass. But the thought movement he began in the 1920s moved through a maturing and stabilizing process in the refining fire of attacks and misrepresentation. The pressures became context and impetus for refinements in detail in which O’Hair correlated more biblical texts with his theology.

The label “Bullingerism” was a serious and damaging half-truth (perhaps quarter-truth). O’Hair’s thought did have similarities to Bullinger’s. Its most acidic feature for Fundamentalist leaders was the extension of O’Hair’s arguments against Pentecostalism to include *baptism*. Without this ingredient, the Bullingerism label would have had much less force. As it happened, the label stuck, mostly because he fought it so fiercely, which in turn caused it’s users to recognize its effectiveness in their own cause. But it was mostly unfair and untrue; with it they succeeded in seriously damaging him by persisting in its use, since it evoked fear and reaction, especially when joined with its synonym, “ultra-” or “hyper-dispensationalist.” To this day, the tactic remains effective among masses of Christians, instilling in them prejudicial fear of O’Hair’s ideas and movement.

Beginning about 1940 O’Hair faced a second form of the Bullingerism controversy which now became “O’Hairism.” The new form was advanced by D. O. Fuller and W. A. Haggai, and again by John R. Rice—all Fundamentalist Baptists. For a brief time, O’Hair seems to have seen the possibilities of the “Acts 28” view of the church’s origin as an alternative to what he increasingly saw as the hopeless problems of an Acts 2 origin. The Ironside debate may have nudged him toward “Acts 28” thinking because this view appeared to follow logically from the categories of the debate, i.e., the church of this dispensation is not Israel and did not begin until Israel’s fall. Clearly, O’Hair checked himself during December of 1935, perhaps by observing some colleagues who were pushing things too far toward Bullingerism, and almost certainly by ongoing conversations with Charles Baker. Between July 1937 and April 1938, O’Hair’s mid-Acts view of the church’s origin was finalized and on the way to becoming the church-origin theology of the grace movement: The church of this dispensation began with Paul’s independent Gentile mission, and Israel’s simultaneous fall from divine favor.

The controversies also produced more determination by O’Hair to expand the details of his dispensational theology by clarifying and integrating more biblical terms, images and concepts into his type of dispensational thought. The pamphlets and booklets of this process increasingly muted his earlier tendency (in 1935 especially) to take Acts 28-like views of many biblical details in order to maintain consistency in the struggle with fellow-Fundamentalists, especially Harry Ironside. The pamphlets of the later 1930s forcefully move away from Acts 28 teaching and toward his newly formed middle-Acts view of the origin of the church. In the 1940s, the deepening and integration of his dispensational theology became the highest priority as a subject classification of the 1940s pamphlets will show.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> O’Hair, Judge David Otis Fuller Concerning “O’Hairism” (Chicago: 1942), 10; from a letter (not his first to Fuller on this subject).

<sup>2</sup> See also the same formulation in, O’Hair, *The Accuser of the Brethren and the Brethren* (1945), 30.

<sup>3</sup> O’Hair, *The Accuser of the Brethren and the Brethren* (Chicago: 1945), 27.

<sup>4</sup> O’Hair, *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren: A Reply to Dr. H. A. Ironside’s Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (nd), 1; the pamphlet also includes, *When Is a Fine Piece of Exegesis a Vagary?*

<sup>5</sup> O’Hair, *The Accuser of the Brethren and the Brethren* (Chicago, 1945), 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

<sup>7</sup> On the larger West Michigan context from a Reformed perspective, see T. Boslooper, *Grace and Glory Days*, (Charlevoix, MI: Woodswalker Books, 1990). *Grace and Glory Days* was also the name of a periodical published by a group of West Michigan Reformed millenarians during the 1920s and 1930s.

<sup>8</sup> J. Gray, ltr. to O’Hair (Feb 20, 1933). Reproduced by O’Hair, inside back cover of Judge David Otis Fuller Concerning “O’Hairism”, 25.

<sup>9</sup> Pamphlets with comments and citations related to this stage of the 1930s debate are *A Letter to Rev. David Otis Fuller*; *Judge David Otis Fuller Concerning O’Hairism*; and, *Accuser of the Brethren and the Brethren*. Material in these pamphlets makes the 1930 date for O’Hairism impossible. This date was not critically determined when it appeared on the Google Books website. We have reconstructed the placement of Haggai’s pamphlet in a chronicle of the debate and determined the date is within the framework of 1938-1942, probably toward the later end of this framework. The actual history of its author’s development of the pamphlet is outlined in in Appendix B of this article.

<sup>10</sup> O’Hair, *A Letter to Mr. Albertus Pieters* (Chicago: O’Hair, 1931).

<sup>11</sup> In *Art Thou He that Troubleth Israel?*, O’Hair wrote he had not read nor even heard of E. W. Bullinger until six years after “the blessed Holy Spirit led me into the glorious truth concerning my position and possession in Christ, completely disentangled from all of Israel’s religion” (p. 2). If this refers to the 1920 Indianapolis meetings, as seems the case, he did not read anything of Bullinger until 1926 (probably later).

- <sup>12</sup> O'Hair, *Much Water—Little Water—No Water* (Chicago: O'Hair, 1933).
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.
- <sup>14</sup> Sometimes O'Hair furnishes a list of such institutions, signs or practices as in *When Does a Fine Piece of Exegesis Become a Vagary?*, 43.
- <sup>15</sup> O'Hair, *Much Water—Little Water—No Water*, 8.
- <sup>16</sup> O'Hair thinks in this way mainly about Jewish symbol and ritual practice; about Jesus' ethic he is, on the contrary, remarkably positive in several passages, including scattered comments on the Sermon on the Mount.
- <sup>17</sup> O'Hair, *Much Water—Little Water—No Water*, 11.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-47.
- <sup>19</sup> O'Hair, *Fine Piece of Exegesis . . . Vagary?*, 43.
- <sup>20</sup> We believe we have successfully pieced together an argument for this date, which we originally thought might have been about 1936. This was done by extensive email correspondence over questions and issues by which we examined the details of the pamphlet and its allusions. The date of the pamphlet is important to understanding the several phases of the Ironside-O'Hair discussion.
- <sup>21</sup> O'Hair, *Is Baptism a Watery Grave Witness?* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, c 1942), pp. 3ff and 15ff; also citing Ironside, *Baptism*, pp. 24, 29 respectively.
- <sup>22</sup> Ironside, *The Mysteries of God* (1908; Second Edition, 1946).
- <sup>23</sup> A similar list of Jewish practices, expanded to thirty items not adopted, or adopted only selectively by some churches, later appeared in "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ" (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1941), Message 1, p. 13.
- <sup>24</sup> Bullinger so argued in "The Mystery" (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, Fourth Edition, 1928), 40; first published as a series of articles in Bullinger's journal, *Things to Come*, 1895-1896, and later as a pamphlet. Failure to appreciate historical theology may be the reason why Bullinger's early view was missed.
- <sup>25</sup> O'Hair, . . . *Watery Grave Witness*, pp. 3-4.
- <sup>26</sup> While this may seem to contradict our comments on *The Silence of God* near the beginning of this article, we believe it does not. The reason is that—contrary to some assessments of Anderson as the first to articulate a middle-Acts (Pauline) origin of the church—we believe Anderson explored two aspects of the changing dispensational situation in Acts, in which he sometimes spoke of the church of this dispensation beginning to form with Paul, and in other places of the "Pentecostal Dispensation" continuing with Israel and kingdom until Acts 28. This ambiguity is visible in many parts of *Silence of God*, and—we believe—was unresolved at the end of the book. This lack of resolution was due, we think, to the exploratory nature of Anderson's thought and not to any fault of his logic or exegesis. We believe *Silence of God* is like a fork in the road with one path that led ultimately to the later, Bullinger's Acts 28 view, while the other led to O'Hair's view of the origin of the church in Acts 13. Bullinger's Acts 13 view expressed in "The Mystery" (1897) may or may not have influenced O'Hair who was quite clear that he had not read Bullinger until well after 1920, perhaps even after 1923. By 1937, O'Hair wrote of Anderson's as an "extreme view regarding the founding of the Christian Church" (*Bible Study for Bereans*, Feb-Mar, 1937).
- <sup>27</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren: A Reply to Dr. H. A. Ironside's 'Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth'* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, May, 1935), 6. Pagination is that of a later reprint in which this pamphlet is published with the letter to J. Gray, *When is a Fine Piece of Exegesis a Vagary?*
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> *Bible Study for Bereans*, August, 1935, 2.
- <sup>31</sup> A larger collection of these passages has been compiled by B. Ross, "Grace History Project" (Grand Rapids: Grace Life Bible Church, 2013), Lesson 96.
- <sup>32</sup> *Bible Study for Bereans*, September, 1935, 16.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, October, 1935, 4.
- <sup>34</sup> O'Hair, *Bible Study for Bereans*, January, 1936, 1.
- <sup>35</sup> J. C. O'Hair, "The Lord's Supper," *Bible Study for Bereans*, December, 1935, pp. 15-17.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, January, 1936, pp. 15-16.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, February, 1936, pp. 15-16.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, April, 1936, pp. 12-13.
- <sup>39</sup> J. C. O'Hair, "Light from Philippians. . .," (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1936).
- <sup>40</sup> O'Hair, "Light from Philippians on the Theory of Two Bodies," *Bible Study for Bereans*, June, 1936, pp. 8-10.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18. A similar article entitled "Dispensational 'Now'" in *Bible Study for Bereans*, June, 1936, extends the historical-inductive argument by examining "now" in the Prison Epistles, showing that, though written in or after Acts 28, "now" refers to prior events he finds reflected in Ephesians and Colossians.
- <sup>42</sup> *God's Reign of Grace for the Human Race* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1936), pp. 19, 25.
- <sup>43</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *Pentecostalism, Bullingerism and the World Wide Grace Testimony* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1939), 8.
- <sup>44</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *The Accuser of the Brethren*, 30.
- <sup>45</sup> The term "reign of grace" comes from Romans 5:17; it recalls a book by Abraham Booth of the same title from the seventeenth century reprinted at Grand Rapids by Eerdmans, 1949.
- <sup>46</sup> By the later 1930s, O'Hair had probably read E. W. Bullinger's earlier, moderate pamphlet, *The Mystery* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, c 1897), where at p. 40 O'Hair would have found the suggestion that Acts 13:46 marks the likely beginning for the church of the dispensation of grace.
- <sup>47</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *How to Study the Bible Dispensationally: Progressive Revelation* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, c 1931), 2.
- <sup>48</sup> *Bible Study for Bereans* (October, 1936).
- <sup>49</sup> J. C. O'Hair, "Unsearchable Riches of Christ" (Chicago, IL: O'Hair, 1941), pp. 64, 99; cf the discussion and references in D. DeWitt, "Essays on Ecclesiology" (Grand Rapids: Grace Publications and Grace Bible College, 2013), pp. 57-61.
- <sup>50</sup> *Bible Study for Bereans* (February-March, 1937), pp. 46-62.
- <sup>51</sup> *Progressive Revelation*, 49.
- <sup>52</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *The Kingdom of Heaven and the Body of Christ* (Chicago, IL: O'Hair, c 1937), 21.
- <sup>53</sup> O'Hair, *Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>54</sup> J. C. O'Hair, "What is the Kingdom of God?" pp. 19-26 of *The Salvation—The Baptism The Dedication of Little Children*, (Chicago: O'Hair, c 1938), 19. Other quoted phrases here are from this same short "message."
- <sup>55</sup> O'Hair, *Ibid.*, 21; he suggests here that the "other nation" to whom the kingdom will be given (Mt 21:43) is the believing disciples, but he is not entirely clear or explicit about this.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.
- <sup>57</sup> O'Hair, *Much Water—Little Water—No Water*, 32. O'Hair's view can be profitably compared to James M. Scott's essay, "Jesus' Vision for the Restoration of Israel as the Basis for a Biblical Theology of the New Testament" in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect*, ed S. Hafemann (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pp. 129-143.
- <sup>58</sup> O'Hair, *Ibid.*, 33.

## Appendix A

### Pamphlets of the 1930s

Many dates are from internal allusions to current years or events. Some are only probable and others are more or less educated guesses. We invite comments or corrections that, if provable, can be posted on the Grace Gospel Fellowship on-line version of the article and Appendix. Circa (c) means about.

*America's Religious Babylon.* c 1939. An allusion to 1939 occurs on p. 14.

*Are the Dead Conscious? And Are We Nearing the End?* One pamphlet refers to May 19, 1932 as the date of "yesterday's paper." Seems to allude to the depression era.

*Are We Ultra-Dispensationalists?* 1930s?

*Art Thou He that Troubleth Israel.* A letter to H. Ironside dated May 15, 1935 in which O'Hair responds to two articles in the Philadelphia School of the Bible's periodical, *Serving and Waiting*. These articles were later published as *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*. They cover an agenda of issues in and around O'Hair's baptism views.

*Ballads I am Movement, The.* A talk given at a Los Angeles Church, July 1938.

*Before and After Acts 28.* Probably from the later 1930s.

*Beginning and the End, The.* After April, 1938, possibly after 1940. Outlines beginnings and endings of several specified biblical eras such as the times of the Gentiles and circumcision.

*Berean Bible Conference.* 1934. Announces a conference at North Shore Church.

*Bible Church—The Baptist Church—The Brethren Church, The.* Mentions the year 1935.

*Bible Messages: The Body of Christ.*

*Bible Messages for Saint and Sinner.* c 1934. Includes *Much Water—Little Water—No Water* for sale, so after 1933.

*Bible Messages for Bereans & A Simple Principle for Bible Study.* Offprint from a 1935 issue of *Bible Study for Bereans*. The date of the pamphlet version is unclear.

*Bible Study for Bereans.* Periodical O'Hair published monthly from summer, 1935 through summer, 1937. An important source of information about O'Hair's thinking and that of several contributors to the journal in its first year. Comes close to Acts 28 views, then backs away in later articles beginning in December, 1935 with an important article on the Lord's Supper.

*Bible Study: Matthew—Ephesians—and Acts, A.* 1933-1934. Mentions *Much Water—Little Water—No Water* as "newest booklets."

*Bullingerism, Pentecostalism and the Plymouth Brethren.* 1933. Comes from the time when accusations of Bullingerism were becoming an issue. Published shortly before *Much Water—Little Water—No Water* and likely the stimulus for Ironside's *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*.

*Christmas Messages.* Possible reference to December, 1936 issue of *Bible Study for Bereans*.

*Comparative Study of the Four Gospels in the Light of Pauline Truth, A.* In existence before the Second Edition of *Great Blunder of the Church* (1938). Also probably refers to *Bible Study for Bereans* of May, 1937

*Devil and the Mystery, The.* 1938. Dates after April 10, 1938 since it mentions *Dispensational Razzle-Dazzle* as for sale.

*Dialogue-Discussion with a Yes-Man, A.* c 1936. Interacts with an article in *Voice* magazine of 1936 on water baptism and related issues.

*Dialogue Concerning Signs and Healing.* Offered in Second Edition of *Great Blunder of the Church* (1938).

*Disgusted with Religious Don'ts?* c 1931-1932. Dispensational explanations of signs, miracles and baptism. Offered in Second Edition of *Great Blunders of the Church* (1938).

*Dispensational Razzle-Dazzle, The.* 1938. Contains a sermon or talk dated April 10, 1938. Comments on H. Ironside's warning to Christians not to read books by certain "grace" preachers. Elsewhere Ironside says he was not thinking of O'Hair in this comment.

*Dispensational Study of Bible Characters, A.* c 1934. Offers thirty-four pamphlets for sale.

*Divine Healing, Water Baptism and the Lord's Supper.* c 1940. Before "Unsearchable Riches."

*Epistle to the Galatians, The.* Offered in Second Edition of *Great Blunder*. . . (1938), but only slightly prior since listed under "new books."

*Epistle to Mr. Albertus Pieters Concerning the How and Why of Water Baptism, An.* 1931. A letter about Pieter's attack on O'Hair's view of baptism. Pieters represents a Reformed infant baptism perspective.

*From the Head of Gold to the Son of Perdition.* Falls between 1938 and 1941.

*Fundamentalism—Factionalism—Fanaticism.* Date uncertain, probably 1930s.

*Fundamentalist Hierarchy and Kindergarten, The.* c 1934. Mentions *Much Water—Little Water—No Water* as among the "newest" pamphlets available.

*General Outline of the Bible in Ten Lessons, A.* Lessons collected from *Bible Study for Bereans*, September 1935-January 1936. Date of the pamphlet version is uncertain.

*Gleanings from the Book of Acts.* Offprint from *Bible Study for Bereans* articles of September, 1935-March 1936. Date of pamphlet version unclear.

*God's Reign of Grace for the Human Race.* Published between July, 1936 and April 10, 1938.

*How to Study the Bible Dispensationally: Progressive Revelation.* Probably very early 1930s since the pamphlet advertisement is in O'Hair's late 1920s-early 1930s form and *Great Blunder of the Church* (First Edition) is featured at the top center of the ad page.

*Is Sickness from God?* c 1935-1940. Mentions his daughter who was sick and nearly died twenty years earlier. The O'Hairs had six children between c 1902 and 1915. An anti-charismatic pamphlet mentioning Aimee Semple McPherson who was in her 1930s heyday.

*Is Sprinkling of Babies Scriptural?* Offered in Second Edition of *Great Blunder of the Church* (1938); possibly pre-1930 since the subject was already under discussion before 1930.

*Is the Great Commission for the Body of Christ?*

*Is the Modernist a Criminal?*

*Isms and Schisms.* c 1936-1937. Booklet from articles first appearing in *Bible Study for Bereans* and as separate pamphlets. Summarizes beliefs of many visible American cults.

*Jew and Us, The*. Early 1930s? Refers to League of Nations and Federal Council of Churches. Offered in Second Edition of *Great Blunder...* Includes *Two Gentile Movements*.

*King and the Corn of Wheat, The*. Published with *Much Water—Little Water—No Water*. Thus c 1933 or earlier. May also have been circulated as a free-standing pamphlet.

*Kingdom of God, The*. This important short piece existed in the 1930s, but may not have been a stand-alone pamphlet.

*Kingdom of Heaven and the Body of Christ, The*. Offered on back of *Bible Study for Bereans*, August, 1935.

*Letter to Rev. David Otis Fuller, A*. c 1937, since O’Hair notes thirty-seven years since his conversion in late 1899.

*Light from Philippians on the Theory of Two Bodies*. 1936 since he names it as a year by which Christ had not yet come.

*Little Word “Now,” The*. 1936-1940. Refers to Franklin Roosevelt’s “New Deal” as “not many years ago.”

*Man Christ Jesus, The*. c 1939. Offers sixty pamphlets for sale.

*Messages of Grace and Eternal Life*. c 1934. Refers to *Much Water—Little Water—No Water* as among the “newest” pamphlets available. See this title below for date.

*Much Ado About Something, or Dispensational Bible Changes*. c 1937-1938. An offprint pamphlet from *Bible Study for Bereans* for February-March, 1937.

*Much Water—Little Water—No Water*. Contains a letter of March 6, 1933 to the Illinois Christian Fundamentals Association asking that they hear him on refraining from including a statement on water baptism in their proposed doctrinal summary. Perhaps the most logically forceful argument among the baptism pamphlets.

*Nineteen Questions Answered*. Probably refers to *Bible Study for Bereans* of May, 1937.

*Present Chaos and the Approaching Crisis, The*. c 1936.

*Prince of Peace is Coming, The*. A Christmas sermon from the early 1930s.

*Progressive Revelation and the Dispensations of the Bible*. Offered in the Second Edition of *Great Blunder...* (1938). Refers to *Bible Study for Bereans* for October, 1936.

*Purile and Childish Diatribes*. A letter of May 20, 1935 to H. Ironside on his booklet *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, the First Edition of which appeared in 1935.

*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*. Early 1930s. Earlier than Second Edition of *Great Blunder of the Church* in which it is offered (1938).

*Salvation and Sanctification*. c 1935. Offers about sixty-five pamphlets for sale.

*Salvation—The Baptism—The Dedication of Little Children, The*. c 1938. Refers to *Dispensational Razzle-Dazzle* (1938) as currently in the press.

*Saved from the Great Tribulation*. c 1936. Offers *Isms and Schisms*, so slightly later than that pamphlet form of cult theology summaries. Subject is the pretribulation rapture.

*Should the Christian Keep the Sabbath and Other Questions Answered*. Probable reference to *Bible Study for Bereans* of January, 1937.

*Spiritism*. May date to later 1920s.

*Studies in the Epistle to the Ephesians*. Perhaps 1938-1939. Sixty pamphlets are offered.

*Sure of Heaven and New Testament Mysteries*. Probably before 1938. Two pamphlets published together.

*Theory of Two Bodies, The*. Offered in Second Edition of *Great Blunder...* (1938).

*Third Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ, The*. Perhaps c 1932-1934.

*True Bible Church, The*. c 1936-1940, but certainly after July 1936 which is mentioned.

*Two Gentile Movements*. See *The Jew and Us* for date.

*Two Questions: Did the Body of Christ Begin at Pentecost and What is Bullingerism?* 1933. Pamphlet written twenty years after E. W. Bullinger’s death in 1913.

*Twelve Messages on the Second Coming of Christ*. Offered in Second Edition of *Great Blunder...* (1938); possibly pre-1930.

*Twenty Interesting Bible Questions and the Bible Answers*. After July, 1938, since it offers *The Ballards’ I Am Movement* (1938).

*Two Thousand Facts from the Bible and American History*. c 1937. Written near the beginning of Franklin Roosevelt’s second term. Dates for president’s terms go as far as 1936-1937.

*Unscriptural Cathedrals*. Bryan Ross has proved that this booklet dates between late 1930 and December, 1931. The booklet mostly examines covenant theology and infant baptism.

*Unsearchable Riches*. This is a 250 questions and answers version of this title. Pre-1941.

*Verse by Verse Study of Galatians, A*. First appeared as an article in *Bible Study for Bereans*, then as a pamphlet. c 1938-1939.

*Water Heretics*. Pre-1938 Offered in Second Edition of *Great Blunder of the Church* (1938). Probably from c 1936.

*What is Bullingerism?*

*What Meaneth This Controversy Concernng Water Baptism?* Spring, 1938.

*When is a Fine Piece of Exegesis a Vagary*. 1933-1934. Replies to an article by J. Gray.

*Who Committed the Unpardonable Sin?* Mid-to later 1930s.

*Why Christians Can’t Get Together*.

*Why We Observe The Lord’s Supper*. Offered in Second Edition of *Great Blunder of the Church* (1938).

*Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren*. 1935. A reply to H. Ironside on his *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*. Addresses baptism and other dispensational issues.