

TRUTH

m a g a z i n e

Apr - Jun 2015, Spring Edition

"Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever. . . . He changes the times and the seasons."

Daniel 2:20-21

Working Together to Advance the Grace of God and Impact the World for Christ



GRACE GOSPEL
FELLOWSHIP

TRUTH

Apr - Jun, Spring Edition, Volume 65, Issue 1

Endeavoring to set forth God's purpose and grace according to 2 Timothy 1:8-11

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Outside my office window stands a weathered old leafless maple tree. But as I write, it is sprouting the first buds of spring in a cycle once again producing a lush, green canopy of leaves that will soften its aging, gnarled trunk and limbs with a renewed youthful appearance. In a few months the maple's greenery will transform into a cheerful multicolored array. Eventually, a few strong autumn gusts will win out and carry away the last browning vestiges of summer and remind me that the bare maple and I have passed another year together. Such is the cycle of change we can observe in the life of a tree.

What we don't see, however, is that which gives life to the tree. Hidden beneath, in the earth, is a vital system of roots supplying steady nourishment for the old maple, from one season to the next, year after year. It is only because of these roots that the tree continues to stand, surviving winter's cruelties and demonstrating cheerful signs of life in the spring and summer.

The core values of the Grace Gospel Fellowship are like the roots of a tree. Though not readily visible, these values upon which the GGF stands are foundational, and they determine the life cycle and growth of our ministry. Visible activities, goals, and ministries may change from season to season, but our core values have been and will remain constant, a solid foundation giving life to us who God has called to be the GGF.

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GGF CORE VALUES *Roots That Give Life*

by Frosty Hansen
President of Grace Gospel Fellowship

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The root system of the GGF consists of five important core values: Bible Centered; Grace Theology; Grace Living; Missional; and Partnership.

Bible Centered

Our taproot core value, giving meaning to all of our core values, is our commitment to the authority of the Bible as the Word of God and consequently, its centrality in our preaching, teaching, and lifestyle ethics. As God's divinely inspired revelation, it is through the Bible that God has spoken and continues to speak to us today. That is why the Bible is central in all we do, taking precedence over church tradition, a shifting culture and especially, our own opinions. We approach Scripture as our ultimate guide for faith (what we believe) and living (what we do).

Do you realize how incredible it is that we are able to receive teaching from the Bible? This is no mere book; the Bible is God-breathed text penned by human authors as they were superintended by the Holy Spirit (2 Tm 3:16; 2 Pt 1:20-21). It is God who is speaking timeless truth to us! This is why Paul gives Timothy the powerful command, "Preach the word!" (2 Tm 4:2). Why should people settle for the opinions of men while God has already clearly communicated living and powerful truth?

Obviously we are exposed to many today who openly question how an ancient document like the Bible could have relevance in today's world. Rejecting the view that Scripture is God's timeless revelation, they prefer to interpret God's truth through the lens of culture, like the popular pastor and author who recently gave his opinion that "the church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2,000 years ago as their best defense. . . ." Such a conclusion is logical from those who view the Bible as nothing more than a collection of faded, millennia-old documents composed by human authors who are influenced by their own ancient cultures.

The Bible, however, never derives its authority from human wisdom; its Author is none other than the self-revealing and self-authenticating eternal God who in wisdom speaks timeless truths which reach across cultural and generational settings. This is why the Bible's authority remains constant regardless of popular culture or conventional wisdom. No less now than the day he first spoke them, God's truths continue to teach us, rebuke us, correct us and train us in righteousness with the goal of producing Christlike character in our lives (2 Tm 3:16-17). When we recognize God's loving authority in our lives, we make a commitment to Bible-centered living by humbly applying his Word to our lives (Ps 119:59-60).

Grace Theology

This second core value, affirming our commitment to a mid-Acts dispensational approach to the Scriptures, is an important outflowing of our commitment to be Bible-centered. In order to live in harmony with biblical truth and obey its authority, it is necessary to handle the Word of God correctly (2 Tm 2:15). We

must be mindful to interpret Scripture carefully, distinguishing between God's unique program for the Church and his purposes for Israel and the rest of humanity in other dispensations.

At the heart of our theological position is the message Christ committed to the Apostle Paul regarding the outpouring of God's grace by creating a new entity, the Church which is Christ's Body, comprised of all people without distinction who come to Christ through faith. This previously undisclosed program does not annul God's prophesied plan for the nation of Israel, but temporarily sets it aside. Since Paul was God's chosen instrument to reveal this hidden plan regarding the Body of Christ, it is no surprise that it is in his writings alone we find the revelation, position, and destiny of the Church.

Two important clarifications must be made as we speak of this core value. First, the special nature of Paul's writings to the Body of Christ does not mean these are somehow "more inspired" than all other biblical texts. Indeed, Paul himself emphasized that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and all Scripture is profitable (2 Tm 3:16). We commit a tremendous error and do ourselves great harm when we discount or fail to read and study any portion of God's Word. Yet, we must do so in light of God's current revelation through Paul to the Body of Christ.

Secondly, it must be clear that we are not believers in Grace Theology merely because our founders held this position. We certainly owe a debt of gratitude to those who recovered this biblical truth. God has used the preaching, teaching and writing of these faithful servants to introduce us to a clear understanding of his divine plan for the Church. However our commitment to Grace Theology must never be based in a creed, doctrinal statement or theological tradition passed down from our fathers. Instead we must constantly put all teaching under the microscope of God's Word and "search the Scriptures to find out whether these things are so" (Acts 17:11).

Grace Living

God's grace transforms the way we live. Released from the bonds of legalism we are fully accepted in Christ, free to love and be loved by God without restraints. Grace also allows us to "accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Rom 15:7; NIV). Our third core value reminds us that our lives exhibit grace by being non-legalistic and providing an inviting environment for all people without distinction.

Legalism is a great enemy of grace, shackling us with the pressure to perform and measure up to impossible standards. Whether self-imposed or placed upon us by others, the bonds of legalism suck joy out of living, making even the most devoted follower of Christ despair. Through grace, however, we have reason to rejoice; the chains of legalism have been broken! In Christ we are complete, totally forgiven of all sin, clothed with His spotless righteousness, and assured that nothing can separate us from his

“Our primary calling is to engage people with the message of the Cross of Christ, ‘so that by all possible means [we] might save some’ (1 Cor 9:22).”

love. So, Paul tells us, don’t even think of putting the old yoke of bondage on yourself or on anyone else (Gal 5:1). That’s not who you are in Christ.

Such grace and acceptance should seep out of every pore of the Body of Christ. Anyone who draws near ought to be able to smell the aroma of grace, regardless of their ethnic background, native language, social status, or any other trait or besetting sin that would tend to make people uncomfortable around one another. Grace breaks down walls. The expectations for someone to “be like me” are removed as together we strive to be like Christ.

We are aware of the historical failures within the Body of Christ to live out our calling to be one in Christ Jesus. The GGF is addressing this core value. A task force has developed a multi-ethnic picture frame with the goal of encouraging leadership and churches to provide an inviting environment for all people without distinction. We are making good and important progress in translating our Grace Theology to Grace Living.

Missional

Our fourth core value speaks of our reason for existence as the GGF, local Grace churches, and individual believers. As critically important as the previous three core values may be, our principal reason for being on this earth is to fulfill our mission as ambassadors for Christ. Our calling is to be intentionally evangelistic, shining as his light in our local communities as we hold out the Word of life (Phil 2:15-16).

The truth is that most in our society have little or no concept of God, sin, or eternity. They may see Jesus Christ as a historical figure but have no understanding of his incarnation, substitutionary death for sin, and resurrection. Since they are basically unaware of their drastic need for salvation, God brings us into the lives of people—a neighbor, a mechanic, a waitress, a classmate, a coworker—to introduce them to the transforming message of the gospel and help them move toward making a decision for Christ.

Evangelism has one purpose: to save sinners. This is increasingly important to emphasize because many Christians in this country have been so caught up in political and social issues that our goal of reaching the lost for Christ has become secondary. But what profit is there to winning them over to one’s earthly cause if they lose their soul? Our primary calling is to engage people with the message of the Cross of Christ, “so that by all possible means [we] might save some” (1 Cor 9:22).

A large implication of being missional is that the gospel is carried to the lost. Churches with the highest impact for Christ are, not surprisingly, those which are actively ministering in and to the local communities. On the contrary, churches which concentrate exclusively on the “holy huddle” gathering of believers

and ignore the needs of their neighbors lose their evangelistic effectiveness and, according to researcher Thom Rainer (“Autopsy of a Deceased Church”) some eventually die.

Partnership

“Two are better than one,” writes the preacher in Ecclesiastes as he builds his case for going through life in partnership. Four benefits of working together are presented: increased productivity on the part of both (4:9); accountability for one another’s well-being (4:10); shoring up one another in times of weakness (4:11); and offering needed support in times of trial (4:12). He concludes by saying that, even better than two working together, “a cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

This kind of partnership is needed today among members of the Body of Christ, and it is central to our final core value as the GGF. We are committed to work in harmony within our fellowship of Grace churches and leaders on a national level, regionally, and locally. In other words, we recognize that we are most effective when we are united in the tasks God lays before us. As we strengthen and encourage one another, we grow stronger and testify to the world of the power of Christ working in us.

But the work of Christ is not confined to the ministries and realm of the GGF. The needs of our world and our communities are great, and God calls us to partner with brothers and sisters in Christ from outside our fellowship who are making an impact for the Savior. Therefore, we also join hands in the work of the gospel with other individuals, churches, and organizations who proclaim salvation by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Partnership is the essence of the Body of Christ. As Paul compares the Church with the effective functioning of the human body in 1 Corinthians 12, he emphasizes mutual dependency. No part of the body has life apart from the whole; each member stands in need of the rest; what happens to one affects the whole. Nor do we choose with whom we form a body, for “God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as He chose” (12:18). Partnership causes us to look at the Body of Christ, both within and beyond the GGF, and resolve to keep on “working together to advance the grace of God and impact the world for Christ.”

These five core values form the roots that nourish the Grace Gospel Fellowship. They are the essence of who we are because they are what God has called us to be. In the cycle of seasons we view programs that come and go; a vision will blossom, bear fruit and later be replaced by another; various people serve for their God-ordained time. But as long as the GGF has life, it is because of five core values consistently giving life: Bible centered; Grace Theology; Grace Living; Missional; Partnership. □



by Ken B. Kemper
President of Grace Bible College

A few years back a Harvard Business School Professor, Clayton Christensen, coined the term, “Disruptive Innovation.” He theorized that organizations and lives are forever “interrupted” by innovations that change everything. Afterwards, things are never the same, and require us to make adjustments and changes. These innovations make former technologies or processes less valuable, forcing things to evolve in order to survive (e.g., Ford’s Model “T” which was mass-produced on an assembly line, allowing its production to be less expensive and accomplished more efficiently than earlier automobiles). We live in an age of the greatest changes and innovations ever experienced in the history of mankind! Many of these are extremely interruptive, challenging our everyday practice of ministry, life, and business.

I recently attended a conference for Bible college leaders, where we discussed some of the most prominent disruptive issues facing biblical higher education. These are issues that educators must address in order to remain in operation. To ignore them or underestimate their significance will cause great harm to a college and the constituency it exists to serve.

Disruptive Issues for Biblical Higher Education

Economic Forces: Student loans and debt in America are increasing at an alarming rate. Average debt is now just below \$30,000 per student at graduation. Potential students enter into a highly competitive arena of colleges and universities that offer “incentives” to lure parents into paying the higher overall sticker

prices. America’s volatile economy has made many people question the wisdom of taking on too much education related debt. Yet, as the costs for maintaining a comfortable standard of living in America increase, the expectations of qualified faculty and staff at academic institutions also rise, which in turn make overhead costs higher than ever before. Add to this equation incredible buildings and state-of-the-art facilities (which are expected at “good” colleges), and the sticker price becomes unmanageable without family sacrifice and financial aid.

Technological Changes: Just look around as you walk down the street, sit in an airport, or stroll through a shopping center; everybody is talking, texting, or “surfing” the Internet. Have you been ready to respond to a stranger’s inquiry, stopping only at the last moment upon realizing they were on their mobile phone with someone else? Young people are especially adept at navigating the world from their smartphones or tablets. The Internet has changed how we bank, shop, navigate, and ascribe value. Electronic communication allows us to attend meetings online without traveling for hours to far away destinations (however, that same technology can interrupt meetings when the devices of those present have not been silenced!). Education too, has been transformed. Students do research online, turn in papers in digital form, and those papers are corrected digitally. Grades are updated in real time online from grade school through graduate school. Professors can teach students living in other states or countries, and can access databases worldwide. Educators must also be vigilant to the originality of student work—making sure it is not just being copied and pasted from the Internet.

“Let’s acknowledge that people are behaving differently now, and education and ministry must change their methods in order to be the most effective in preparing graduates for the world they live in, not the world of the past.”

Government Policies: The US Department of Education has begun using checklists and measures of their own to apply to financial aid, and to inform potential students of the quality of various colleges. They are deliberately bypassing longstanding third-party accrediting bodies that were established to guarantee quality of education and a college delivering on promises in mission statements (private or public). In the last seven years, we have seen the government “monitor” student loans in financial aid; next, came a “government-backed option” in financial aid (which they suggested was “stronger”); and now, they’ve eliminated all other subsidized loan options and increased their interest rate. What is over the horizon for us should government officials determine to “grade” colleges and reward or deny financial aid to students based upon elitist ideologically formulated standards? We prayerfully move forward.

Demographic Changes: Ethnic diversity in America is changing the landscape of our cities and our country. Current students already speak “multiculturally” in that they expect to see people from other cultures and ethnicities included in the process of all they do. In fact, the media and other societal mouth-pieces are so vocal on this issue that many in their audience believe “truth” can only be found when other cultural (or religious) explanations are taken into consideration (this is pluralism). If our Bible colleges and other Christian ministries do not recognize and address these changes, we limit our outreach and impact to an ever decreasing percentage of the population.

Stating it as an Equation

We live in a media saturated society. Opinions and policies are reported and repeated, whether they are factual or simply the latest opportunity for propagation of ideologies. The climate created by the media is one of doubt and pessimism in regard to almost everything.

Federal and local government administrations, education boards, foundations, community activists, industry, the media, all constantly talk about the “value” of college education, but (according to them) equate it mostly to the following factors:

$$\text{Cost of Tuition} + \text{Job Placement Expediency} + \text{Salary Potential} = \text{Value of Education}$$

This is a clear “transactional” equation, which makes four years of education mostly about attaining fiscal ability and speaks nothing

to the tremendous “transformational” character of biblical higher education. The American culture fosters an inwardly focused mindset that gravitates toward wealth, attracted to a “success” measured by financial freedom and the possession of luxury items and goods. When choosing a “good college,” this mentality responds to the influence exerted by a “transactional” equation.

Christians should not get sucked into the orbit of unregenerate man and his worldview. Bible colleges train young people to focus outwardly, to be ethical agents of change, to impact other people, families, cultures, and the world in a redemptive process which God desires of his children. Bible college goals are oriented to fulfill God’s mission in this world, not simply to achieve personal fiscal advancement. Generally speaking, their concentration is on a life “well lived,” characterized by using one’s gifts and abilities to impact others for the glory of God wherever he calls and leads. A life of service is more gratifying, and a legacy of lives touched is eternal—beyond an inheritance of temporal “stuff.”

Potential Responses to these Interruptions

These responses have been used by Bible colleges and other ministries.

Wait it out: Sometimes the interruption springs forth from familiarity, that the *method* is the *ministry*. In other words, a new paradigm just cannot be real ministry (or education) if it is not done like we have always done it in the past. Institutions can view such an interruption as a temporary aberration, waiting for it to pass so everybody can get back to their work. This occurs when school leadership is not cognizant of a growing disparity between cultural mindsets (e.g., set of assumptions, methods, behaviors, choices, or tools), their’s and the next generation’s.

My grandchildren exemplify new paradigm adaptation. They are growing up with constant access to the Internet, and they ask to “Skype” with their grandparents, and love to pick up a smartphone, hold it against their face, and pretend to talk—even before they are able to talk! Let’s acknowledge that people are behaving differently now, and education and ministry must change their methods in order to be the most effective in preparing graduates for the world they live in, not the world of the past.

Study it: This involves intensive studying, analyzing, and criticizing of these disturbing trends, and writing long papers evaluating the “disturbances.” We need to be students of God’s

See Disruptive, continued on page 19

Hearing the Joys of Ministry Is Music to Our Ears



by Jeremy Clark
Executive Director of Grace Ministries International

Above: Joseph Asong hears a children's choir singing in English, French, and Chichewa, a song he taught their church congregation more than a year earlier and in a distant region of Malawi.

At the end of the Apostle Paul's life he reflected back on the race he had run and concluded that he had finished it well, even as he looked forward to receiving the crown of righteousness from "the Lord, the righteous judge" (2 Tm 4:7-8). The ultimate joy of a life lived unto the Lord will be the moment the Righteous Judge rewards his faithful servant. It will be the moment when God "who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts" will render praise to those who served him (1 Cor 4:5). Because of this, "we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to him" (2 Cor 5:9). While no reward received here on earth can compare to those received in heaven, the Lord gives us a foretaste of our heavenly rewards while we still live in this "earthly house" (2 Cor 5:1): He gives us the joy of serving him.

The missionaries of Grace Ministries International who have dedicated their lives to making the Lord and his grace known around the world have experienced the joys and blessings of serving him. Consider how the Lord has given them such incred-

ible joy through their service, though, in the end, nothing will compare to the joy of living with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ forever and ever in his presence.

Leaving the States for the field is exciting and trying—all at the same time. While looking ahead, the present reality is getting the family and all of the baggage from the airport in the U.S. to the field. Brett and Debby Chapman left for Nicaragua in February. They recall the small blessing of being able to check their 65 pound carry-on bags free of charge, instead of dragging them from airplane to airplane until finally touching down in Managua. While ministry is not about luggage, the Chapmans recognize God's provision:

The challenges we face as we adjust to a new culture and learn a new language push us to keep our eyes open and looking for God's hand. And as we watch we are reminded to rejoice in the Lord for his provision and to continually lay our requests before him trusting in his loving care.

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“Sometimes when things get a little tough, and I don’t have a good answer as to why, I remember that there is a great group of people praying for me and making it possible to continue.”

Watching daily for the Lord’s blessings fills the missionary life with welcomed surprises. Joy Befus who is serving in Costa Rica with her husband, Chuck, says, “To live as a missionary is to live an adventure! Every day you wake up praying for God to use you, wondering who will cross your path today!” Blessings often come in the form of ministry opportunities. Ted Rabenold (Tanzania) puts it like this:

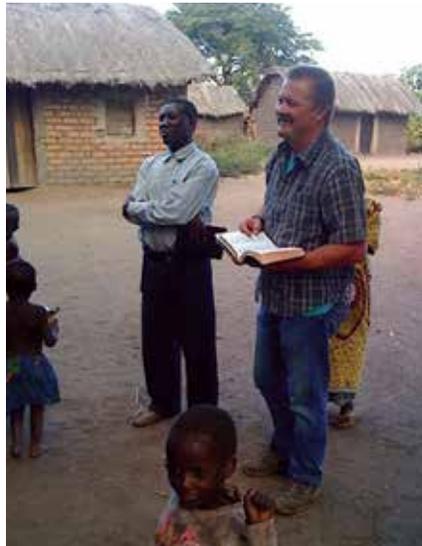
I love the fact that one morning will find me meeting with village elders trying to figure out how we can partner on a water project for the village. The next day will find me preaching “Open Air” with a group of evangelists in Kilangawana village. The day after that I will be praying with patients and extracting teeth at the dental clinic. From farming, to sunflower oil presses, to encouraging and discipling believers; each day holds its own exciting adventure.

For the missionary, work is not about watching the clock. Steve Sherman (Tanzania) used to work as a machinist and would count the hours and overtime since the goal was to earn an income. Comparing punching the clock to ministering on the field, Steve observes, “Although all of our needs are met as missionaries, being a missionary is never about the money. We don’t think about the rewards of overtime, we just do our work—out of service to the Lord until it is done. It is a refreshing way to live.”

In an ironic way, living in a foreign country far from friends and family highlights the joy and strength of belonging to the Body of Christ. Lawrence Trumbower who has served in Puerto Rico with his wife, Barbara, since the 1970s, recognizes the financial sacrifice that many have made to support their ministry. Not only this, but he says, “Sometimes when things get a little tough, and I don’t have a good answer as to why, I remember that there is a great group of people praying for me and making it possible to continue.” Sue Vinton (Malawi) once shared during a missionary Q&A panel that one of the greatest blessings of being a missionary was knowing that there might be hundreds or even thousands of people praying for you, your ministry, or even one of your children. These hundreds or thousands of believers committed to prayer are an extension of the missionary’s support and are members of a global team which provide an invaluable source of strength. Dan and Mary Sue Reed (Bolivia) say that the “missions life brings the advantage of working together on a ‘global team for Christ.’” The faithful prayers of the saints and the support coming from an organization structured to facilitate the missionary’s work are sources of strength and encouragement which bless our missionaries. They are part of a team—or better yet, a family!



Above: Children and youth Kaylah Fosnot works with in Puerto Rico in her after-school Bible club.



Left: Ted Rabenold preaching in the village of Ngomeni.

Because the extended family and friends are so distant, the immediate family relationships and bonds become that much more important and meaningful. Ted Rabenold remembers moving to the Rukwa Valley where there were no other missionary families living at the time. In spite of this, he and his wife, Kim, did not feel isolated. He recalls, “Every evening it was the two of us. No TV, no phone for fifteen years, no restaurants or places to go—or even babysitters. After the kids went to bed we spent time together. We would sit on our porch at the end of the day by a wood fire, looking at the stars, talking about our day.” Because of this, they have a special relationship. Mike and Lynn Caraway extended their family on the field in Tanzania when they came

See Hearing, continued on page 19



Part One

Traitor in Our Midst : *A study in Romans*

by Pastor Jim Shemaria
Celebration Bible Church, Grandville, MI

TruthCoverApr2015web.jpg As a huge fan of the Seattle Mariners growing up in the 1990's, I explicitly remember the fiasco that surrounded Alex Rodriguez. Long before he was looked down upon by the vast majority of non-Yankee fans, he was an up-and-coming shortstop helping the Mariners finally be a successful team. But in 2000, Rodriguez declined to return to the Mariners and instead signed a then-record contract to play for the rival (and last-place) Texas Rangers. It was no secret that A-Rod made this move almost entirely because of the money he was offered. And while many of us may well make the same sort of decision, most Mariner fans (myself included!) took this very personally. During the first at bat of his first game in Seattle (now playing for Texas) there was an infamous moment when a fan threw a handful of Monopoly money from the upper deck of the stadium. As fake money and authentic boos rained down on "Pay-Rod," we Mariners fans took out our frustrations on our betrayer. From being *with us* to being *against us*, Rodriguez had become the

traitor in our midst.

A Traitor of His People

If you were a Jew living in the first century world, there is a good chance that your feelings about Paul would closely line up with the my feelings towards Rodriguez fifteen years ago. Think about it: there was this promising young Pharisee who had spent his life on your side. He loved your religion and customs and way of life. And just as much as he loved your people, he actively "disliked" anyone who was opposed to your religion, customs and way of life (Acts 22:3-5). But then something happened. Instead of hearing him praise your people as being elite and unique, he was now traveling around the world with the goal of telling everyone that being Jewish was no better than being. . . wait for it. . . Italian (Col 3:11). Yikes!

But here's the thing. As much as Paul's understanding of God's interaction with *all people* had shifted (thanks to the unique

message God had communicated with him [Eph 3:8-9]), Paul's love and commitment to *his* people remained. In fact, when we read his letters, it seems his attachment to them actually increased (Rom 10:1). But let's be honest, if you were a first century Jew and you heard Paul say that strict observance to Torah (the foundation of your whole of life) was no longer relevant (Rom 8:1-3), you're probably not going to send the guy a birthday card. So it made sense that he would spend a good portion of his longest letter, Romans, explaining himself and his true feelings for his Jewish brothers and sisters.

It's all Due to a Misunderstanding

When you've read through Romans, this letter to the Christians in Rome, you've sensed a very clear transition in Paul's line of thought when you got to chapters 9-11. This may have caused you to isolate this section as a sidebar—something to be read on its own with minimal connection to the rest of the letter. I'll admit that I found myself doing that, and it's a problem! The authors of the New Testament wrote all of their books and letters with the understanding that they would be read in the same way you and I read letters from friends and relatives; in their entirety! So before we jump into this section, it's worth reflecting on what has been said in chapters 1-8.

If we boil those chapters down to their essence, Paul's message is this: Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus there is a way for *all people* (regardless of gender, ethnicity, social status, past failure, etc.) to get *on the same page* with God (Rom 3:24-26; 5:15). It's only through a faith in the facts—that Jesus is who he says he is and did what he says he did—that we can be made right with God. Paul is also very clear that this is directly contrasted with the misunderstanding that many of the Jewish people had developed—that it was through following Torah that true “rightness” was found (Rom 4:1-3). What's more, Paul is also saying that God has put a “pause” on his plan of dealing with Israel as a unique and special people. This was a lot to take in. Especially since the necessity of following the law in order to be made righteous was a commonly held *misunderstanding* (Rom 4). So, when Paul rejects this, he seems to be rejecting anyone caught up in this thinking (i.e., he seems to be a traitor).

When people experience rejection there's always a sense of hurt, which often leads to bitterness and resentment. For many of the first century Jews who heard Paul's teaching, that was exactly why there was so much vindictiveness. He looked as if he had abandoned his own people, and some took this personally. Thus for clarification and to reassure his countrymen that this was not the case, he included this section of the letter (chapters 9-11).

That's the *why*, but we still haven't even touched upon the *what*. In these chapters Paul details a couple ways that God is still in the business of being “The God of the Jewish People.” We'll get to one of these ways now, and leave the other for the next issue of Truth.

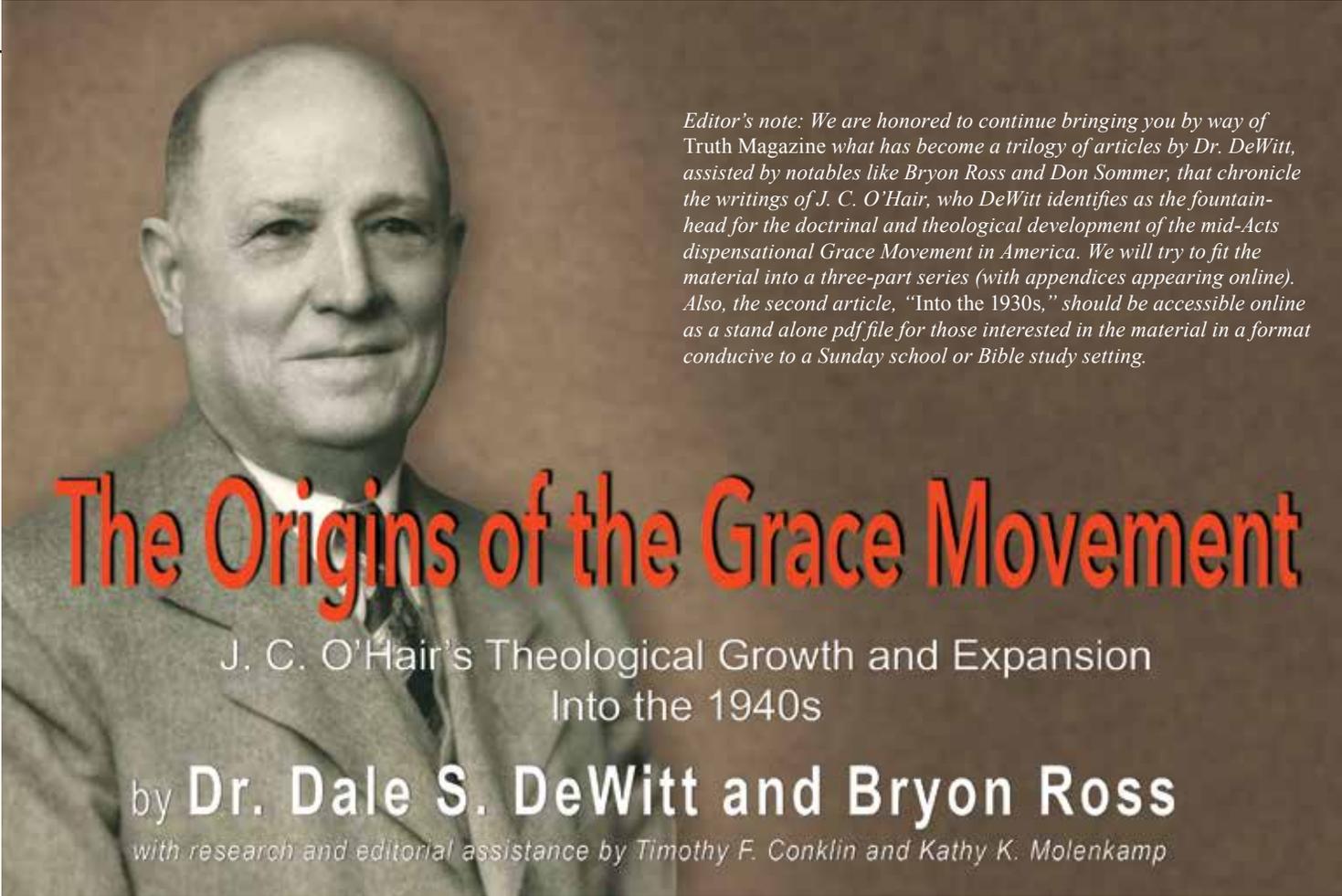
Is There Rejection Going on?

Paul asked a question at the beginning of chapter 11, that would have been in the forefront of many of his Jewish reader's minds: Did God reject his people? For many of them, this would have been a much more personal issue: Did God reject me? This is a fair question, but is met with a resounding, “No way!” How can Paul say this? After all, he just said that many Jews have missed the point and have therefore missed out on obtaining *rightness* with God. “Well,” Paul says, “I can say this because I am a Jew and I have obtained this rightness. If God has rejected all of us, I would be out luck as well. But I am living, breathing proof that God is still loving, accepting, forgiving and offering righteousness to Our People” (Rom 11:1). Paul, as a Jewish man, put his faith in the work of Christ, and because of that, was made right with God.

God has not and will never reject *His People*. Right now, that love is seen when anyone—regardless of race—steps into the hope of the Gospel (Rom 10:11-13). It could even be argued that this love is on display in a special way with the Jewish people whom God has loved since the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and will love until the end of the age.

So what's the relevance for you? Most of the readers of this article are probably not ethnically Jewish, but it is likely that there is a Jewish presence in your community—among your neighbors, coworkers, friends, and relatives. If Paul were to show up in your town tomorrow, there is no doubt that he would make a point of proactively engaging with this community about the hope and fulfillment of the Gospel. This was a top priority for him in the first century and is an example we should be following. How often do we do the same by speaking of and living out our faith in a loving, accessible, inclusive, and engaging way? Do we ever make a point to break from our daily routine or comfort zone to be around someone with a different faith than ours? The connections between the Gospel and the faith of our Jewish friends and neighbors provides a gateway that can be used to lead others to the grace of Jesus. Are we looking for ways to bring others there? Maybe you don't personally feel equipped to do this. While there is something to be said about the power of Christ working through you, there are great organizations operating all around the world who are committed to this very mission of bringing the openness of the Gospel to Jewish communities. Check out *Chosen People Ministries*, and *Jews for Jesus*, to learn how you can support them in this. Encourage your pastor and mission committee to do the same. As followers of Jesus, we have a message of reconciliation that can profoundly change lives; let's embrace this message as we embrace the world around us. May we be people who are deeply committed to the hyper-inclusiveness of the Gospel as we bring the hope, joy, and acceptance of Jesus to our communities.

In the next issue we'll look at what [□] Romans 9-11 has to say

A black and white portrait of J. C. O'Hair, an older man with a receding hairline, wearing a suit and tie, looking slightly to the right of the camera.

Editor's note: We are honored to continue bringing you by way of Truth Magazine what has become a trilogy of articles by Dr. DeWitt, assisted by notables like Bryon Ross and Don Sommer, that chronicle the writings of J. C. O'Hair, who DeWitt identifies as the fountainhead for the doctrinal and theological development of the mid-Acts dispensational Grace Movement in America. We will try to fit the material into a three-part series (with appendices appearing online). Also, the second article, "Into the 1930s," should be accessible online as a stand alone pdf file for those interested in the material in a format conducive to a Sunday school or Bible study setting.

The Origins of the Grace Movement

J. C. O'Hair's Theological Growth and Expansion
Into the 1940s

by **Dr. Dale S. DeWitt and Bryon Ross**

with research and editorial assistance by Timothy F. Conklin and Kathy K. Molenkamp

The decade considered here was framed by the beginning of World War II and the beginning of the Korean War with the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948. O'Hair continued to teach and explain his form of dispensational theology amid the conditions of the world war and postwar periods with no abrupt changes. Modest changes did develop in his dispensational theology, however, in which deepening and further integration occurred in continuity with earlier ideas. A new development did emerge in another group of pamphlets not dispensational in nature, but directly related to the European war. In at least fifteen pamphlets O'Hair discussed moral and ethical aspects of Christian thought about war ethics and the Jews—a bold step into social ethics not typical of fundamentalist social thought, but not completely unknown in these circles either. New dispensational developments and aspects of O'Hair's wartime social thought will be discussed in this chapter along with a new stage of the baptism-Bullingerism controversy.

The reality of development which one has to face in reading O'Hair's writings over a forty year period seems to raise difficult questions for some of his followers who claim he never changed anything or all his ideas were his own discoveries from careful study of biblical texts and guidance from the Holy Spirit. There is a grain of truth in such claims, but they are also misleading. Some of his early views passed through changes in later thinking; on

some issues he was exploring possible new interpretations; he also speaks clearly in the later pamphlets about his earliest reading of well-known dispensationalists whose work he admired and from whom he learned in the years immediately after his 1899 conversion to Christ. An open mind will be rewarded with a sense of O'Hair's expanded theology.

Pamphlets and Booklets of the 1940s

O'Hair produced more than eighty pamphlets and booklets during the 1940s. The total may have approached as many as 100 or more, including a major book of 320 pages (*The Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, 1941). A projected study series he called *Through the Bible in Fifty-Two Lessons: Ten Books* was begun in 1939; if completed, it would have amounted to more than 500 total pages. By our count of booklets and pamphlets, and classification of their subjects, the greatest attention was on biblical concepts and terms of dispensational importance; these he discusses in at least twenty-four of the eighty-plus pamphlets, booklets and articles of the decade. He also continued writing baptism pamphlets under the pressure of a new phase of the 1930s baptism-Bullingerism controversy. Another noticeable quantity of pamphlets focused on the world situation. "World situation" here covers World War II issues, abuse of Jews in Europe, Israel and the Antichrist in

prophecy, and American citizens' ethical responsibilities amid the dark intentions of the Third Reich. The 1940s pamphlets and booklets fall roughly into the following topical classification:

| | |
|----|-----------------------------------|
| 24 | Dispensational Topics and Studies |
| 16 | World Issues |
| 11 | Baptism Issues |
| 9 | Books of the Bible |
| 7 | Diverse Topics |
| 6 | Salvation and Eternal Life |
| 6 | Bullingerism and the Church |
| 3 | General Eschatology (the future) |
| 2 | Pentecostalism |
| 1 | Cults |

When these topics are compared to subject quantities of the two previous decades—especially the 1930s—pamphlet subjects like cults or Pentecostalism declined in quantity while dispensational studies gained in quantity, and world issues received much more attention. The increased number of topical dispensational pamphlets is also striking when considered in the context of a new stage of the baptism-Bullingerism controversy which also demanded attention. While it is hazardous to attempt an explanation for the shift toward more discussion of biblical terms and concepts related to dispensational thought, the shift at least suggests where O'Hair's priorities lay in the 1940s. Even though the baptism controversy demanded ongoing attention, O'Hair decided to work at enlarging his theological base by assembling and discussing biblical expressions not yet correlated with what he had come to believe in the two previous decades; most aspects of this expansion are covered below.

These general observations suggest the nature of O'Hair's thinking in the 1940s. While the 1920s were years of *transition* to a new form of dispensational theology, and the 1930s a decade of *controversy* over alleged Bullingerism and baptism, the 1940s were dominated by positive theological enlargement. In this decade, O'Hair's main interest was in *stabilizing, deepening, expanding, and further integrating biblical detail* into his theology. This positive emphasis involved a shift of interest away from cults, Pentecostalism, and Bullingerism, and toward positive correlation of biblical terms and concepts.

One form of stabilization was publication of at least two confessional pamphlets: *Bible Truth: What I Believe Scripturally* (1944), and *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It* (1944); the "We" of the latter title was probably intended to represent O'Hair's whole following at the time. These pamphlets are doctrinal summaries emphasizing the substance of his Trinitarian orthodoxy and dispensational views. The former of the two pamphlets stated his convictions more briefly, the latter more fully. The smaller of the two (*Bible Truth: What I Believe Scripturally*) is a short summary of all his major evangelical

and dispensational doctrinal commitments. However, O'Hair's confessional pamphlets were only one form of a stabilizing and deepening trend. While O'Hair prioritized expansion of biblical aspects of his theology and the baptism-Bullingerism issue took a new turn, interest in Nazi Germany, the Jews, and the World situation also drew his attention. Since biblical details of dispensational importance were the first priority, our discussion begins and concentrates here.

Developments in O'Hair's Dispensational Theology

Aspects of O'Hair's thinking discussed above led to expansion of earlier ideas during the 1930s and especially the 1940s. Moving beyond the baptism-Bullingerism struggle seems to have become a priority as the 1940s opened. Perhaps this explains why development of more theological pamphlets gained the upper hand in O'Hair's output. The number of baptism pamphlets and an irritated letter-pamphlet on baptism to David Otis Fuller about 1945, together suggest the controversy was not only frustrating and exhausting, but also a distraction to O'Hair's greater interest in correlating more biblical details with his dispensational theology. Perhaps he saw that if he could get the stressful and annoying baptism controversy behind him, he would have time to write more fully about biblical concepts and phrases of dispensational importance. As it happened he did both, continuing to increase the number and diverse subjects of theological pamphlets, while a new phase of the distracting baptism-Bullingerism controversy unfolded.

While the renewed baptism-Bullingerism controversy sparked the emotions of his close followers and captured their interest, further theological integration, though much less exciting at the time, turned out to be the more definitive aspect of his effort, even though somewhat hidden in the shadows. In the process, his congregation and other followers seem to have paid more attention to the controversies than to the enlarging theology. Interest in O'Hair's controversies perhaps resulted in more congregational attention to his person and concerns over abuse by antagonists, and less attention to how he was enlarging the study of biblical details in writing. As a result, some important aspects of the *written theology* were missed in popular oral traditions while many followers paid more attention to public controversies. There is good reason to think that by the 1950s the board of North Shore Church was tiring of controversy and pressuring him to end it.¹ This concern was not necessarily a sign of interest in theological refinements. Most were content to repeat simplified versions of his theology—a well-meaning practice which in

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¹ This observation was communicated to us in an email in 2013 or 2014 by a person close to both O'Hair and the church board at the time; while we cannot document it to the source at present, a development like this is certainly likely given the intensity and disturbing effects of O'Hair's public struggles.

Continued from page 11

effect tended to normalize some of his ideas while inadvertently suppressing others.

The largest of O’Hair’s expansions was *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* (1941). This 320-page book—his largest publication—contains seventy brief “messages” or articles mostly of four to six pages in length; a few used as many as nine pages. The “messages” may originally have been sermons, radio talks, Sunday school lessons, or Bible study materials. Of the seventy messages easily forty are on biblical expressions like “The Unsearchable Riches of Christ,” “The Consolation of Israel,” or “The Kingdom of God”—biblical expressions he now set himself to integrate into an already formed biblical theology. Bit by bit O’Hair sought to explain more biblical concepts and language as aspects of a theology already rooted in *biblical texts*. Some topics he had addressed one or more times in earlier pamphlets or articles, like “Jesus Christ the Same, Yesterday, Today, and Forever.” Some short studies in *Unsearchable Riches*. . . were later expanded into stand-alone pamphlets or booklet size treatments, like “Did Peter and Paul Preach Different Gospels?”; still others seem to be once-only treatments of a subject, like “The Kingdom of God in the Gospel of Luke.”

Early in our research on the 1940s we thought 1940-1945 might have been a period of diminished output. Then we discovered *Messages of Grace and Eternal Life*, a newspaper format piece from 1944 containing a list of fifty-five available pamphlets, at least sixteen of which were from the first five years of the decade; we soon found even more, early 1940s pamphlets. Thus the earlier impression of a lower output in the first half of the decade was wrong. On the contrary, the later 1940s (1946-1949) now appears to be the actual period of diminished writing and publication. We cannot account for this unless it represents a natural slowdown from aging or the wear and tear of controversy; we also thought of a period of illness in the later 1940s which turned out not to have been the case either. The important point for now is that 1940-1946 was a highly productive period that included a book length work and a remarkable number of stand-alone booklets and pamphlets on biblical words, phrases and thoughts.

We concentrate here on studies important to trends moving toward what became the Grace Movement. While O’Hair repeats his basic arguments often, people who think this means he always says exactly the same thing over and over and never varies, and therefore think reading his various booklets and pamphlets is fruitless, might be surprised if they would pay closer attention to the details, say, over a decade. While he does repeat himself frequently, these brief dispensational studies sometimes show remarkable new perspectives. Excessive repetition may be one factor accounting for neglect of his pamphlets after his death. We believe neglect of O’Hair’s writings has been a serious mistake of the ensuing Grace Movement’s history, whatever its explanation. Fortunately, a few interested persons have more recently renewed the collecting and study of O’Hair’s writings.

The Dispensations

O’Hair does not overtly seek a new scheme of the traditional seven dispensations as taught, for example, in the *Scofield Reference Bible*. He continues to mention the first three of Scofield’s seven dispensations (Innocence, Conscience, Human Government) in the 1920s, but less frequently and with some hesitations in the 1930s and 1940s. More often in the 1940s—quite frequently in fact—he refers instead to Paul’s broad outline of the era from Adam to Moses in Romans 5:14, “Sin reigned from Adam to Moses.” However, rather than calling this era “Promise,” O’Hair sometimes calls it “Sin,” but more often the era “When there was no law,” on the basis of the same text. He does not use the term “dispensation” for this pre-law period. And yet, in this same study, the other three eras/dispensations are called “Law,” “Grace,” and “Kingdom” respectively as in Scofield and others’ dispensational outlines. For these he continued to use the term “dispensation.” Why he did not use Paul’s term “Promise” for the Adam-to-Moses era is unclear, even though Paul uses “promise” for the whole era from Adam to Moses. The obvious implication is that he was thinking of four main dispensations of the Bible, not the traditional seven, although he also calls the same four periods “divisions,”² and sometimes “ages.” In another explanation from 1944, he says under the heading “Dispensational Bible Study”:

We see then three general divisions in the Scriptures, at least three ages. First from Adam to Moses. . . . Second, from the giving of the law until the beginning of the reign and age of grace. Third, from the beginning of this present age of grace until the realization of the blessed hope. After this present age of grace Christ will come. . . to establish His political, spiritual kingdom on the earth and that will be another age. . . . There will be other ages.³

The final “other ages” of the preceding line is based on Ephesians 2:7. O’Hair immediately adds, “There was an antediluvian age,” but names no more than this. He is clear that the “antediluvian” era was a redemptive age because it featured a series of persons related to God by grace or faith (Adam, Seth; Enoch, Noah)—a point he makes several times over in other pamphlets. This repeated treatment of “ages” leaves the door open for other constructions. O’Hair was exploring modified arrangements of the dispensations and even their names; his comments seem sketchy and feel unfinished. His assessment involves changes, even though he still does not want to call Adam-to-Moses a “dispensation.”

² J. C. O’Hair, *Unsearchable Riches of Christ* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, 1941), p. 128. His term “divisions of the Bible” also includes the next two dispensations in the usual way of naming them (Law and Grace). The same outline prevails in *How to Understand and Enjoy the Bible* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, c. 1944); O’Hair also calls the Adam-to-Moses era a “period” (p. 4), with Law and Grace following. The Kingdom is not discussed in the *Unsearchable Riches* message. See also O’Hair’s early 1950s pamphlet *Dispensational Bible Study*, p.14, for another appearance of the same basic outline.

³ J. C. O’Hair, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, 1944), p. 21.

However this may be, Scofield's first three dispensations are gone, replaced by the single Adam-to-Moses era, and "ages" or even "periods" sometimes preferred as a substitute for "dispensations." This redoing of the older system is persistent throughout the 1940s. If ever the older names for the first three dispensations recur in the 1940s, it is exceptional; the change was gradually settling into a revised dispensational outline, although never firmly finalized. On any reckoning, this treatment shifts terms for what he and others elsewhere call "dispensations," probably in the effort to explain more clearly and partly out of revisionist interests already visible in the 1930s, although these seem always exploratory and cautious.

The favored outline appears in several other places in *Unsearchable Riches of Christ* and is repeated slightly later in *Six Important Bible Lessons to Rightly Divide the Word of Truth* (post 1945). Thus the Sin—Law—Grace—Kingdom sequence of four major eras otherwise usually called "dispensations" became one of several ways of stating his view of the earliest dispensation. An alternate term for the first dispensation could have made clear that the four eras are in fact *redemptive* in nature, Promise—Law—Grace—Kingdom, whereas calling the first era "Sin" disrupts the redemptive intent of the series. In a related discussion from much later (1955), he does describe the pre-law era as "promise," a "not under law" era followed by Law;⁴ in these later discussions O'Hair no longer refers to Scofield's Innocence, Conscience or Human Government. Thus, by the 1950s, Scofield's first three dispensations no longer seem to count for much. Clearly, O'Hair was putting less stock in Scofield's outline after about 1940. On the other hand, Charles Baker continued teaching Scofield's older seven-dispensation outline to the end of his life. If Baker was aware of O'Hair's modifications of Scofield, he does not mention or reflect them.

Within the four-point outline, O'Hair does subdivide the Adam-to-Moses period into two stages, but again without using Scofield's names for the first three dispensations. The subdivision is: before circumcision (Gn 1-16) and after circumcision (Gn 17 to the giving of the law). This subdivision comes from Galatians 3 where the distinction is featured. Following Paul's argument in Galatians 3, O'Hair saw the pre-circumcision period as a series of early salvation-by-grace-and-faith-alone events—cases of salvation without circumcision or any ritual elements of the later Mosaic Law. O'Hair saw Paul's way of dividing and subdividing biblical "ages" as part of the latter's argument for freeing the Gentile churches from the Law and circumcision on which Paul's Jewish-Christian opponents insisted for his Gentile converts. Put another way, the Adam-to-Abraham era was really about illustrating how man in his *sin* (as he names the era) could know *salvation without law* long before Paul or even before the Mosaic Law. The Genesis examples are similar to those mentioned above; each is noted for some aspect of faith or grace, without rituals of the later Mosaic Law. In these modest revisions of the received

dispensations, O'Hair was becoming more precisely Pauline, or at least guided more closely by Paul's details.⁵

Some Studies in *Unsearchable Riches of Christ*

One unusual piece in the book is "The Kingdom of God in the Gospel of Luke." With other dispensational thinkers, O'Hair thought the kingdom in Luke was the same one described in the prophets—the promised kingdom of David; for this he had a substantial basis in Luke 1:32-33. In some of Luke's passages it is viewed by Jesus as near, in others as actually present in Jesus' mission, and in still others as future. In one passage he says with discriminating, insight:

But in Luke 16:16 we learn that beginning with the ministry of John the Baptist, "the Kingdom of God" was at hand in a sense that it was never at hand in the period covered by the law.⁶

The same kingdom is in view in Peter's preaching in Acts. O'Hair calls these aspects of the kingdom, "phases," which suggests recognition of sequence or historical stages of the kingdom. Luke's "kingdom of God" is sometimes synonymous with Matthew's "kingdom of heaven," and sometimes not. The kingdom's "phases" can be illustrated in many passages which O'Hair sometimes gathers and quotes in full. Critical comments like these are evidence of careful observation of what is actually in texts and do not sound, either as stated or in implication, like the way dispensational distinctions were sometimes made; here too O'Hair seems to engage in cautious, modest revisions.

Another short study of interest in *Unsearchable Riches*. . . is on the phrase, "the consolation of Israel," for which Simeon was waiting (Lk 2:25). The consolation is defined in context by the prophecy of Zachariah on Israel's hoped-for spiritual-political salvation (Lk 1:69-71). "Consolation of Israel" describes the expected end of Israel's struggle with harsh foreign conquerors and deliverance from its sins under Messiah. The same national hope is expressed in Luke by other Jews like Joseph of Arimathea who was "looking for the kingdom of God" (23:51). Such phrases are testimonies to Jewish hopes for Israel's promised kingdom. But Israel failed to repent and receive its Messiah, and the kingdom in its fullness was delayed until the Second Coming. Instead, the newly revealed mystery *church* came to fill the space between Christ's two comings.

A third study of interest in *Unsearchable Riches*. . . is "The Restitution of all Things" (Acts 3:21). The phrase summarizes prophetic promises to restore exiled Israel to its land and finally establish its expected kingdom sustained by the spiritual dynamics of a new covenant. O'Hair thought this biblical phrase could not

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⁴ J. C. O'Hair, *The Dispensationalism of Dr. E. W. Bullinger, Dr. C. I. Scofield, Dr. John R. Rice* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, c 1955), pp. 20-21.

⁵ O'Hair, *Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, pp. 42-44, 56-59; *Six Important Bible Lessons to Rightly Divide the Word of Truth*, pp.1-7.

⁶ *Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, p. 291.

Continued from page 13

refer to the Pauline church or to Paul's independent mission to the Gentiles; in their speeches in Acts, the Twelve preached only actual or hoped-for fulfillment of kingdom prophecies. In O'Hair's thinking the preaching of the Twelve in Acts was the third of *three offers* of the kingdom to Israel—one in the Old Testament, the second in Jesus' mission before the cross, and the third in the Twelve's mission to Israel in Acts;⁷ the three offers were so understood from the Parable of the Vineyard and Tenants in Matthew 21:33-46. The Grace Movement soon had difficulties with the idea of multiple kingdom offers since it was thought Christ's death had to occur as a prophesied rejection (Is 53) before any real offer was possible. Most early leaders of the Grace Movement decided there was one offer, and it was tendered only in Acts 1-12. On the other hand, O'Hair's reading of the Parable of the Vineyard was ignored and no general agreement on its meaning emerged after O'Hair's death.

In studying these three expressions of Israel's hope in Luke-Acts, O'Hair contrasts what they describe with the church and Gentile mission of Paul and his colleagues. Luke's phrases are rather focused on Israel and its promised national redemption. That redemption began to be realized in the appearance of its Messiah and his salvation, and had potential for completed fulfillment had Israel responded to the Twelve's post-resurrection preaching of repentance and salvation. O'Hair pursues the

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 270; see also *Important Facts to Understand Acts* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1944), p. 16.

dispensational distinction between kingdom and church in the details of these texts; other short studies in *Unsearchable Riches* . . . do the same.

Paul and the Mystery Revelation

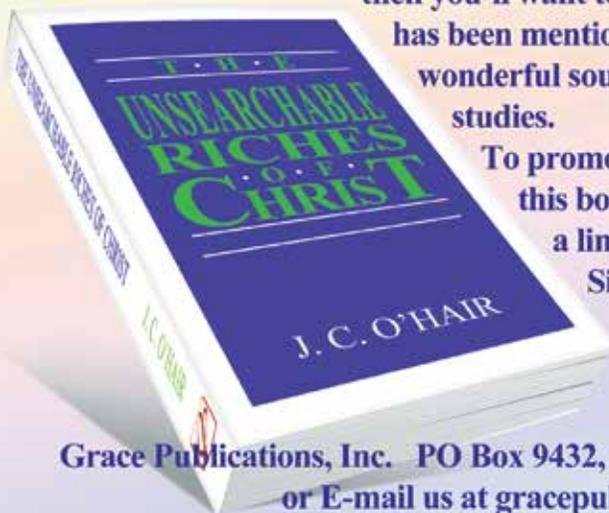
O'Hair frequently discussed the Pauline "mystery" texts basic to dispensational theology; hardly a theological pamphlet bypasses the theme. Paul's texts on the mystery not only use the term "dispensation" in close relation to the mystery, they also define aspects of the joint Jew-Gentile church as the actual entity created in history by the newly revealed mystery. Discussion of the combined mystery-dispensation-church-revelation thoughts of Paul's epistles took several forms in O'Hair's pamphlets.

Changes in the Book of Acts:⁸ In several pamphlets, O'Hair enlarged his explanation of Acts' significant events and speeches—the scenes of Acts 9-28 with thoughts and actions parallel to those of Paul's epistles. After firmly rejecting the Acts 28 origin of the body-church, coordination of Acts' Gentile salvation scenes with Paul's epistolary comments on Gentile salvation became a critical enterprise. An expanded treatment of Acts occurs in the pamphlets *Paul Takes Over* (1943) and *A Study of the Book of Acts* (c 1945).

⁸ O'Hair's booklet, *A Study of the Book of Acts* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, c 1942-1943) covers all major aspects of how he understood the Israel-church contrast visible in Acts. There is little new here; the summary-like treatment of Acts is useful.

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST

by J.C. O'HAIR



If you are enjoying this series about J.C. O'Hair by Dr. DeWitt, then you'll want to own one of J.C. O'Hair's greatest works. It has been mentioned a few times in the current article and is a wonderful source that covers over 70 topics of dispensational studies.

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Noting Paul's prominence in Acts 13-28, O'Hair asks how this transition to Paul unfolded. To answer, he follows a repeated trend-theme in Acts rather than selecting a verse or phrase. The trend is Acts' decline of interest in the original Twelve. Initially, Acts detailed the apostles' replacement of Judas to show how they restored their number to twelve (Acts 1). But when the apostle James died (Acts 12), no replacement to sustain the number twelve is recorded. Instead, the next event in Acts is the *blinding of the Jew Bar-Jesus* as the *Gentile Sergius Paulus believes*—a stunning symbolic miracle about the shift from unbelieving Israel to believing Gentiles displayed dramatically in cause-effect detail. O'Hair relates this Acts 13 *Jewish blinding story* to Paul's comments about the *blinding of Israel* in Romans 11:7 (AV)—a theme-word correlation on the language of blinding. In the same chapter (Acts 13) Paul turns to the Gentiles after and because the Jews reject the gospel in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (13:46). Peter reappears only when Paul, at his own initiative, seeks agreement from the Jerusalem apostles on Gentile converts' freedom from the Mosaic Law (Acts 15). Thus a dispensational change (Israel to Gentiles) moves Paul to the center of Acts' story line while the Twelve slowly fade from view.

Pamphlets on the Mystery: In addition to the *Unsearchable Riches*. . . articles, several pamphlets—and many parts of still other pamphlets on other subjects—offer more details on Paul's mystery-now-revealed texts. For example, in *The Lost Precious Gem* (c 1944), O'Hair gathered comments mostly from fundamentalist critics of his thinking on the mystery—critics who had themselves discussed the distinctive Pauline revelation of the church in ways nearly identical to his own. In *The Mystifying Mystery* (1942), he notes Protestant Modernism's reaction and blindness to both Christianity's Trinitarian basics and Paul's mystery teaching. He also chides fellow dispensational teachers for having once acknowledged the rapture of the church among the “mystery truths,” but later turned to the fashionable search for signs of the Antichrist, the Great Tribulation and near Second Coming in the Axis powers. The two rapture passages (1 Cor 15:50-51; 1 Thes 4:13-17), both of which lack pre-event signs, rather ground the rapture in a newly revealed phase of the Second Coming without signs (e.g., 1 Cor 15:51, AV: “Behold, I show you a mystery”). Two other pamphlets on this theme are *The Dispensational Stir* (1945) and *The Dispensationalism of Three Groups of Premillennial 'Grace' Bible-Teachers* (1940s).

Reconciliation: O'Hair also saw the Pauline term “reconciliation” as belonging to the circle of ideas in and around Paul's mystery thoughts. Reconciliation language appears in mystery-related texts like Ephesians 2:16, Romans 11:15, and Colossians 1:20-22. Two short articles in *Unsearchable Riches of Christ* on this subject are “Reconciliation—New Creation—Identification” and “Reconciliation and the Mystery.” O'Hair recognized “reconciliation” as a salvation term in Paul, but also as a social term for inclusion of the Gentiles, their union with believing Jews, and the union of both with Christ in the body-church. In discussing the two uses of reconciliation—its salvation and social senses—he is not clear

about how the two meanings work together in Paul until near the end of the article where he finally says,

The Lord's special apostle was sent with the message of reconciliation and grace to the alienated children of Adam. He found the wicked Gentiles *twice alienated* [our italics], alienated in Adam from the life of God by wicked works [salvation use], and alienated from the commonwealth of Israel [social use].⁹

Since reconciliation is discussed under the “mystery” heading, the impression is left that “reconciliation” as a salvation term also belonged strictly to the mystery revelation along with the social sense. O'Hair thus suggests that *atonement and personal salvation as well as the church* were made known first and only to Paul. From this connection some colleagues and successors of O'Hair thought both the church *and the gospel of salvation* (both senses of “reconciliation”) were entirely hidden in God until made known to Paul. A tendency then arose to deny that atonement and salvation prophecies could be found in the Old Testament (including Isaiah 53) or in any teaching of Jesus. This view was supported by arguing that Peter preached the cross only as a crime of Israel against Christ.¹⁰ Somehow this thinking lost sight of O'Hair's repeated comments in many booklets and pamphlets on Paul's “confirmation preaching” of salvation *from Old Testament prophecies*, a preaching theme he shared with the Twelve. O'Hair rightly saw common apostolic preaching of salvation in Paul's phrase, “according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3-4), about which Paul said at the end of the passage, “Whether then it was *I or they, so we preached* and so you believed” (1 Cor 15:11).¹¹ As far as we can tell, O'Hair was not entirely clear on how to correlate the common apostolic salvation preaching from the Old Testament prophets with the uniquely Pauline “reconciliation” language.

The Preaching of Jesus Christ According to the Revelation of the Mystery (c 1947): The pamphlet features a series of contrasts between hundreds of Old Testament prophetic details and Paul's mystery texts. It elaborates on differences between the apostles' “confirmation ministry” noted above, in which Paul proclaimed with the Twelve the prophesied gospel of salvation from several of these prophetic passages, and Paul's “revelation ministry” which focused on the mystery not made known in earlier ages. Some examples of differences are: “according to the Scriptures,” as against Paul's “mystery kept secret since the world began”; Jesus' “Go not into the way of the Gentiles” to the disciples as against Paul's “Lo, we turn to the Gentiles”; and Jesus' “repent” to Israel, as against Paul's “because of [Israel's] transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles” (Rom 11:11, NIV).¹²

Continued on page 16

⁹ *Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, p. 310; current author's brackets for clarity.

¹⁰ C. R. Stam, *Fundamentals of Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1951), pp. 68-79, 207-212.

¹¹ Current authors' italics.

¹² J. C. O'Hair, *The Preaching of Jesus Christ According to the Revelation of the Mystery* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, c 1945-1947?), pp. 6, 8, 13, 14.

Continued from page 15

A similar contrastive pattern is found in *The Most Wonderful Truth in the Bible* (1947). This seventy-six page booklet repeats and summarizes O’Hair’s most distinctive themes and patterns of contrast. But in the midst of these sharp contrasts, the pamphlet exhibits a moderating tendency in O’Hair’s thought. For example, he offers more carefully formed definitions of terms, like the church as a “parenthesis” between Christ and the kingdom.¹³ And about Christ’s words, he says,

“No Spirit-taught servant of the Lord will make the statement that [Christ’s] messages are not for members of the Body of Christ. Much of what Christ said on earth is for the obedience and practice of members of the Body of Christ, [though O’Hair quickly added] much is not.”¹⁴

He also recognizes Paul’s uses of “kingdom” and cautions that “We should explain what we mean when we say the ‘Kingdom and the Body of Christ are not the same.’”¹⁵ These are modest cautions, it is true; but they show O’Hair’s second-thought willingness at times to qualify the harshness of sharp contrasts.

Unsearchable Riches: O’Hair saw another expression of the mystery’s uniqueness in Paul’s language about the church revelation being “unsearchable” or “beyond tracing out.” Such expressions occur in the exuberant praise of Romans 11:33-36 and in Ephesians’ joyous thought about Christ’s riches (Eph 3:8-9). In these texts Paul speaks of God’s “unsearchable” wisdom, his “inscrutable judgments,” and Christ’s “untraceable riches.” O’Hair thought this language was another way to speak of the mystery of the church as unknown to Moses or the prophets. O’Hair notes this meaning in several places, but devotes to it the whole pamphlet *The Riches of Glory ‘Past—Tracing—Out.’* Such phrases seem to refer to something more specific than deeply felt expressions of awe over God’s wisdom and plan. His view of such phrases is partly based on contextual use of “mystery” language in both passages (Rom 11; Eph 3).

Emphasizing the Mystery of the Church

Why did O’Hair emphasize the unique newness of the church so fervently and relentlessly? Several reasons seem relevant considering the pamphlets as a whole—three theological and three practical, and something more personal than either theological or practical.

Theologically, (1) the mystery explains differences between Israel, the kingdom, and the Mosaic Law on one side, and the Gentiles, the Law-free church and its world mission without Israel on the other. No other theme-word and its contexts in the epistles covers the revelation of an Israel-free, Law-free church in

the unfolding redemptive plan; (2) the mystery provided a framework for some features of the present dispensation which did not appear in Israel’s relationship with God: the egalitarian, one-body Jew-Gentile church, the sealing of believers with the Spirit, baptism of believers by the Spirit into Christ, the social sense of reconciliation discussed above, and the rapture-resurrection; and (3) the revelation of the church is the basis for the oneness of the universal Body of Christ stated in the seven unities of Ephesians 4:3-4. The unity of the church was very important to O’Hair; he hoped his mission would move the old Protestant churches toward a new reformation and a renewed unity of evangelicals.¹⁶ A church awakened to its uniqueness between the advents was O’Hair’s fervent hope.

Practically, (1) the mystery texts, their contexts, and their implications were major ingredients in O’Hair’s forceful opposition to Pentecostalism; these elements explained how the rise of the church entailed the decline of Israel and its sign gifts. O’Hair was troubled by the disorder, “fanaticism” and “fraud” he saw in Pentecostalism’s claims and activities; (2) the revelation and rise of a new Spirit-based, egalitarian church and the concurrent fall of Israel also provided a basis for dropping the divisive, varied and contradictory practices of water baptism in the churches. Water baptism divided the one church into a multitude of conflicting churches over both its form and meaning with virtually no hope of restored unity; the only hope was dropping the practice in all forms; and (3) the rapture-resurrection of the church was also part of the mystery revelation (1 Cor 15:51); to it Paul attaches no preliminary signs. Recognition of the lack of prelude signs eliminates signs-of-the-end speculation for prophecy enthusiasts whose claims of fulfillment in current-events are belied by actual history. O’Hair strongly opposed on principle any and all current fulfilled-prophecy speculation.

Interests of this kind were not themselves *the root* of O’Hair’s attention to the Pauline mystery-church. He became aware of these realities from a deeper and more personal source. At some point in his early Christian life—between about 1899 and 1916, or possibly as late as 1920—O’Hair was mentally, emotionally and aesthetically gripped by the unique grandeur and force of Paul’s thoughts about the *body-church as the presence and extension of the resurrected Christ*. Captured by the wonder of this Pauline thought, O’Hair gained an intensely personal sense of the status and relation of the church to Christ. He found this relation in texts where Paul equates Christ with the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12), or where Paul speaks of “the church . . . , the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph 1:22-23). In *God the Builder*, O’Hair thinks of the church as the “New Man” (Eph 2:15) moving toward the “Perfect Man” (Eph 4:13; 5:26-27).¹⁷ Such descriptions refer to the true church as a community in growth toward holiness

¹³ J. C. O’Hair, *The Most Wonderful Truth in the Bible* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, 1947), p. 41.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁶ In *Buried with Him by Baptism*, O’Hair states that he had not intended to start a new view of baptism. Perhaps we can surmise from such a statement that this larger vision of his mission developed even before this later 1920s pamphlet.

¹⁷ J. C. O’Hair, *God the Builder* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, 1944), pp. 1-12.

and righteousness, and to individuals within it inclusively, not merely as isolated persons gaining a “personal salvation” alone or without church-community connections. Realized union with Christ and his Body became a central dynamic in O’Hair’s life. These spiritual-theological dynamics are transparent throughout his writings.

Biblical terms like those above for Christ and the church belong to Paul’s union-with-Christ thinking—the basis of believers’ transformed life and new being (Rom 6:1-14). O’Hair was quite aware of how “perfectionistic” these biblical expressions sound; but he also realized Paul saw the church moving toward perfection. Progressive sanctification was encouraged by the Westminster Catechisms of O’Hair’s Presbyterian years (c 1905-1925). His dispensational theology, also learned in these years, does not seem to have required him to drop the Catechisms’ “more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness,”¹⁸ even though he adopted the “two natures of the believer” view of the Christian person thought by evangelical Presbyterians to be incompatible with reformed catechisms. Nor does he advocate any “deeper life” form of spiritual experience as a second or third stage of the Christian’s new life. For him, Christ’s union with the true church is the reality and power of the individual Christian’s sanctification and the church’s movement toward the “Perfect Man.” Union with Christ is the center of the church’s spiritual life and actually happens through baptism by the Spirit into Christ and his Body at salvation. Deep personal appreciation, awe and understanding of these Pauline concepts were the root of his attention to the mystery of the church, as odd as this might sound to traditional Presbyterians.

O’Hair believed awareness of these divine realities would grow from a true experience of salvation continuously enriched by the Holy Spirit through Bible reading and study, prayer, and fellowship with the people of God, not from seeking some form of a “second blessing” or “deeper life.” “The mystery” was not valued for theological or practical problem-solving reasons alone; it was more basically about the revelation of the church including its baptism by the Spirit into Christ, its union with him, its sealing with the Spirit, and its freedom from Israel and its Law and rituals; none of these blessings were known in Old Testament Israel. Aspects of the Christ-church union must have begun reaching O’Hair’s mind and emotions at or soon after his conversion. From this point his awareness grew more fully during his young Christian life after 1900, and further during his first years of full-time ministry.¹⁹ Whenever discovered and appreciated, these realities were for O’Hair an engulfing spiritual power and wonder, not merely heady materials for argument. Nearly thirty years after his

¹⁸ *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* (1617), Question 35; in the *Larger Catechism*, Question 75 is substantially the same.

¹⁹ In the letter-pamphlet *Extreme Dispensationalism Called Bullingerism* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, 1943), pp. 28-29, O’Hair produced a list of ten aspects of the mystery stated in passages from H. Ironside, and on which he, Ironside and Bullinger agreed. The list is a basic definition of the subject; it does not include items mentioned in this discussion, but is limited to observations about the mystery from the texts where it appears.

baptism by immersion, probably by a Church of Christ minister about thirteen months after his salvation in 1899, he confesses in a reflective moment that he wondered what his immersion could have added to the completeness of his salvation in Christ alone.²⁰ In the early 1940s pamphlet, *A Study of the Book of Acts*, he put it this way:

With all spiritual blessings at the believer’s disposal. . . and. . . with the mighty power of God available because the believer is in Christ. . . , is it not the height of folly, as well as spiritual ignorance, for a member of the Body of Christ to be seeking for the second blessing and more power? . . . When. . . dead sinners were made alive by God’s grace, His Divine baptism made them members of Christ’s Body and baptized them into the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. . . There is One Body, One Baptism, One Spirit, even as there is only One Christ.²¹

This statement summarizes the spiritual realities of the mystery revelation—the special blessings of the church and the realities that gripped O’Hair’s thoughts, emotions and will during the early years of his Christian life. Notwithstanding these personally powerful spiritual understandings, the mystery theme and its related details and implications as he explained them would become a major ingredient of theological formation and debate after 1920. □

To be continued in the next issue of Truth.

²⁰ O’Hair, discusses this in some detail in his pamphlet of c 1927, *Buried with His by Baptism*, pp. 14-17.

²¹ J. C. O’Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, c 1943), p. 65; see also comments in *Seven Questions Concerning Water Baptism*, p. 14, and his remarks in other pamphlets from the 1920s .

TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF MISSIONARIES

Philippines
United States
Indonesia

Mission History
Missionary Life
Church Planting
Theology of Mission

Field Orientation
Evangelism
Leadership
Troas Strategy
Cross-Cultural Training
Exposure Trip

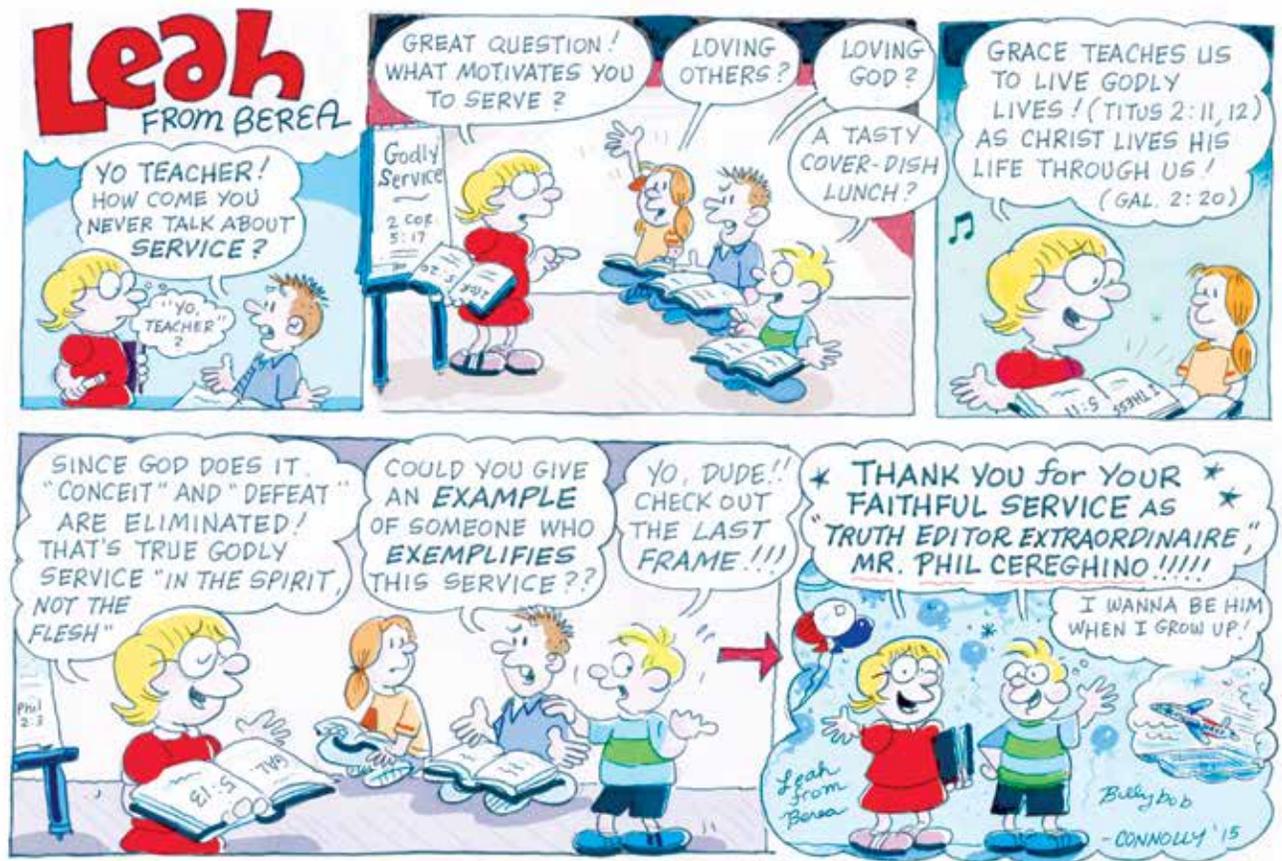
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It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known ... (Rom. 15:20)



Word and God's world—which includes nature as well as the people and cultures of the world. Nevertheless, we also must be doers; God is looking for ministers, not just students. He holds us accountable for what we know. It is not difficult to sit and study issues, or even write about them in evaluations. But we often fail to move beyond that in education and ministry.

Confronting change: Sometimes we will aggressively confront and fight against change, because we want to keep things as they have “always been.” We are more comfortable with how we were raised and were trained to do something, than we are to learn new things and change our methods to be more effective. This is a reality in academia. The faculty “tenure” system that has evolved, for example, is not as much about learning and student-focus as it is about the “job security” of faculty members who have finished their education and desire assurance of employment. And yet, as I've heard it stated, the only constant about our culture is change. An institution has to find balance between the old and the new. Some change requires confrontation because of moral issues or ethical implications, but many changes simply need to be understood, and incorporated into our thinking for our greater effectiveness.

New opportunities for effective ministry. If we can humbly seek to understand cultural changes and “ride these waves” of opportunity, we will impact people in the coming years. We must seek to integrate Biblical Truth with the new realities of education and ministry. These paradigm shifts present new opportunities for education and ministry of a new generation. It is hard work to be entrepreneurial in education and ministry. It costs us time, energy, learning, and finances. Often, this “capital” must be re-allocated from other efforts in order for us to focus on the future rather than the past.

At Grace Bible College, we too have made some major changes, to try and adjust our institution for a lasting ministry of biblical higher education into the future. We now have more students online than we do on campus in the classroom. We have professors who live in other states teaching students who live all over the world. Grace is beginning graduate studies, which will also follow the nontraditional format allowing students to study and be active in ministry simultaneously. At the same time, our students minister in face-to-face contact with children and youth in our community to touch them with the love of Christ Jesus. We seek your prayers to fulfill the mission of Grace Bible College as we *Graduate Godly Individuals Prepared To Serve Christ In Church And Society* in our ever disruptive and ever changing world.

In your life and church, what are your responses to disruptive innovations? Our Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul both demonstrated a cultural sensitivity to the world in which they ministered, taking advantage of the changes to touch lives for all eternity. It behooves us to do the same in education, church ministry, and our daily living. God bless you as you discern and adjust for his glory. □

across a starving little boy in an orphanage in 2007. Though not intending to adopt him, Lynn shares, “It became so obvious to us that God meant Luka for our family, and in 2012 his adoption was complete. If we hadn't followed the Lord's leading back to Tanzania, we would have missed out on the blessing of Luka!” For the missionary, family is a joy.

Among the greatest joys of the missionary life is when the Lord works in others to bring about salvation, repentance, or a life that is touched. Reflecting on their ministry in Brazil, Ken and Mary Mueller speak of a woman whose heart was so hard they did not think she would become a believer. They shared the gospel with this lady who trusted Christ as her Savior and declared with joy, “I've waited seventeen years to hear this Good News.” While Alex Gulart (Paraguay) was ministering with Operation Mobilization on the Logos II ship at a port city, Alex was preaching the gospel when a homosexual man came to him crying and said, “I want the Holy Spirit to change me and transform me, because I really need it.” Joseph Asong (Malawi) recalls a trip he took back in 2013 to visit churches far away from Lilongwe—the capital of Malawi. He shared with a congregation a song he learned growing up in Cameroon, in English and French and also in Chichewa (the language most commonly spoken in Malawi). Joseph then tells about a flood-relief trip he made earlier this year to a region of Malawi he had never visited before. He recounts the following:

During a joint service in a location I knew I had never visited, a choir made up of very young children stood up and sang the song I had taught more than a year before! And they sang it so well, and in English, French, and Chichewa! I later found out that the choir came all the way from one of the places that I had visited more than a year before.

Kaylah Fosnot (Puerto Rico) was recently sharing the gospel with kids from her after-school Bible club. She recalls what happened next:

We then bowed and prayed together. I will never forget what happened when I said “amen.” The little girl I was praying with opened her eyes and was beaming from ear to ear. She was so joyful that she had just accepted Christ and it was radiating out of her face.

Putting your trust in the Lord and faithfully serving Him will bring you joy. The missionary life is an emphatic reflection of this principle—each missionary placing him or herself in faith-stretching situations daily. Ultimately, the Lord will demonstrate his favor face-to-face to each one who serves him in such a way. In the meantime, he blesses them with incredible joy now, which only foreshadows the joy each believer will have upon entering his everlasting presence. Pray for our missionaries and pray for more missionaries to share God's grace with the world. As you do, ask the Lord if you might be one who could experience the joy of serving him on the mission field. □

NEWS from AROUND GRACE GOSPEL FELLOWSHIP



Region 2: Southwest
Chuck Williams

At the time of this writing **Grace Bible Church**, Anaheim, CA is beginning its preliminary search for a new pastor. Pastor Phillip duPlessis, and his wonderful wife, Antoinette, officially ended their time at Grace after services on March 22nd. The congregation gave them a “bang up farewell party” on March 21 in the form of a California barbecue. Some of the Vietnamese congregation that uses the church joined in at the barbecue (see photos).

They were thankful to have Pastor Bruce Kemper, driving all the way from, Sun City West, AZ, to fill the pulpit for their Easter Sunday service. □



Region 3: West
Steve Blackwell

Harvest Fellowship (Brighton, CO, Pastors Steve Blackwell & Bob Hill):

We are in the midst of changes, adding some modularity, changing walls, making things as easy as possible for our people and visitors. We are growing. We’ve had to change how we house our children’s ministry with adding two modularity to accommodate the kids. We also have eight teens and four adults headed for Honduras in May to assist in building an orphanage. We just had two people return from Rwanda and another two from Calcutta teaching pastors and wives to support themselves in the ministry in their own countries. It’s really been good for our church body to see the progress in these missions.

Denver Bible Church (Arvada, CO, Pastor Bob Enyart):

Thanks to God’s blessing, there is now a new facility in Colorado dedicated to the spread of the Gospel of Grace and that’s the new home of Denver Bible Church. Thank



you everyone for your prayers! The sanctuary seats 120 and there’s a kitchen, fellowship hall, and plenty of classrooms to train up young and old alike. The very first meeting there just happened to be a long-ago scheduled mid-Acts study group for authors and teachers! Praise the Lord! □



Region 4: Upper Midwest
Mark Matychuk & Les Takkinen

Pastors Les Takkinen and Randy Brown of **Grace Bible Church**, West Allis, WI write:

God continues to amaze us as we walk with the Master and watch HIM work in the

lives of people. We did show the movie, “God’s Not Dead,” once more and prayed for 50-plus to be in attendance for the showing. Over 50 came but more importantly, most were not attenders of our church and we had at least four professions of Christ as Savior. What a thrill!!!

In February, I did an exchange of speakers with another pastor in our area on a Thursday afternoon at two of the Extended Care facilities. The first one was not scheduled for the other pastor, but I requested it for our normal meeting. I arrived about five minutes before the start time which left me only 30 minutes for the service. I waited about ten minutes with no one showing up. I was ready to leave when Anne, one of the caretakers, came with two people in wheelchairs.

After another five minutes of introducing myself, and we had about a dozen residents from the center in attendance! A number of new people were there when I began singing Amazing Grace with only 20 minutes left in the service. After sharing the message: “Packing for a Trip of a Lifetime” three of those present professed Christ as Savior. What a blessing to my heart!

In an effort to get the people in our church to reach out to our community we enjoyed a Saturday afternoon packing 600

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Continued from bottom right of page 20

boxes for the elderly. This work for the Hunger Task Force was enjoyed by about 19 people and most of them were new to this ministry. We are looking forward to another time in July.

Finally, on March 1, we had a message entitled, "Journey to the Center of the Earth," and the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Again, God's Spirit touched hearts and we had three more professions of Christ as Savior. We are thrilled at what God is doing and excited to be a part of His Work in our small part of the world. □



Region 5: Lower Midwest
Ed Jeude

Pastor Zack Slater, **Faith Bible Church**, Olney, IL, reports that the Lord is at work! The ministries are actively reaching children and teens for Christ in the area, and the Lord has granted increase. The CBC program just came to a close for the year and has been a blessing in many ways, from adult fellowship to training so many young people in the message of Grace. The middle and high school programs, called L.O.F.T. (Living On Faith and Truth), are reaching and teaching the previously unchurched in massive ways. The Lord has been reaching hearts and opening doors. More and more are receiving Christ as their personal savior, as well as beginning to understand the grace of God in deeper ways. God has opened doors for them with the answer to prayer—a 71-passenger school bus—to add to their 15-passenger van for transporting the large number of young people God is entrusting to them. "We are blessed to preach in our public middle and high schools each week," writes Pastor Zack, "Joining with other churches to present *hundreds* with the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

They are also looking forward to large outreach projects in the next few months: RCYA's Blitz—a county-wide overnight outreach to churched and unchurched middle school youth; they partner with a ministry from Evansville, IN and Teen Missions International out of Merritt Island, FL for Fair Share, which coordinates with several county fairs in the area to have youth present the Gospel to hundreds of fair goers; and, through Mission Richland they reach out in work for Christ to clean, paint, witness, cook, etc. for others in Christ's Name.

Region 5 wants to encourage all those that work with youth in your area to try and attend RPG in Michigan this July 15-18. It is such a motivator for our youth to meet with other Grace believers, and the spiritual growth that accompanies them home is outstanding

It's been an exciting time at **Grace Gospel Church**, Linton, IN, reports Shaun Winters. They just finished a doctrinal sermon series focusing on how doctrine is still relevant the believer's life and how one practically lives out their faith. Since the last update, it has been a time of doing things they've never done before, like marching in parades; having sermons at the park; and really trying to concentrate on outreach.

A popular outreach ministry has been an archery program. This has been a youth program the last two years. They teach kids the fundamentals of archery combined with a growing biblical program that ranges from evangelism to equipping kids to study and evangelize. Recently, the program has changed because parents were bringing their children and *staying* to watch. So, they now also offer adult instruction and Bible study to help meet their needs. It has been amazing to see how God is using this in the community and how it is reaching out and drawing people in from the community.

And finally, they are shifting gears in anticipation of the summer months. The archery program will expand into a family summer program also incorporating the community into their VBS program. The church will also be in the 4th of July parade this year. It will be the single largest event to talk to people and invite them to services. □



Region 9: Western MI
Kathy Molenkamp

Grace Bible Fellowship has been blessed, reports Pastor Caleb Befus, with a flurry of ministry opportunities and events. A few highlights of this past season of ministry were our Missions Conference ("What is My Part?"), where we were challenged to partner in the Gospel (Phil 1:3-6). We are excited to partner with local and foreign missions to see the Gospel reach more people in our community and our world. We are also in the midst of wrapping up an exciting year of CBC where GBF children have truly displayed a passion to memorize and know the Word of God. As we look toward the Summer we are confident that God has special and exciting things in store for us as strive to be an engaging community growing in Christ.

This past Good Friday approximately 300 brothers and sisters in Christ gathered at **Baker Chapel** on the campus of Grace Bible College to reflect on the significance of the death of Jesus Christ. The service was a joint effort between pastors and leaders of the West Michigan GGF churches. It was a blessing to have several GGF pastors work together as they shared and helped to focus our hearts and minds on Christ as we prepared to celebrate His resurrection on Easter Sunday at our respective churches. □



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