

Sunday, November 25, 2012—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 81 The Spread of Acts 28ism and the Rise of Pentecostalism

Welch and the Spread of Acts 28ism

- February 1909 was when Charles Welch launched his Bible study magazine [*The Berean Expositor*](#). The magazine was thoroughly Acts 28 in its dispensational perspective. In fact, Charles Welch could rightly be viewed as the father of the Acts 28 position; he was the one that suggested the division of the Pauline Epistle to Bullinger. Moreover, due to EWB's advanced age at the time of his death in 1913, it was the much younger Welch that continued to hammer out the doctrinal details of the Acts 28 position.
- Welch's first book, *Dispensational Truth*, was published in 1912. Welch offers the following account of its publication:
 - "It was the first born of three similar volumes and it made its entry into the world when the author was almost at his wits end to obtain the bread that perisheth. Most, if not every one, of Paul's epistles were elicited by the immediate needs of the church. It is evident that he did not sit down and intentionally write a treatise or a book. In like manner [*Dispensational Truth*](#) was conceived. I did not take up the pen and say to myself I will write a book and call it *Dispensational Truth*. It came about in a more homely way. A young man, whose mother had come into the light, and who had opened her home for meetings along the lines of Dispensational Truth, paid me a visit, and for several hours asked questions and received answers. At the close of the long interview he said, "Why don't you put all this into a book? There must be many like myself who would appreciate such a work." I just told him simply and frankly that it was a matter of money. I would gladly do the work, but I had not a single penny in the world to spend on such an undertaking. He said he felt sure that he could raise the amount needed among his friends. In this he proved to be too sanguine, but his enthusiasm was fruitful, for at a meeting held subsequently at my parent's house in Denmark Park, a promise of fifty (pounds) was made by those there gathered and, with this as an earnest, I prepped to write the book." (Welch, 110)
- Time and space will simply not allow a detailed evaluation of everything Mr. Welch ever wrote with respect to dispensational truth. Those interested in learning more about the dispensational views of Charles Welch are encouraged to view the website listed in the works cited at the end of this lesson. What is important for our purposes is to understand that Welch continued to stand for and teach Acts 28 doctrine until his death in 1967. In his autobiography, Welch relishes being viewed as more dispensational than Bullinger.
 - "I was definitely assured that Dr. Bullinger was as bad as, if not worse than, a higher critic because he "cut up" the Word of God! Since that time I have been honoured by being designated "worse than Dr. Bullinger!" (Welch, 75)

- In addition to his controversial views regarding dispensational truth, Welch also held some controversial views concerning the intermediate and final state of the dead, namely, conditional immortality and annihilationism. Welch states the following on these subjects in his autobiography:
 - “One of the earliest subjects that came up for consideration was the doctrine known as “Conditional Immortality.” The teaching which I had hitherto endorsed held to the orthodox view concerning the immortality of the soul, eternal conscious torment of the lost, and the consciousness in an intermediate state of those who had died. The very prospect of reconsidering so formidable and solemn a set of doctrines was rather intimidating, but at length the light dawned and the Platonic doctrine that had been foisted upon the Scriptures was perceived to be untrue, and the glorious Gospel of “Life only in Christ irradiated our new endeavors. This, wonderful as it was, was not the main quest before us.” (Welch, 80)
 - “A further test of loyalty remained. Not only were we seeing light upon the place of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper that rendered our witness “dangerous” in the eyes of many, we were also seeing light upon the nature of the soul, hell, and the wages of sin that was indeed “damnable heresy” in the estimation of others. . . The findings of those early days have since been made the basis of the booklet, [*‘Hell,’ or Pure From the Blood of all Men*](#), and we rejoice to know that some of the choicest of our acquaintances give ready testimony to the emancipating power of the truth there set forth. While the dispensational position of Acts 28 and of the epistle to the Ephesians and its logical consequences was uppermost in that early ministry, together with the doctrine of the soul and with the teaching of the Scripture concerning Hell. . . Even in that early day I saw that the judgment of the great white throne was twofold and quoted the rendering of JND and of J.R. Rotherham “And if anyone was not found written in the book of life he was cast into the lake of fire,” and followed the quotation with the comment “Instead of the orthodox idea of myriads being cast into the lake of fire, Scripture leads us to see that it is to be an intensely individual matter, depending not upon works, but upon the book of life.” Our study of the Word drove us to the conclusion that the soul of man is not inherently immortal, that immortality is a gift in grace conferred at the resurrection; that the dead are asleep, that they awake at the resurrection, and that there is no conscious intermediate state.” (Welch, 107-108)
- Welch’s words speak for themselves and require no interpretation; he rejects the orthodox view of key Scriptural passages related to the intermediate and final state of the dead. When the term “Bullingerism” is used as a pejorative it is often in reference to EWB’s views regarding conditional immortality. In Appendix 101 of *The Companion Bible*, Bullinger states:
 - “*pneuma* being imparted to man, making him “a living *psuche*” (= “a living soul,” or “being” as in Gen. 2:7, Psa. 104:29-30, Ecc. 12:7). When taken back to and by God, man, without *pneuma*, becomes and is called “a dead soul” in each of the thirteen occurrences rendered in the Authorized Version “dead body,” etc.”

- The issue of conditional immorality often confused with the Seventh Day Adventist doctrine of Soul Sleep was taught by Bullinger. The Doctor vehemently resented being characterized as believing in Soul Sleep, “We must be judged only by what we actually say, not by what we have not said.” One writer retorts, “Oh, then you believe in the sleep of the soul!” “We believe nothing of the kind. The expression is not in Scripture, and we know not what it means.” (quoted in Baker, 571) Interested parties are encouraged to consider the following works by Bullinger for more on this subject (PDF users can follow the links for access to these works).
 - *The Spirits in Prison* written in 1891
 - *The Rich Man and Lazarus* written in 1902
 - *The Companion Bible Appendices 13, 101, and 110*

- Charles Welch continued his testimony with respect to dispensational truth on many fronts throughout his lifetime. Through the efforts of Welch and his protégée Stuart Allen, Acts 28ism was disseminated around the globe despite meeting almost continuous opposition. In 1959 Welch and Allen issued a special issue of *The Berean Expositor* celebrating the magazine’s 50th anniversary. The issue was titled, *Jubilee! The Berean Expositor 1909-1959 A great record of sustaining grace*. In 1960, The Berean Publishing Trust issued *Charles H. Welch: An Autobiography*. Here are some of the key points regarding the movement’s history that can be gleaned from these books.
 - In 1943, Welch adopted the Wilson Street Chapel in London as his church building which he renamed The Chapel of the Opened Book. (Welch, 123-128)
 - The Berean Publishing Trust was established to preserve Welch’s works and research. This is the group that is primarily responsible for keeping the works of Welch and Allen in print. (Welch and Allen, 24-25, 31)
 - The Berean Forward Movement Trust was responsible for the ministerial side of the work. “. . . Expenses resulting from effort to extend or “forward” the movement are defrayed from the funds. The Berean Forward Movement Trust funds are the means of paying stipends to the Principal and Assistant Principal, maintenance and repairs of the Chapel, including heating and lighting, advertising, expenses of the Sign Post Work and the Tape Recording Service.” (Welch and Allen, 31)
 - In the notices section of the Jubilee issue one finds the following statement, “The following friends hold, on our behalf, a stock of literature by Mr. Charles H. Welch and orders for these books and renewals for *The Berean Expositor* may for your convenience be sent to them.” They included a Mr. Charles Foley of Australia, Mr. H.I. Jones and Sons of New Zealand, and a Mr. Oscar M. Baker of Warsaw, Indiana. (Welch and Allen, 31)

- Mr. Oscar M. Baker’s ministry Truth For Today has been the primary means through which the writings of Bullinger, Welch, and Allen has been distributed in the United States. According to

the ministries website, Truth For Today was founded July 1, 1944 as a small bible study paper (150 copies) that continues to this day (6,700 copies) and forms the backbone of their ministry. Currently, Truth For Today is being sent to all fifty states and sixty-one other nations. Through their paper and web site (tftmin.org) the writings of Bullinger, Welch, and Allen are being sent around the world. When Mr. Baker died, the ministry was relocated to Lafayette, Indiana for logistical reasons. (tftmin.org)

- There are still many individuals and groups that are seeking to promote the Acts 28 dispensational position. For a more complete list of these persons and groups, interested parties are encouraged to consult the listing of Acts 28 ministry on the dispensationalberean.com.
 - Dispensationalberean.com/links-2/acts-28/

The Rise of Pentecostalism

- “. . . Pentecostalism, one of the most important developments in world Christianity in the twentieth century. It had its roots in the Holiness movement, a trend that spread through the churches of the USA—especially the Methodists—in the second half of the nineteenth century. The movement harked back to the revivals of the eighteenth century. Its members stressed that the evangelical life involves not one but two conversions. The first involves repentance and the forgiveness of sins, but the second involves full sanctification, the dedication of oneself to God and the living of a holy life. The Holiness preachers and congregations therefore stressed moral living, and were known for their austere lifestyles. By the late 1880s, many of these groups had broken away from the Methodists to form splinter denominations of their own.” (Hill, 452)
- “. . . earlier leaders and movements had anticipated what Pentecostals call “the latter rain” or the “outpouring of the Spirit.” The Scottish preacher Edward Irving (1792-1834) was only one of several nineteenth-century leaders whose ministry encouraged special spiritual gifts. Toward the end of the century, widespread longing for revival combined, in several places, with an equally great longing for Christian sanctification. Among zealous heirs of John Wesley’s Methodism such longings were expressed in the language of “Christian perfection” or “Holiness,” while Protestants of Calvinist background spoke more of “the higher Christian life.” (Noll, 299)
- “One of these Holiness Methodist preachers, Charles Parham (1872-1929), ran a Bible school in Topeka, Kansas. Here, on 1 January 1901, his student Agnes Ozman started speaking in tongues, strange language that made no sense. It began when Parham had his students study what the New Testament said about the blessings of the Holy Spirit, and Parham became convinced that those blessings were being suddenly bestowed upon his group. He believed that the coming of the Holy Spirit indicated a “second baptism” in the Holy Spirit, and that speaking in tongues was the Bible evidence of this baptism.” (Hill, 452)
- “Parham’s movement really made its mark in 1906, when one of his students, William Seymour (1870-1922), began preaching at 312 Azusa Street, Los Angeles. His preaching had an extraordinary effect of a kind not witnessed in the USA since George Whitefield. People

shrieked and shouted, danced, fell over, and most of all babbled incomprehensibly in tongues. This happened at three services a day, seven days a week, for three years. Miracles were attested, and the crutches of those who had been healed soon covered the wall or the church.” (Hill, 452)

- “The movement spread, as Azusa Street worshippers traveled across the USA. Gaston Barnabas Cashwell took the message to the Holiness churches of the South in 1906, while Charles Harrison Mason took it to Memphis, forming a new church, the Church of God in Christ, and William Durham took it to Chicago where he helped set up the Assemblies of God in 1914. Since they all believed that the defining moment for all Christians was the coming of the Spirit to the apostles on the Day of Pentecost, they became known as Pentecostals. Before the first decade of the twentieth century had finished, the movement had spread to Europe, South America, and Africa.” (Hill, 452)
- “Significantly, the first major split within Pentecostalism reflected differences concerning holiness among the late nineteenth century revivalists. The original Pentecostal teachers, Parham and Seymour, taught a Methodistic Holiness view of a “second blessing” of entire sanctification in which the sinful nature was eradicated. This, they said, was followed by a third blessing, “Baptism of the Spirit,” accompanied by tongues. By 1910, however, a significant group had developed within Pentecostalism who did not have methodistic backgrounds. These taught a view resembling the Reformed teaching that sanctification was a continuing process rather than a distinct experience. They also held that the Baptism of the Spirit resulted not in perfect holiness, but rather “endowment for service”. This Baptistic . . . Pentecostal teaching led to the formation of the Assemblies of God . . . These groups, like most Pentecostals, shared many traits with fundamentalists that reflected their common origins in the revivalism of the Moody era.” (Marsden, 94)
- “In the meantime revivalist evangelicals who did not seek the gift of tongues were embarrassed by the emergence of these cousins in Christ. During the early decade of the century they were at pain to disclaim any ties. The favor, however, was not returned, as the Pentecostals were quite willing to claim antecedents in their earlier revivalism. . . Dispensationalism, which fit so well with the Pentecostal and holiness ideas of the “Age of the Spirit,” easily gained acceptance in the new Pentecostal movement, even though the Scofield-type dispensationalists maintained that tongues ceased with the Apostles.” (Marsden, 94)
- “Despite close resemblances of Pentecostals to “fundamentalists,” Pentecostals were only tangentially part of the fundamentalism of the 1920s. Pentecostals often identified themselves as “fundamentalists,” read fundamentalist literature, and adopted anti-Modernist and anti-evolution rhetoric; yet other fundamentalists seldom welcomed them as allies or called them to their councils. The influence, then, was largely in only one direction, from fundamentalism to Pentecostalism.” (Marsden, 94)
- George M. Marsden, author of *Fundamentalism and American Culture* highlights the struggle between 1910 and 1920 between the various factions within fundamentalism as they sought to

come to grips with the Pentecostal movement. “In 1912, H.A. Ironside (who later became the Pastor of Moody Church in Chicago) published the most famous attack on the separatist Holiness movements, *Holiness, The False and the True*. Ironside agreed with Hills (A.M. Hills) that tongues-speaking was an aberration. . .” (Marsden, 95)

- “Once underway, the Pentecostal movement rapidly became a world-wide phenomenon. Over the last half of this century (20th century), the charismatic movement in Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and many other denominations expanded emphases on healing and other spiritual gifts borrowed from earlier Pentecostalism. Together, the Pentecostal and charismatic emphasis upon experiencing the grace of God—especially upon sensing God through more intimate, less cognitive forms of worship—have influenced Protestant, Catholics, and even some Orthodox all over the world.” (Noll, 300)
- “Also in the second half of the twentieth century, Pentecostal and charismatic currents have been central in the rapid expansion of Christianity outside the West, with most of the rapidly growing churches in Brazil, Nigeria, Korea, Russia, China, and many other nations either explicitly Pentecostal or heavily influenced by charismatic practices in these situations, Pentecostal and charismatic forms of Christian faith flourish by directly confronting pagan gods and animistic spirits as well as by imparting the direct immediacy of God’s presence.” (Noll, 302)
- “Most Pentecostals and charismatics hold to traditional Christian beliefs on the Trinity, human sinfulness, and the authority of the Bible. Many share a perspective on Christ in interrelated roles as Savior, Healer, Baptizer in the Spirit, and Returning King. With such emphasis, Pentecostals as charismatics have placed great stress on the supernatural power of God to defeat disease and to provide other miraculous intervention in ordinary life.” (Noll, 302)
- According to Alister McGrath, “The more recent “signs and wonders” movement, which placed considerable emphasis on the importance of spiritual healing, has caused controversy. Some critics have argued that it presents the gospel in terms which make no reference to repentance or forgiveness, changes which were pressed particularly forcefully after the 1990 Spiritual Warfare Conference at Sydney, Australia. Further controversy centers on the theology of healing itself. However, it is clear that a major movement is in the process of emerging, with the potential for articulating a distinctive theology of its own. The new awareness and experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the modern church has raised a series of debates over the nature of baptism of the Spirit, and which of the various “spiritual gifts” (*charismata*) are of greatest importance in relation both to personal faith and spirituality, and to the upbuilding of the church as a whole.” (McGrath, 125-126)
- The rise of Pentecostalism has been one of the most influential developments in the twentieth century with respect to the history of Christianity. “In 1900 there were, at most, a bare handful of Christians who were experiencing special gifts of the Holy Spirit similar to those recorded in the New Testament. By the end of the century, as many as 500 million (or more than a quarter of the worldwide population of affiliated Christian adherents) could be identified as Pentecostal or charismatic. . . Should trends of the twentieth century continue with Pentecostal and charismatic

forces continuing to expand, especially in the Two-Thirds World, events around 1900 that precipitated identifiable Christian movements defined by belief in the special word of the Holy Spirit may loom as one of the most decisive turning points in the recent history of Christianity.” (Noll, 299-302)

- It is important to note that Fundamentalism as a whole had no consistent coherent answer for Pentecostalism apart from the consistent application of dispensational truth. More specifically, while Scofieldian dispensationalism was against tongues speaking for example, they had no consistent answer to the Pentecostals because of where they began the body of Christ. If the church started in Acts 2, based upon what method of exegesis could Acts 2 dispensationalism consistently argue against the Pentecostals with respect to tongues speaking and other charismatic phenomenon?
- It was in the midst of this combative doctrinal climate that a consistent answer did emerge in the form of a mid-Acts dispensational movement. The roots of the so-called “grace movement” find their roots in this culture conflict that existed within America’s religious community. Not only were the Fundamentalists warring against the modernists but they were also fighting a losing battle against the Pentecostals.
- J.C. O’Hair, one of the great leaders of the “grace movement” in the United States, said that unless his Fundamentalist brethren embraced the unique and distinct message and ministry of the Apostle Paul, they would have no answer to Pentecostal fanaticism.
 - “It does seem that God is using the rod of Pentecostal fanaticism to bring to their senses the “grace” preachers, among Fundamentalists, who teach that the dispensation of the mystery began with Peter on the Jewish feast day, instead of with Saul, after his name was changed to Paul. They will still say that there is no difference between the gospel of the circumcision committed to Peter and the gospel of the uncircumcision committed to Paul (Galatians 2:7). They add to the confusion by teaching that Paul perpetuated the same message and spiritual program which began with Peter and Pentecost.

The answer to Pentecostalism, Seventh Day Adventism, Anglo Israelism, and every ill and “ism” with which the Body of Christ is afflicted, is Pauline Grace Truth, the understanding of Ephesians 3:1 to 11 and 4:1 to 14.” (O’Hair, 190)

Work Cited

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Organizations

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