

Sunday, March 10, 2013—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 96
Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren, O’Hair’s Response to Ironside

Introduction

- When I first read *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* by Ironside, I could not understand why Stam and O’Hair responded so harshly to what appears to have been a critique of Acts 28ism not the mid-Acts view. It has only been in the past three months (since late December 2012) that I have come to understand why. As we have previously observed, as late as March, 1933 when O’Hair wrote *Much Little No Water?* he was still making Acts 2 statements.
- The *Grace History Project* now believes that when O’Hair began to question the traditional Acts 2 position he gravitated for awhile towards Acts 28ism. During 1935, both in *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren* and in the issues of *Bible Study for Bereans* that began in August, O’Hair makes many comments that resemble the thinking of Acts 28ism. This would explain why O’Hair took such offense to Ironside’s publication. In short, when *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* is read in its historical context rather than in isolation, a new understanding of the thought history emerges.
- Heretofore, even within Grace Circles, there has been little clarity as to the development of O’Hair’s dispensational thinking over time. This is no doubt compounded when O’Hair is studied by those who are critical of the Grace Movement’s theology. For example, Adam O. Christmas, author of the doctoral dissertation *An Analysis and Evaluation of the Interpretations of J.C. O’Hair, Cornelius Stam, and Charles Baker Concerning the Origin of the Church, Water Baptism, and the Commission of the Church*, views *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* are more focused on the extreme type of ultra-dispensationalism espoused by Bullinger and not the moderate form taught by O’Hair, Stam, and Baker. (Christmas, 93) This demonstrates that even opponents of O’Hair’s theology lack a clear understanding of how his thinking changed over time.
- The *Grace History Project* believes that *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* is reflective of parts of O’Hair’s thinking in 1935. The goal of this lesson is to prove that, for a time, O’Hair was making statements that have much in common with the Acts 28 view espoused by Bullinger and Welch.

Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren

- On May 20, 1935 Pastor J.C. O’Hair addressed a letter to Dr. H.A. Ironside titled, *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren* in which he voiced his many objections to the dispensational teaching found in *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*. Since we have already considered Ironside’s book (see Lesson 94 and 95) we will limit our comments here to understanding O’Hair’s response to Ironside.
- As a general rule, the reason why the two men disagreed dispensationally was because of their different views of when Israel was set aside.
 - “As I have said to you before, our differences as to water baptism, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Dispensation of the Grace of God and the Dispensation of the

Mystery, are because we do not agree as to when the Nation Israel was set aside.”
(O’Hair, *Deriding*)

- In the following quotations O’Hair makes statements in his response to Ironside that are very consistent with Acts 28ism. Specifically he speaks of the dispensation of the mystery not having been revealed until the close of the book of Acts.
 - “I cannot definitely fix the time when the risen Lord revealed the mystery of Ephesians and Colossians to the Apostle Paul but I do know that there is no statement concerning the “Dispensation of the Mystery” during the “Acts” period. There must have been some reason, in the mind of God, why He withheld the writing of Ephesians 3:8 and 9 until after He pronounced His judgment upon the Nation Israel in Acts 28:25 to 28. I believe that there is a very definite turning-point with the close of the “Acts” period, whether or not we call it the close of the transitional period or the beginning of a new dispensation. Your ultra dispensationalist brethren do not teach that the message of pure grace began with Paul’s prison Epistles neither do they teach positively that the risen Lord had not revealed the mystery to him before he reached Rome. They do know that the “Dispensation of the Mystery” was not mentioned before that time, and they have learned by the study of Ephesians, Colossians and II Timothy glorious truths that are not to be found in any of Paul’s preprison Epistles or in the oral ministry of the Twelve or Paul, recorded in Acts.” (O’Hair, *Deriding*)
 - “I believe that the “Times of the Gentiles” politically or governmentally began with Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem about 606 B.C., and the “Times of the Gentiles” religiously or spiritually began after God’s judgment upon Israel pronounced in Acts 28:25 to 28.” (O’Hair, *Deriding*)
 - “There is such a radical change in the program of the Church after the close of the “Acts” period that it might as well be considered a different Church or a different dispensation. The close of Acts certainly closed a “transitional” period, which was in the mind of the Lord as well as in the mind of the apostles, or it marked the beginning of a new dispensation. From my Bible study it is difficult for me to make the New Testament (Covenant) dispensation and the “Dispensation of the Mystery” one and the same: To my mind I Corinthians 9:20 to 22, Acts 20:16, Acts 21:20, Acts 23:4, Acts 23:6, Acts 24:6, in the light of Philippians 3:6 to 12, proves that Israel was before God as a nation until the quotation of those significant words from Isaiah 6:9 and 10 after Paul reached Rome. That marks either the end of a transition period or the beginning of new dispensation, with the revelation of truths theretofore unknown.” (O’Hair, *Deriding*)
 - “I could agree with you that the message of grace was proclaimed in the “Acts” period, but could never agree with you that the Lord would have ushered in the Dispensation of the Mystery at Pentecost and have kept His few selected, well-trained apostles in such ignorance. Did the infallible Holy Spirit lead them to say that what was happening and what was being offered to Israel was the fulfillment of promises made by prophets who were wholly ignorant of the Mystery?” (O’Hair, *Deriding*)

- “How any student can follow Paul from Acts 13:22 through Acts 13:41 and say that he is even hinting at the Mystery, or giving the truth in connection with the dispensation of the grace of God, as told in Ephesians 3:1 to 9, I cannot see.” (O’Hair, *Deriding*)
- In addition, to the quotations above, O’Hair expresses his agreement with Sir Robert Anderson that the book of Acts contains the record of a transitional dispensation. Students of the *Grace History Project* should recall that Sir Robert Anderson first introduced this notion into the theological discussion in 1897 with the publication of *The Silence of God*. In lessons 76 through 80 we discussed the impact this notion had upon the dispensational thinking of E.W. Bullinger. This is a hallmark doctrine of the Acts 28 position. Anderson referred to the time between Acts 2 and Acts 28 as the Pentecostal dispensation. O’Hair states the following about Sir Robert Anderson in *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren*.
 - “Whether or not I agree with the second of these two quotations from Sir Robert Anderson’s *Silence of God*, I certainly agree with the first: “My contention is that the Acts, as a whole, is the record of a temporary and transitional dispensation in which blessing was again offered to the Jew and again rejected.” “The right understanding of the Acts of the Apostles . . . a book which is primarily the record, not as commonly supposed, of the founding of the Christian Church, but of the apostasy of the favoured nation.”” (O’Hair, *Deriding*)
- When one takes the statements quoted above into account along with similar ideas found in *Bible Study for Bereans* (we will begin looking at these next week) there is little doubt that, for a time, O’Hair was holding dispensational beliefs similar with those being espoused by Bullinger and Welch.

O’Hair’s Use of *Tongues, Signs, and Visions, Not God’s Order For Today* by A.E. Bishop

- Throughout his writings, O’Hair defended himself against his critics by making reference to the 1920 publication of *Tongues, Signs, and Visions, Not God’s Order for Today* by A.E. Bishop, a missionary from the Central American Mission. The pamphlet was endorsed by C.I. Scofield and published in many editions by Moody Press. As of 1945 when *The Accuser of the Brethren* was written, O’Hair states that the Bishop pamphlet had been being printed by Moody Bible Institute for twenty-five years. (O’Hair, *Accuser*) Also in *The Accuser of the Brethren* O’Hair states that during his time in Indianapolis in 1920 when he came to his no-water position on baptism he was handed a copy of the Bishop pamphlet.
 - “A few nights later, I stated my conclusion (no sign gifts/water baptism) to the congregation where I was teaching. A gentleman came forward and said, “Brother, you believe very much the same that is taught in this pamphlet published by the Moody Bible Institute.” He handed me a pamphlet, entitled “Tongues, Signs and Visions Not God’s Order For Today.”” (O’Hair, *Accuser*)
- In 1935 when he addressed *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren* to Ironside, O’Hair used the Bishop pamphlet as ammunition in his defense. O’Hair seizes upon the fact that the Bishop pamphlet was fully endorsed by C.I. Scofield. In the introduction, Scofield states, “It is in every way to be rejoiced in that Mr. Bishop has sent forth the testimony

enclosed in the pages following. Never has there been greater need, both on the mission field and here at home among the churches, of a clear word of testimony concerning this important part of divine revelation. I am glad to commend it unreservedly.” (Bishop, *Tongues*) O’Hair uses Scofield’s endorsement of the pamphlet to ask Ironside the following question, “I doubt very seriously if you would stand before an audience and refer to the late Dr. Scofield, as an “unspiritual theorist.” What did he believe about Israel to the close of the “Acts” period?” (O’Hair, *Deriding*) O’Hair goes on to point out that Scofield “endorsed, without reservation, these seven statements, as you well know.” (O’Hair, *Deriding*)

- “After repeated study of the Epistles written after Paul’s arrival at Rome, I am convinced that in them is found a curative teaching for all of the present-day delusions and fanaticisms found among many of the most sincere saints in the Church.”
 - “From Romans 9 to 11, it is evident that Israel was set aside nationally before the close of the Acts. . . That the Jew is in the forefront right down to the end of the Acts cannot be disproved.”
 - “Jewish rites, vows, and ceremonies were in vogue among the truly regenerated even down to the close of the Book of the Acts period.”
 - “The sign gifts of I Corinthians 12, were limited to a portion of the believers and operative only during the Book of the Acts period.”
 - There is no foundation in the Word of God for the prevailing popular doctrine of “divine healing.””
 - “A careful study of the Epistles, especially of the latest Epistles of Paul, which give the normal course of the Church during the present dispensation, would dismount all from their hobbies, eliminate the last vestige of Judaism from their lives.”
 - “After this clear revelation of the mystery hid in God from all ages, removing the Jew from the position of superiority . . . which kept the Jew in the forefront right on to the close of the Book of the Acts.” (All seven of these quotes are presented as O’Hair presented them to Ironside in *Wrongly Deriding Christian brethren*. All seven of these statements can be found in A.E. Bishop’s *Tongues, Signs, and Visions, Not God’s Order for Today*.)
- Throughout *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, Ironside calls ultra-dispensationalists “unspiritual theorists,” ecclesiastical hobby riders,” and “heretics.” In *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren* O’Hair turns these words against Ironside and asks him if he would publically call C. I. Scofield an “unspiritual theorist,” even though Scofield “unreservedly” endorsed the statements quoted above from the Bishop pamphlet. O’Hair concludes his point by stating the following:
 - “If you did not know it before, now you know that Dr. C. I. Scofield was almost an ultra-dispensationalist. He was certainly coming into the light and departing from your uncertain. and unsatisfactory dispensationalism which leaves Christians in the darkness as to the sign gifts and religious program of the “Acts”

period. You teach that signs, visions, tongues, imposition of hands, and religious ceremonies belong to the dispensation of the Mystery because that dispensation began on the day of Pentecost and you teach that the same program was carried on by Paul until his death, with no truth revealed in his prison epistles that he had not been preaching.” (O’Hair, *Deriding*)

- Elsewhere in *Wrongly Deriding*, O’Hair makes a similar argument using Lewis Sperry Chafer, president of Dallas Theological Seminary as an example. O’Hair begins by citing the fact that Ironside had taught at Dallas despite not being in agreement with Chafer about to whom the revelation of the mystery was given. O’Hair then asks the question if Ironside is willing to call Chafer an “unspiritual theorist?”
 - “You teach in the Dallas Seminary and enjoy fellowship with the president of that seminary. He wrote an article in the monthly magazine, “Revelation” concerning the Mystery of the Body, and in that article he said it was not unto John and Peter that the revelation of the Body was given; but it was given specially and specifically to the apostle Paul. Is he an “unspiritual theorist” because he disagrees with your statement that John knew it before Christ died and Peter received it in his housetop vision?” (O’Hair, *Deriding*)
- This type of argument is common throughout the writings of both O’Hair and Stam. They question why they are being attacked when there are others within mainstream Fundamentalism that agree with portions of their theology. In *The Accuser of the Brethren* O’Hair asks why Scofield and Bishop are not branded as “ultra-dispensationalists,” “hyper-dispensationalists,” “Bullingerites,” or heretics for their statements in *Tongues, Signs, and Visions, Not God’s Order for Today?* Furthermore, why was Dr. James Gray, president of Moody Bible Institute and contributing editor on the *Scofield Reference Bible*, not branded a heretic for continuing to print and circulate the Bishop pamphlet? Dr. Gray even wrote the following appraisal of Bullinger for *Moody Monthly*:
 - “Bullinger would be called a fundamentalist were he now on earth, for he was an able defender of the inspiration of the Bible, the deity and virgin birth of Christ, the substitutionary atonement, the premillennial coming and all that. But he was an extremist, some would call him a faddist, on dispensational truth, and he was unscriptural as we believe, on future retribution. Because of these last-named errors, *The Monthly* has not felt free to advertise Bullinger’s books, certainly not all of them and yet the writer of these lines owes one of his richest spiritual blessings, to that great teacher, for a truly great teacher he was. No one ever set before us from the Word of God so clearly as did Bullinger, the profound mystery of the Body of Christ, and we always shall be indebted to him.” (O’Hair, *Accuser*)
- Why was Dr. Gray not labeled a heretic for his statement regarding Bullinger? For Stam and O’Hair this was nothing short of double standard brought on because of their refusal to water baptize.

Double Standards Abound

- The following are examples of men that were not branded as heretics by the fundamentals of their day even though they were in agreement with O’Hair on various points of doctrine.
- Dr. William L. Pettingill’s notes on Romans 16:25-26:
 - “Now to Him that is of power to establish you (Romans 16:25 to 27). This closing paragraph is of great doctrinal importance as touching the person of Christ. (1) God is of power to establish His people; (2) He establishes them according to Paul’s gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ; (3) This preaching of Jesus Christ by which God establishes His people must be a preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery! There is much preaching of Jesus Christ which does not establish God’s people, because it is not according to Paul’s gospel, nor according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but was made manifest by revelation to the apostle Paul. (Compare Ephesians 3:1 to 7).” (O’Hair, *Accuser*)
- A. C. Gaebelien made the following statements about the revelation of the mystery being uniquely Pauline:
 - “The miserable method of applying promises made to God’s earthly people Israel to the Church, and forcing the fulfillment of them into the present age, has its starting point from the same misconception. . . . When at last all is to be brought out and that mystery hidden in former ages is to be made known, the Lord does not commit these truths at all to Peter, but He chooses another instrument to whom He entrusts His secrets, Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles. Through Paul the full revelation of the assembly, the one body is given.” (Gaebelien, *Gospel of Matthew*, Vol 2, 48-49)
 - “The magna charta of the church is in the Epistles of Paul, to whom the full revelation of the church was given.” (Gaebelien, *Gospel of Matthew*, Vol 1, 109)
 - “Do not regard the church as the subject of Old Testament Prophecy. Her unique origin, heavenly character, and eternal destiny—all in closer association with Christ—is a New Testament mystery, alone revealed by Paul in two of his prison epistles—Ephesians and Colossians.” (Gaebelien, *Our Hope*. Jan., 1936, 458)
- Comments by I.R. Dean about Israel’s rejection of the kingdom.
 - “Messiah was first offered to Israel and rejected. This offer was to be made both before and after His resurrection.”
 - “He must be offered to Israel, after His resurrection as their Messiah, before the nation is set aside.”
 - “Christ while on earth did not preach the same gospel that He revealed after His ascension. That is very clear.” (O’Hair, *Accuser*)
- Dr. Kenneth Wuest in Moody Monthly about there being no water in Romans 6.

- “The mechanical meaning of the word, namely, the introduction of something in a new environment or into union with something else, is in view in Romans 6 and I Corinthians 12:13. It is set in a context of supernaturalism. It refers to the act of God placing us in Christ. This precludes any suggestion of water baptism as a means whereby a believing sinner is joined to Christ. It is a question, of course, as to what the inspired writer had in mind when he used the word, and certainly Paul was not thinking of the rite of water baptism, but of the act of God uniting a believing sinner with Christ, thus using the word in its original meaning rather than its ritualistic connotation.” (O’Hair, *Accuser*)
- O’Hair points out in *The Accuser of the Brethren* that Dr. William L. Pettingill, Dr. James M. Gray and Mr. John Nelson Darby are not branded as heretics, yet they taught about the so-called great commission of Matthew 28:19-20:
 - “Mark’s Gospel, like Matthew’s and Luke’s, is primarily a Kingdom book, and I am satisfied that none of them contains the church’s marching orders—not even the so-called “Great Commission” of Matt. 28:18-20. . . This we would call “The Kingdom Commission” of course, we are well aware that it is often spoken of as the Great Commission of the church, but we are convinced that this is an error. It would be a strange thing to find the church’s commission in the Kingdom Gospel. . . I have long been convinced, and have taught that the Great Commission of Matt. 28:19-20 is primarily applicable to the Kingdom rather than to the church.” (Pettingill, 100-112)
 - “This is the kingdom commission, as another expresses it, not the Christian commission. The latter is in Luke, distinctively the Gentile Gospel, but not here, which is distinctively the Jewish Gospel. And this is all the more remarkable because in Luke, the disciples are commanded to go to the Jews (Luke 24:47), right here they are commanded to go to all nations: It points to the close of the age when the commission will be carried out by the faithful remnant of the Jews so often spoken about. It has not yet been carried out. The story of Acts is not its fulfillment. Its accomplishment has been interrupted, but will be taken up before the Lord comes to deliver Israel at the last.” (Gray, 313)
 - “It is well to notice what has been alluded to: the ministry in the Acts is not the accomplishment of this commission in Matthew, but of the mission of Luke, the book itself being, as is known, the continuation of his Gospel; nor was the ministry of Paul, who took up a separate divine mission to evangelization of the nations, carrying out of this (the commission here in Matthew). A new mission is set forth in the person of Paul and that connects with the establishment of the church on earth. The accomplishment of the commission here in Matthew has been interrupted . . . The commission was given but we find no accomplishment of it. It connects the testimony with the Jewish remnant owned by a risen Lord of all, with the earth, and His earthly directions, and for the present it has, in fact, given place to a heavenly commission, and the Church of God.” (Darby, 327)
 - “This is the Kingdom Commission. In Luke 24, we have the proper Christian Commission. A time is coming when this great commission here will be carried out by a remnant of Jewish disciples, who are expressed by the eleven. It is the same remnant as in Matthew 24.” (Gaebelein, *Gospel of Matthew, Vol 2, 323*)

- The point here is simple. O'Hair and Stam would like to know why their views are branded as heretical while similar views expressed by some of the greatest Bible teachers of their day were not.

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