

Sunday, November 10, 2013—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 114  
The Grace Movement in the 1950s

## **Introduction**

- The purpose of this lesson is to survey the major events that transpired within the Grace Movement during the 1950s. Seeing as how we have already surveyed the major changes with the GGF as well as GBC during the 50s, we will focus our attention in this lesson on highlighting the major events of the decade.

## **General Events of the 1950s**

- 1950—*Truth Magazine* debuts under the editing of Charles F. Baker as a joint publication of Milwaukee Bible Institute and Worldwide Grace Testimony.
- 1951—Stam publishes *Things That Differ: Fundamentals of Dispensationalism*
- 1951, July 11—Pastor and Mrs. O’Hair celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary. The event is commemorated with the printing of *God Forbid That I Should Glory Save in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ* with a special gold cover.
- 1952—Harry Bultema dies.
- 1953, September 19-20—Pastor O’Hair celebrates his 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as the Pastor of North Shore Church with a special weekend of services and speakers. A special 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary program was printed containing a tribute, photograph, and schedule of the weekend’s events. Speakers included: Saturday Evening—Charles F. Baker and J.C. O’Hair; Sunday Morning—Dr. Louis T. Talbot; Sunday Evening—Dr. R.F. Suerig. The Tribute on the inside of the front cover included the following statements about Pastor O’Hair’s career:

- “. . . He became Pastor of North Shore Church in September of 1923.

Aside from his work as a church pastor he has been engaged in radio broadcasting of the Word longer than any other preacher in the United States—totally more than 8,000 broadcasts since he began back in 1924. Also he has written some 156 books on the Bible and related subjects, of which some half a million copies have been printed.

Sensing the need for instructing young people in the Pauline Truth, he helped start the Milwaukee Bible Institute. And for the propagating of that truth, he helped organize a missionary society that has come to be known as the Worldwide Grace Testimony.” (30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program)

- 1954—Stam publishes *Acts Dispensationally Considered, Volume I*

- 1955—Milwaukee Bible Institute expands their curriculum and becomes Milwaukee Bible College.
- 1955—Stam publishes *Acts Dispensationally Considered, Volume II*
- 1955, March—Stam’s *The Fundamentals of Dispensationalism* is reviewed in the March edition of *Our Hope* by Ray C. Stedman of Palo Alto, CA. In response, Stam published an article titled “Do We Belittle Christ” in the June, 1955 edition of the *Searchlight*. Among other things, Stedman’s review asserts that Stam and those in agreement with him were the heirs of Bullingerism, a charge that Stam vigorously resented (*The Controversy*, 274-289). In reply Stam wrote:
  - “The fact is that we are the heirs of the Scofield-Darby movement, not of Bullingerism. It was the teachings of such men as Ironside, Gaebelein, Chafer, Haldeman, Pettingill, Newell, Ottman, and Gray that led us to the position we now hold. We saw that their dispensationalism, as a system of interpretation, was sound, but were increasingly convinced that their failure to see the absolute distinctiveness of Paul’s apostleship lay at the root of their many doctrinal differences.” (Stam, 275)
- 1956—Stam publishes *Moses and Paul*
- 1956, June 1—Pastor O’Hair addresses a letter to his radio audience thanking them for 32 years of radio ministry. The radio station was completed July 17, 1924. The letter states that O’Hair had published 155 books with three more then on the press.
- 1956, July 14—O’Hair falls deathly ill and is rushed to the hospital.
  - Sometime during the first half of 1956 O’Hair published *The “Paulites” and “The Thessalonian Baptists”*. This is clearly established by the following statement on page 2, “What informed Christian in this year 1956 A.D. does not agree with most of these statements.” The *Grace History Project* believes that this was quite possibly O’Hair’s last booklet. In the back on page 30, O’Hair declares that he has just sent the printer a manuscript for a new book which he believed to be the most important book of his career. The title for this upcoming release was given as *How Many of the More Than 250 Commandments, Doctrines, Ordinances, and Religious Ceremonies in the Bible Does God Want Present-Day Christians to Obey, Observe, and Practice*. There is no record that this book was ever printed. O’Hair must have fallen ill shortly after *The “Paulites” and “The Thessalonian Baptists”* was published.
- 1957, July—O’Hair writes *A Thank-You Letter* addressed to “North Shore Church Friends Here and Scattered Abroad. . . And ‘RADIO’ Friends.” In this letter we learn that O’Hair had fallen deathly ill shortly after his 55<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary (July 11, 1956). The illness, operation, and recovery had incapacitated O’Hair for the better part of the year (July, 1956 through July, 1957). Regarding this trying time O’Hair wrote:

- “Three days after Mrs. O’Hair and I celebrated our fifty-fifth wedding anniversary I became ill very suddenly, quite seriously ill. I was rushed in an ambulance to the hospital in St. Charles. Later I was taken to the hospital in Elgin for an operation. Then I spent many weeks at the home of Dr. Wyngarden and our daughter (his wife) at Wheaton. While at the hospital and during my weeks at Wheaton I received hundreds of get-well cards and letters from Christian friends. . . Inasmuch as I have by no means fully recovered and have not been able to take care of my daily office work at North Shore, and have been quite weak and frequently in pain many days during the past year, several hundred unanswered letters have accumulated. . . I decided that the task of writing to each friend separately, which I would with pleasure like to do, is more than I can undertake, so I decided to have printed this ‘Thank-You’ message. . . After almost one year of illness I have just finished my best ‘recovery’ week. . . Since my eightieth anniversary (December 31, 1956) the Lord has given me grace and strength to preach every Sunday morning and every Wednesday evening and to broadcast His glorious ‘GRACE’ gospel each and every Sunday night at 10:05 over Station W.L.S. I have also been able to carry on my duties as president of the official boards of Milwaukee Bible College and World-Wide Grace Testimony, and to spend hundreds of hours in Bible Study.” (O’Hair, 6-8)
- 1957, November 14—Pastor Stam appears at a panel discussion on “Dispensationalism” at Wheaton College with Dr. M.C. Tenney, Dr. B. Mickelsen, Dr. A. Holmes, and Dr. John R. Rice. No new objections or lines of argumentation, other than what we have seen in other conflicts emerge from this panel discussion.
- 1957, December—Stam addresses a letter to A.W. Tozer regarding an article published in the December, 1957 issue of *Christian Life* magazine titled “How to be Filled With the Spirit.” In his letter Stam takes exception to Tozer’s position that being filled with the Spirit is a second work of grace that will transform the life of the believer.
- 1958, January 14—Pastor J.C. O’Hair died at his home in Wheaton, IL at the age of 81. When O’Hair died he had the second longest running radio program in history, eclipsed only by *Amos and Andy*.
- 1958, January 17—O’Hair’s funeral was conducted at North Shore Church and presided over by Charles F. Baker and C.R. Stam. The church was packed not only by those who had been blessed by his ministry, but also those who had bitterly opposed his Pauline dispensationalism. (Conklin, 6)
- 1958—Stam publishes *Acts Dispensationally Considered, Volume III*
- 1956-1958—Stam publishes articles in the *Searchlight* responding to the news that the *Scofield Reference Bible* was set to be revised under the leadership of Dr. E. Schuyler English. For details please see pages 290 to 312 of *The Controversy* by C.R. Stam.

## O’Hair’s Dispensational Development

- Throughout the course of these studies we have been chronicling the development of O’Hair’s dispensational teaching. Thus far, we have demonstrated the following stages in O’Hair’s theological development.
  - Acts 2 Stage—from the Indy Insight of 1920 till early 1933 when he began to criticize Plymouth Brethren Dispensationalism in *Bullingerism, Pentecostalism, and the Plymouth Brethren* (1933).
  - Towards Acts 28 Stage—for sure from the Spring of 1935 (possibly earlier) O’Hair entertains the Acts 28 position for a time. This can be seen in *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren* (1935) and the early issues of *Bible Study For Bereans* (Aug., 1935 through Dec., 1935)
  - Anti-Acts 2/Acts 28 Stage—January, 1936 issue of *Bible Study for Bereans* O’Hair comes out hard against the Acts 28 position claiming that he seriously entertained it but ultimately rejected it. Between January, 1936 and July, 1936 O’Hair publishes a series of articles in *Bible Study for Bereans* explaining why he is neither Acts 2 nor Acts 28.
  - Toward Mid-Acts Stage—beginning in August, 1936 till the final issue of *BSfB* in July, 1937 O’Hair struggles to articulate exactly where the Church began although he is sure that it was not in Acts 2 nor Acts 28.
  - Before Paul Wrote Romans Stage—between the close of *BSfB* in July, 1937 and the publication of *The Dispensational Razzle Dazzle* in April, 1938 O’Hair published *God’s Reign of Grace for the Human Race* in which he teaches that the Church began before Paul wrote Romans. We have previously identified this as the earliest clear articulation of a mid-Acts position. This position can be found in the doctrinal statements of both the Worldwide Grace Testimony and the Grace Gospel Fellowship at the time of their founding.
  - Before Paul Wrote His First Epistle Stage—this view is expressed by O’Hair in *Accuser of the Brethren* which dates from 1945. **“I believe that this age of grace and the Body of this dispensation began before Paul wrote his first Epistle;** and that it is absurd to call the Church at Corinth, or at Phillipi, or at Ephesus, or at Thessalonica, a “kingdom” church. I have stood against such fantastic teaching as uncompromisingly and aggressively. . .” This of course would move the origin of the Church closer to middle portion of Acts before Paul wrote I Thessalonians (O’Hair viewed I Thess. as Paul’s first letter) rather than before Paul wrote Romans in Acts 20.
- I have often heard men such as Pastor Richard Jordan state that O’Hair believed in the Acts 13 origin of the church before his death. Documenting this has proven to be a challenge. There is

some evidence that before his death in 1958, O’Hair embraced and taught the Acts 13 version of the mid-Acts dispensational position.

- In *Dispensational Bible Study* written in 1951, O’Hair states the following about when God opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.
  - “It was after Paul said to Israel, ‘lo, we turn to the Gentiles’ (Acts 13:46), that God opened the door of faith unto the nations (Acts 14:27). We should not have that door open before God opened it. . . Peter’s keys of the kingdom and his gospel of the circumcision and his message of Acts 2:38 have no place in the ‘DISPENSATION’ or ‘DEPOSIT’ which Christ, by revelation gave to Paul.” (O’Hair, *DBS*, 19)
- *The Unsparring God of all Grace*, written in February, 1953, according to the last page of the book, contains language that indicates O’Hair was still holding the position that he outlined in *Accuser of the Brethren* in 1945.
  - “In light of Acts 10:28, 5:29-32, and 11:19, it is absurd to teach that God began on the day of Pentecost the work of baptizing Jews and Gentiles in ‘THE JOINT-BODY’ of Ephesians 3:6. But in light of Acts 14:27 and I Thessalonians 2:14-16, it is obvious that the BODY of Christ began historically before Paul wrote his first Epistle, I Thessalonians.” (O’Hair, *UGG*, 27)
- Two years later (1955) with the publication of *The All-Sufficient Much More Overabounding Grace of the God of All Grace*, O’Hair once again makes comments that indicate that the body of Christ began in Acts 13.
  - “As we think of Romans 5:20, studied with Ephesians 3:1 to 3, very special grace for Gentiles, let us prayerfully and carefully consider some other Scriptures describing the terrible, sinful state of the Gentiles from the time Paul said, in Acts 13:46, ‘lo, we turn to the Gentiles,’ until he wrote in his farewell message concerning God’s eternal ‘GRACE’ purpose, and then added, ‘whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.’ (2 Timothy 1:9-11)” (O’Hair, 8)
  - “We should note with real interest and enthusiasm the statements in Romans 11:30, 11:12, and 11:15; the truth that the Gentiles obtained special Divine mercy because of Israel’s unbelief, the truth that, because of the diminishing and fall of Israel, God’s special riches were presented to Gentiles. When and because Israel was cast away, God sent the ministry and message of reconciliation to the Gentiles.

After the apostle Paul said, in Acts 13:46, ‘seeing that you (Israel) put the Word of God from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles,’ after he said to Israel in Acts 18:5 and 6, ‘your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean: henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles,’ after the terrible judgment of

1 Thessalonians 2:14 to 16 pronounced upon Israel, God ushered in a new dispensation, and gradually changed His spiritual program.” (O’Hair, 14)

- Further complicating matters is the existence of an unnamed and unmarked booklet that has often been attributed to O’Hair titled *A Guide to Dispensational Bible Study*. The booklet does follow many of O’Hair’s conventions in terms of formatting and capitalization. This booklet explicitly states that the dispensation of grace began in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Acts.
  - “A new government by God—GRACE—began in Acts 13 with the blinding of a Jew and salvation coming to a Gentile through that blindness. Though this dispensation was a secret from the foundation of the world, yet God had planned it for just this time. Whom did God use to perform this dispensational change? PAUL, formerly called Saul. See Romans 11:13. Paul in Acts 13 becomes God’s Apostle to the Gentiles. (quotes Gal. 2:6-9) Peter had the gospel of the circumcision to the circumcision; Paul in Acts 13 was appointed as the apostle of the uncircumcision with the gospel of the uncircumcision (Acts 13:2). Here then begins a new apostle, with a new message, to new people to form a new body, the Church which is the Body of Christ. This is God’s church of this GRACE dispensation (Eph. 1:22-23) to be completed when Christ suddenly appears to transfer all the Body members to their heavenly home.” (page 8)
- At this point, conclusive written documentation that O’Hair ever embraced the Acts 13 version of the mid-Acts position eludes us. It seems likely that he did, just not conclusive.

### **Stam and the Scofield Revision Committee**

- In the chronology above we noted that in March, 1955 Stam’s *Things That Differ* was reviewed by Ray C. Stedman of Palo Alto, CA in *Our Hope*, the former periodical of Arno C. Gabelein. By the mid-1950s editorship of *Our Hope* had been transferred to Dr. E. Schuyler English. Consequently, when it was announced in the mid-1950s that a committee was being formed under the headship of Dr. English to revise the *Scofield Reference Bible*, Stam objected strongly and wrote a series of articles about the matter in the *Searchlight* and later republished them as part of *The Controversy*.
- The articles to which we refer appeared in the October, 1955 and April, 1958 issues of the *Searchlight*. According to Stam, he sent copies of *Fundamentals of Dispensationalism* and Volume one of *Acts Dispensationally Considered* to Dr. English and the entire revision committee along with a letter that stated in part:
  - “It is our conviction that the so-called “Grace Movement” is the spiritual heir of the *Scofield Reference Bible* and that this movement is “everywhere spoken against” only because our spiritual leaders have condemned it without giving its claims serious consideration.
  - We have wondered whether the Revision will remain truly representative of what Dr. Scofield taught and, if not, whether it will still bear his name. If there is to be any change

- from his view, we pray God that it will represent progress in the recovery of truth rather than a retreat from truth already recovered.
- With this in mind, we send herewith two volumes, which represent the basic views of a growing number of sincere believers who claim that they have the answer to the confusion which grips the Church at present, especially with regard to the signs and baptism of the so-called “great commission.” (Stam, 300-301)
  - It is clear from the quotation above that Stam viewed himself and the “Grace Movement” as the rightful heirs to the teaching of the *SRB*. That Stam viewed his dispensational position and that of the “Grace Movement” as an outgrowth of the *SRB* is beyond doubt.
    - “The sad fact is, however, that the Church, as such, has ceased going forward in the truth. Many have felt that the Darby-Scofield movement brought us to the zenith of truth and that to depart from what these men have taught is to be guilty of heresy. But those who do not go forward in the truth go inexorably backward, so that many who once felt they had reached the summit of dispensational truth have now fallen back into Amillennialism and Pentecostalism, and others, who still hold generally to Scofield's position are beginning to ask whether, after all, we might not have to go through the prophesied tribulation period or at least part of it.” (Stam, 292)
    - “It is well more than a year now since we began our efforts to induce the members of the *Scofield Reference Bible Revision Committee* to consider important dispensational truths 1.) which are finding ever wider acceptance among Bible-believing Christians, 2.) which we claim to be the answer to the confusion that has gripped the Fundamental Church and 3.) which the Scofield dispensational movement itself led us up to.” (Stam, 296)
  - In the end, Stam was vindicated in his comments regarding the revision committee when one considers that every note in the *SRB* that had been identified as problematic by the Presbyterian Church was altered in the *New Scofield Reference Bible* of 1967. Consider the following statement by R. Todd Mangum:
    - “Tellingly, when normative dispensationalists revised *The Scofield Reference Bible*, they made adjustments (improvements) to each and every one of the notes identified as problematic by covenant theologians in the debates of the 1930s and 40s.” (Mangum, 26)
  - Time and future lessons will tell if C.R. Stam was ever guilty of failing to move forward in the recovery of Pauline truth.

### Works Cited

Conklin, Timothy F. "J.C. O'Hair: Leader Among Leaders" in *Truth Magazine*. February, 1988.

Mangum, R. Todd. *The Dispensational-Covenantal Rift: How It Happened, Why It Happened, Can it be Repaired?* Atlanta, Georgia 19 November 2010.

O'Hair, J.C. *God Forbid That I Should Glory Save in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. 1951.

O'Hair, J.C. *Dispensational Bible Study*. 1951.

O'Hair, J.C. *The Unsparing God of All Grace*. 1953.

O'Hair, J.C. *30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program*. September 1953.

O'Hair, J.C. *The All-Sufficient Much More Overabounding Grace of the God of All Grace*. 1955.

O'Hair, J.C. *The "Paulites" and "The Thessalonian Baptists"*. 1956.

O'Hair, J.C. *Dear Radio Friends*. June 1, 1956.

O'Hair, J.C. *Thank-You Letter*. July, 1957.

Stam, Cornelius R. *Dispensationalism: A Panel Discussion*. November 14, 1957.

Stam, Cornelius R. *The Controversy*. Germantown, WI: Berean Bible Society 1963.

<http://www.gracegospel.eu/grace-books/StamI20.pdf>.