

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

A Dissertation  
Presented to the Faculty of  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
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Doctor of Philosophy

by  
Adam O. Christmas

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## **APPROVAL SHEET**

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OF THE CHURCH

Adam Orlando Christmas

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Dr. Larry Tyler, Committee Chair, Dean of the Graduate School

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Dr. Barkev Trachian, Director of Graduate School

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Dr. Hoyle Bowman, Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To  
my wife,  
Kristin  
*for supporting me through everything*

*And to*  
my children,  
Emily and Ethan  
*for motivating me to succeed*

*And to*  
my parents,  
Jesse and Betty  
*for instilling in me the will to persevere*

*And to*  
my family,  
by my blood and His  
*for encouraging me in word and deed*

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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE INTERPRETATIONS OF  
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Adam O. Christmas

Moderate ultradispensationalism found its historic inauguration within the teachings of three men: J. C. O'Hair, Cornelius Stam, and Charles Baker. These individuals purported that the doctrine they instructed was a true resemblance of biblical "dispensationalism." This research aims to determine if this assertion is correct on the basis of the accepted hermeneutic of dispensationalism: the grammatical-historical method.

The question that this research seeks to answer is, "Did the historic proponents of moderate ultradispensationalism, Stam, O'Hair, and Baker, arrive at their ecclesiology concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church by interpreting ecclesiological passages in harmony with the grammatical-historical method, the hermeneutic which leads to a truly dispensational theology?" From this question, the purpose of this research is to analyze and evaluate the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning

the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church in order to determine their adherence to the grammatical-historical method of interpretation.

This research utilizes the principles of the grammatical-historical method of hermeneutics and the “Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics” as the criteria for analyzing and evaluating the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker. These principles are as follows: 1) context, 2) other Scripture, 3) grammatical considerations, 4) historical background, and 5) genre. They are utilized by forming them into a series of questions in order to determine an overall evaluation (i.e. “Is this interpretation in harmony with the *context* of the text?”).

The results of the evaluation is that the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker, concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church, are not in harmony with the principles of the grammatical-historical method of hermeneutics and the “Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics.” Therefore, the conclusion is that they employed a different hermeneutic; and further research necessitates investigation in order to ascertain that exact hermeneutic they applied.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“When did the Church begin?” “What is the purpose of baptism?” “What is the commission of the Church?” Depending upon which system of theology one references, various answers could be derived. One particular theological system, called “dispensationalism;” the system of theology whose view of the world as existing throughout history under different economies operated by God as derived from an adherence to the grammatical-historical method of interpretation of the Scriptures, distinguishing of Israel from the Church, and viewing the overarching theme of the Bible and history to be the glory of God;<sup>1</sup> advocates that the Church began on the day of Pentecost, individuals should be baptized in water after salvation, and the commission of the Church is to make disciples of Christ as taught in Matthew 28.

While not everyone who claims to be a dispensationalist, one who adheres to the primary tenets of dispensationalism, might agree on all the details pertaining to every area of ecclesiology, one particular group that identifies itself with dispensationalism, yet which differs greatly in its ecclesiological doctrine, is

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<sup>1</sup> For a more in-depth definition of “dispensationalism,” refer to page 23 of the “Clarification of Terms” section in Chapter 1 of this research.

commonly referred to as “ultradispensationalism,” or sometimes called “hyperdispensationalism” which is the system of theology that places an additional dispensation between Pentecost and the rapture of the Church.<sup>2</sup> In the late 1800’s, a man by the name of Ethelbert William Bullinger<sup>3</sup> began advancing doctrine that was not in concert with normative dispensationalism by stating that the dispensation of the Church did not begin on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 but rather with the apostle Paul in Acts 28.

Bullinger’s ecclesiology later influenced the advancement of another form of ultradispensationalism advocated by three key men: J. C. O’Hair; Cornelius Stam; and Charles Baker.<sup>4</sup> These individuals also denied the beginning of the dispensation of the Church on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, but differed from Bullinger’s ecclesiology in also denying its birth in Acts 28. Instead, they linked the inception of the Church to the revelation of the mystery of the Church to Paul in the middle of the book of Acts.

This belief also influenced the departure from “normative dispensationalism,”<sup>5</sup> a term hereafter used in order to differentiate between

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<sup>2</sup> For a more in-depth definition of “ultradispensationalism,” refer to page 28 of the “Clarification of Terms” section in Chapter 1 of this research.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A for a brief biography of E.W. Bullinger.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendixes B, C, and D for a brief biography of J. C. O’Hair, Cornelius Stam, and Charles Baker.

<sup>5</sup> For a more in-depth definition of “normative dispensationalism,” refer to page 27 of the “Clarification of Terms” section in Chapter 1 of this research.

classic/traditional dispensationalism and ultradispensationalism, in their denial of water baptism as applicable today and the location and commission of the Church as found solely in the writings of Paul and not anywhere in the latter portions of the gospel accounts. In order to distinguish this form of ultradispensationalism from Bullinger's, the views of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker were commonly labeled as "moderate ultradispensationalism" because they did not go as far as Bullinger's "extreme" views of ecclesiology.<sup>6</sup>

### **Statement of the Problem**

A problem concerning this theological issue lies in O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's adamant claims that their interpretations promote true dispensationalism. "How can two systems, normative dispensationalism and ultradispensationalism, whose ecclesiological interpretations cause them to advocate noticeably different doctrines, affirm the same title?" This is an issue between normative dispensationalism and moderate ultradispensationalism. Both groups claim to be true dispensationalists, yet their teachings concerning ecclesiology are in sharp contrast. "Is moderate ultradispensationalism true to the interpretations which arrive at dispensationalism?"

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<sup>6</sup> For a more in-depth definition of "moderate ultradispensationalism," refer to page 27 of the "Clarification of Terms" section in Chapter 1 of this research.

### Research Question and Thesis

In order to address the issue between normative dispensationalism and moderate ultradispensationalism properly, the question that this research answers necessitates correlation to a principle that lends itself to dispensationalism. In this case, the particular dispensational principle is linked to the grammatical-historical method of hermeneutic. Therefore, the question that this research seeks to answer is: "Did the historic proponents of moderate ultradispensationalism, Stam, O'Hair, and Baker, arrive at their ecclesiology concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church by interpreting ecclesiological passages in harmony with the grammatical-historical method, the hermeneutic which leads to a truly dispensational theology?" The answer to this question is the purpose of the research. Therefore, this research will analyze and evaluate the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church in order to determine their adherence to the grammatical-historical method of interpretation.<sup>7</sup>

### Subsidiary Questions

In addition to the research question which this research seeks to answer, several subsidiary questions will also be answered in order to develop a better

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<sup>7</sup> The "Chicago Statement of Biblical Hermeneutics" will also be used as an aid in the analysis and evaluation.

understanding of the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker. As a way to systematize these subsidiary questions, they have been divided into three ecclesiological topics relevant to the research: the origin of the Church; baptism; and the commission of the Church.

The first group of questions this research will answer pertains to the view concerning the origin of the Church according to the interpretations of moderate ultradispensationalism. Some of the questions answered by this research are as follows: "How did O'Hair, Stam, and Baker interpret the first mention of the Church in the New Testament, Matt. 16:18?"; "How did they interpret the event in Acts 2 since they deny that this is when the Church began?"; and "How did they interpret the *μυστήριον* of the Church since they tie its revelation to Paul with the beginning of the Church?"

The next set of questions pertains to the moderate ultradispensational interpretation of baptism. Since O'Hair, Stam, and Baker denied the applicableness of water baptism for the Church today, the following questions are answered by this research: "How did O'Hair, Stam, and Baker interpret baptism in the Gospels?"; "How did they interpret baptism in the book of Acts?"; "How did they interpret Paul's baptism?"; and "How did they interpret Paul's baptizing of individuals considering he did so after they believed the Church began?"

The final series of questions pertain to the commission of the Church. Considering that moderate ultradispensationalists O'Hair, Stam, and Baker denied the location of the commission as found in Matthew 28, some questions



that are answered are as follows: “How did they interpret this passage of Scripture?”; “Where did they believe the commission of the Church is found?”; and “Why did they believe it was found there?”

### **Direction of the Research**

The following section details the model that this research will follow by presenting the outline of the research, stating the delimitations and limitations to the research, acknowledging the assumptions of the researcher, and clarifying key terms related to the research.

### **Outline of Research**

This research is organized into five chapters. Each chapter has its own purpose and presents its own unique information pertinent to the development of the thesis. The first chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will introduce and state the problem this research seeks to resolve. Within this section, the research question, thesis, and subsidiary questions are presented. The second section will give the direction of the research by developing an outline and presenting delimitations and limitations to the research. It will also acknowledge the assumptions of the author and clarify the key terms related to the research. This chapter will lay the foundation for the research by allowing its reader to understand what will and will not be covered in it.

The second chapter provides a review of the literature pertinent to “moderate ultradispensationalism.” It is divided into two primary sections: writings of moderate ultradispensationalists and writings critical of ultradispensationalism.

The literature reviewed written by moderate ultradispensationalists, the writings of each historic proponent of moderate ultradispensationalism, O'Hair, Stam, and Baker, are categorized by materials related to the origin of the Church, baptism, and the commission of the Church. Then, the literature written critical of ultradispensationalism is reviewed and categorized based on books, articles and theses and dissertations. This chapter will expose the reader to what has been written on this subject and reveals that the approach this dissertation takes is substantive and makes a unique contribution to this area of theology.

The third chapter presents the methodology of the study. Since the purpose of this research is to analyze and evaluate the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker to determine their adherence to the grammatical-historical method of interpretation which develops a dispensational theology pertaining to the origin of the Church, baptism, and the commission of the Church; the methodology used to evaluate this is the grammatical-historical method and "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics."<sup>8</sup> Various principles of the grammatical-historical method and "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics" are presented such as interpreting the text in light of its context, interpreting the text in light of other Scripture, interpreting the text in light of its grammatical construction, interpreting the text in light of its historical background, and interpreting the text in light of its genre. Various other writings concerning the

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<sup>8</sup> NA, "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 4 (December 1982), 397-401.

principles of the grammatical-historical method are utilized as a means to aid in the development of the methodology of this research.

The fourth chapter analyzes and evaluates the ecclesiological interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker by the methodology of this research. This chapter will present the ecclesiological interpretations of moderate ultradispensationalism concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church and compare them with the grammatical-historical method and "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics" presented in Chapter Three to determine their adherence to the grammatical-historical method of interpretation which develops a dispensational theology.

The final chapter summarizes the findings of Chapter Four and submits the conclusions of the research. The researcher will address the subsidiary questions of this research to determine if the research was adequate enough to answer them. From this research, conclusions will be derived and various issues will be presented that may need further study.

### Delimitations

This section defines the boundaries with which the research is developed: its delimitations. As with any research, if the boundaries are not defined, then the material will become too broad and daunting for both the researcher and the reader. Because of that, this section lists and discusses that which is and is not covered through this research.

First, the only systems of theology discussed throughout this paper are

dispensationalism and ultradispensationalism. Though there are a number of others, they will not be summarized, analyzed, or evaluated throughout this research.

Secondly, considering there are two forms of ultradispensationalism, this research will only focus on the moderate type of ultradispensationalism. This is due to the fact that the topic of ultradispensationalism is much too broad of a subject to manage. Therefore, the researcher has determined to narrow this to the moderate view instead of both the moderate and extreme views.

Thirdly, concerning the theology of moderate ultradispensationalism, this research will only examine its ecclesiology. Furthermore, only the ecclesiological teachings of moderate ultradispensationalism pertaining to the origin of the Church, the ordinance of baptism, and the commission of the Church will be discussed. This is not only done to limit the scope of the research in an effort to keep it from becoming too broad, but also because, as will be seen, the three ecclesiological issues are inseparable.

Fourthly, this research will only analyze and evaluate the writings of the historic proponents and developers of moderate ultradispensationalism: O'Hair, Stam, and Baker. Since these three men are credited with the formation of its theology, it seems fitting that only their writings would be analyzed and evaluated as opposed to analyzing and evaluating the writings of all moderate

ultradispensationalists.<sup>9</sup>

Fifthly, this research will only use the grammatical-historical method and the “Chicago Statement of Biblical Hermeneutics” in evaluating the ecclesiological teachings of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church. While the researcher acknowledges that there are various methods of interpreting the Scripture, only this hermeneutical method is used since that is what develops a truly dispensational theology.

Lastly, throughout the Scriptural evaluation of the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker only portions of a passage(s) pertinent to the research will receive exegesis. This is done because of the limited scope of the research and to keep the research relevant to the material under investigation.

### Limitations

The limitations of research differ from the delimitations since they explain areas in which this research and its researcher are hindered from exploring for various reasons. The primary limitation of this research is found in the fact that the historic proponents and developers of “moderate ultradispensationalism” have recently passed away. Because of this, the researcher is not able to correspond with these men personally in an attempt to receive any clarifications of their

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<sup>9</sup> It should also be noted that since this research only focuses on the writings of the historic proponents of “moderate ultradispensationalism,” surveys and questionnaires will not be used as a tool of this research.

writings. Therefore, that which they wrote will be taken at “face value.”

### Assumptions

As with any research, its researcher brings various assumptions that affect its writing. These assumptions are categorized into two types: basic assumptions and research assumptions. These assumptions are given so that those who read this research will have a better understanding from where its researcher is coming.

#### **Basic Assumptions**

For this research, there are three basic assumptions of the researcher that are foundational to this research. The first basic assumption is that there is a God. As Lewis Sperry Chafer explained, “The belief that a divine being exists greater than man has been common to all cultures and civilizations. This has been due in part to the fact that man reasons there must be an explanation for our world and for human experience, and that being greater than man would serve to explain this.”<sup>10</sup> These various explanations have been classified as arguments for the existence of God. In *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, these arguments were explained as referring to “certain patterns of thinking that use a variety of observable features of our universe as evidence for the reality of God.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 37.

<sup>11</sup> Ed Hindson and Ergun Caner, eds., *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 236.

Four primary arguments have been developed as evidence for the existence of God: the ontological argument; the cosmological argument; the teleological argument; and the moral argument. The ontological argument proclaims the existence of God on the basis that because man can believe that a Supreme Being, *Ontos*, exists, then He must therefore exist.<sup>12</sup> The cosmological argument declares the existence of God on the basis that since the universe, *cosmos*, exists, then there must have been an uncaused cause of it.<sup>13</sup> The teleological argument declares the existence of God on the basis of the design, *teleos*, of the universe; therefore, there must have been a Designer.<sup>14</sup> The moral argument proclaims the existence of God on the basis that since man intrinsically has some form of moral values in every society, then there must be a moral Source.<sup>15</sup> As Floyd Hamilton concluded concerning these arguments for God's existence, they "are so plain that the conclusion is inescapable."<sup>16</sup> Whatever

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<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed explanation and evaluation of the ontological argument for the existence of God, see Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 554-64.

<sup>13</sup> For a more detailed explanation and evaluation of the cosmological argument for the existence of God, see Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 160-65.

<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed explanation and evaluation of the teleological argument for the existence of God, see Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 714-21.

<sup>15</sup> For a more detailed explanation and evaluation of the moral argument for the existence of God, see Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 498-501.

<sup>16</sup> Floyd E. Hamilton, *The Basis of Christian Faith* (New York: George H.

argument to which one finds himself more drawn, the conclusion is the same: there is a God.<sup>17</sup>

The second basic assumption is that there is truth. Since an absolute authority exists, the researcher finds it logical to assume that there must also exist absolute truth. In today's postmodern world, the issue of whether or not there is right or wrong and truth or error is crucial to one's worldview. As Norman Geisler proclaimed, "The nature of truth is crucial to the Christian faith. Not only does Christianity claim there is absolute truth (truth for everyone, everywhere, at all times), but it insists that truth about the world (reality) is that which corresponds to the way things really are."<sup>18</sup> This necessity of truth is what compelled this researcher to agree with Edward Carnell in his conclusion that it exists because "man must know what truth is that he may have a norm by which a true solution to the problem of the one within the many may be recognized when it comes along."<sup>19</sup> This speaks to the heart of this research: "How can two systems claim the same title but teach vastly different doctrines?" Only one can be true!

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Doran Company, 1927), 54.

<sup>17</sup> One notable aspect of these arguments for God's existence is that Chafer excludes the moral argument and replaces it with the anthropological argument in his book, *Major Bible Themes*, 39.

<sup>18</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 741.

<sup>19</sup> Edward John Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), 46.



“Truth” has been defined in a variety of ways. Some have flippantly stated that “all truth is God’s truth,” but as Charles Ryrie declared, “That cliché should be more carefully stated and used than it generally is.”<sup>20</sup> He later went on to define “truth” as “agreement to that which is represented and includes the ideas of veracity, faithfulness, and consistency.”<sup>21</sup> Others have presented definitions as well; Carnell defined “truth” as “a judgment that corresponds to things as they actually are,”<sup>22</sup> and Norman Geisler stated that truth is “*correspondence*.”<sup>23</sup>

While the purpose of this section is not to determine a precise definition of “truth,” each individual who set out to define it demonstrated some adherence to one main concept: consistency. Carnell called this the “surest test to the absence of truth.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, one way to determine if something is truly consistent is to observe its endurance with the law of contradiction. Plainly stated, this law teaches that something cannot be both X and non-X. An example of this is demonstrated in this research: the Church could not have both started in Acts 2 and in Acts 9 or 13; baptism could not both be applicable and not applicable to the Church today; and the commission of the Church for today cannot both be found in Matthew 28 and not found in Matthew 28. These statements impede on

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<sup>20</sup> Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 27.

<sup>21</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 49.

<sup>22</sup> Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 46.

<sup>23</sup> Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 745.

<sup>24</sup> Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 57.

the law of contradiction. One is true and the other is false.<sup>25</sup>

The third basic assumption of this researcher is that God has revealed Himself to mankind. The word “reveal” is of a Latin derivative meaning to “unveil.”<sup>26</sup> As James Oliver Buswell explained, “Usually the word ‘revelation’ refers not to the unveiling, or making visible, of an object or a person, but to the making known of a truth.”<sup>27</sup> He further stated, “In Christian theology the doctrine of revelation is the doctrine of God's making Himself, and relevant truths about Himself, known to man.”<sup>28</sup> God’s revealing Himself to mankind has been divided into two categories: general and special revelation. In Chafer’s *Systematic Theology*, he included God’s revelation in nature, providence, and preservation under the category of general revelation.<sup>29</sup> Concerning God’s special revelation of Himself to mankind, Chafer listed miracles, direct communication, the incarnation of Jesus, and the Scriptures as falling under this category.<sup>30</sup>

Synthesizing these basic assumptions, since there is a God and there is

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<sup>25</sup> For a deeper study into the concept of truth see Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 741-45.

<sup>26</sup> James Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 1:183.

<sup>27</sup> Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 1:183.

<sup>28</sup> Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 1:183.

<sup>29</sup> Chafer, Lewis Sperry, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications reprint, 1993), 1:53-56.

<sup>30</sup> Sperry, *Systematic Theology*, 1:56-60.

truth, one can safely assume that the revelation of Himself to mankind is also true and therefore trustworthy. This third basic assumption not only shows continuity between the first two basic assumptions, but it also serves as a perfect transition to the research assumptions of the researcher.

### **Research Assumptions**

Now that the researcher presented the basic assumptions of this researcher, this section focuses on specific research assumptions which directly influence this research. Since the primary method for determining the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker is the grammatical-historical method, the following research assumptions will be invariably connected to Bibliology and hermeneutics. There are three specific research assumptions which are related to this study.

The first research assumption is that the Bible was inspired by God. Paul proclaimed in his second letter to Timothy that Πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim 3:16a).<sup>31</sup> The Greek word translated "inspiration" is θεόπνευστος which literally means "God breathed."<sup>32</sup> Theologically, Geisler defined "inspiration" as "the mysterious process by which God worked through human writers, employing their individual personalities and

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<sup>31</sup> In Josh McDowell's book, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 333-38, he presented an excellent defense of the inspiration of the Scriptures by referencing the Old Testament and New Testament claims to it and also discussing various details pertaining to the issue.

<sup>32</sup> J. H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 287 cf. 287 and 520-23.

styles to produce divinely authoritative and inerrant writings.”<sup>33</sup>

When this researcher states that he assumes that the Bible was inspired by God, he further explains this to be verbal and plenary. “Verbal” means “that the Spirit of God guided the choice of the words used in the original writings,”<sup>34</sup> and “plenary” means that the entire Bible was directed by God and not just a portion of it.<sup>35</sup> Since the researcher assumes that the Bible is God’s Word breathed out to mankind, his next assumption is natural: it is inerrant and infallible.

The second research assumption is that the Bible is inerrant and infallible. These two concepts are complementary to each other. “Inerrancy” means that the original autographs of the Bible contained no errors, and “infallibility” means that the Bible is completely accurate.<sup>36</sup> Chafer did well in explaining this concept by stating, “Although the Bible may record on occasion the statements of men which are untrue or even the false teaching of Satan as in Gen. 3:4, in all these cases, while the statement attributed to Satan or men is faithfully recorded, it is

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<sup>33</sup> Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 39.

<sup>34</sup> Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 17.

<sup>35</sup> It should also be stated that the researcher only concludes that the original autographs of the Scripture were God-breathed and not the copies made thereafter.

<sup>36</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 402-03.

clear that God does not affirm the truth of these statements.”<sup>37</sup>

Despite the fact that Ed Hindson and Ergun Caner stated in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics* that inerrancy “is not taught directly in Scripture, but it is implied,”<sup>38</sup> based on the previous assumptions that there is a God, He is the originator of truth, He has revealed Himself through the Scriptures, and those Scriptures are inspired; it is only logical to conclude that they are without error.<sup>39</sup> This is also supported by Jesus’ declaration in John 17:17 that His word is truth. McDowell concluded about inerrancy that “when all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs, properly interpreted, will be shown to be wholly true in everything they affirm.”<sup>40</sup> This statement accurately asserts the essence of inerrancy.

The third research assumption is that the Bible is to be interpreted by the grammatical-historical method of hermeneutics. This is the crux of the research. Since God has revealed Himself to mankind through the Scriptures, it is logical to assume that the way in which man should understand how to hearken to that

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<sup>37</sup> Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 17.

<sup>38</sup> Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 103.

<sup>39</sup> Hindson and Caner present a similar argument by stating: (1) The Bible is the Word of God; (2) God cannot err; (3) therefore, the Bible (which is the Word of God) cannot err. They also do an excellent job addressing the various details pertaining to what inerrancy and infallibility are and are not (*The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 103-107).

<sup>40</sup> McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, 338.

word is by the principles of the grammatical-historical method of interpretation.<sup>41</sup>

Now that the basic assumptions and research assumptions of the author were discussed, the reader of this study will now have a better understanding of the foundation from which the researcher is building the research.

### Clarification of Terms

Since the meaning of words is paramount to the effective communication of information, this section will list and define key terms that are related to this research. They are as follows: “dispensation”; “dispensationalism”; “ultradispensationalism” (moderate and extreme); “hermeneutics” (with a special treatment of the grammatical-historical hermeneutic); and ecclesiological terms such as “Church,” “baptism,” and “commission.”

### Dispensation

The word *dispensation* is derived from the Greek word οἰκονομία. This word is a compound of οἶκος, meaning "house,"<sup>42</sup> and νόμος, meaning, "law."<sup>43</sup> When placed together this word gives the connotation of the “law” or rules of a “house.” The Greek word for “dispensation” and its various forms are found twenty times in the New Testament. Its verb form is only found one time (Luke 16:2 translated

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<sup>41</sup> Since this assumption also serves as the methodology chapter of the research, it will merely be stated in this section and expanded further in Chapter Three.

<sup>42</sup> Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 441.

<sup>43</sup> Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 427.

“to be a steward”), yet it reveals a great deal about what this word implies.

From its usage in Luke 16, Charles Ryrie concluded four characteristics concerning a dispensation. First, he observed that there must be two parties. He stated that with these two parties there is “one whose authority it is to delegate duties” and the other “whose responsibility it is to carry out these charges.”<sup>44</sup>

Secondly, he determined that there must be specific responsibilities. Renald Showers supported this characteristic by declaring, “Each dispensation makes man responsible to obey God in accordance with its unique ruling factor or combination of factors.”<sup>45</sup>

Thirdly, Ryrie observed from the usage of “dispensation” in Luke 16 that there must be accountability in addition to the responsibility as a part of the arrangement. He noted, “A steward may be called to account for the discharge of his stewardship at any time, for it is the owner's or master's prerogative to expect faithful obedience to the duties entrusted to the steward.”<sup>46</sup> The fourth characteristic observed by Ryrie is that “a change may be made at any time unfaithfulness is found in the existing administration.”<sup>47</sup> From these characteristics as observed in Luke 16, a more complete picture is developed

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<sup>44</sup> Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 26.

<sup>45</sup> Showers, *There Really is a Difference*, 30.

<sup>46</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 26.

<sup>47</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 26.

concerning the meaning of a dispensation.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the verb form for “dispensation,” it also appears as two noun forms. As the noun form οἰκονόμος, it appears ten times (Luke 12:42; 16:1, 3, 8; Rom. 16:23; I Cor. 4:1, 2; Gal. 4:2; Titus 1:7; I Peter 4:10) and is usually translated “steward” or “manager” with the unique translation of “treasurer” in Rom. 16:23. As the other noun form, οἰκονομία, it is seen nine times in the New Testament (Luke 16:2, 3, 4; 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2, 9; Col. 1:25; 1 Tim. 1:4). In these passages, it is translated as “stewardship,” “dispensation,” “administration,” “job,” or “commission.”

From the usage of the Greek word for οἰκονομία, various definitions for “dispensation” are developed. Most definitions focus on a particular aspect of a dispensation and not the totality of it. The Scofield Reference Bible’s definition focuses on the human aspect of a dispensation and defined it as “a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some *specific* revelation of the will of God.”<sup>49</sup> H. A. Ironside simply stated that a “dispensation” is a “house order” and then elaborated upon this by focusing on the divine aspect of it by declaring, “A dispensation is a period of time in which God is dealing with

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<sup>48</sup> Renald Showers agrees with Ryrie’s four characteristics but adds one more to them: the giving of revelation. See Showers, *There Really is a Difference*, 30.

<sup>49</sup> C. I. Scofield, *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 5.



men in some way in which he has not dealt with them before.”<sup>50</sup>

Clarence E. Mason focused upon the revelatory aspect of a dispensation and declared that it is “a divinely established stewardship of a particular revelation of God's mind and will which is instituted in the first instance with a new age and which brings added responsibility to the whole race of men or that portion of the race to whom the revelation is particularly given by God.”<sup>51</sup> Chafer actually focused on several aspects of a dispensation when providing a definition for it. In his book *Major Bible Themes*, he focused on a dispensation’s revelatory characteristic by declaring it to be “a stage in the progressive revelation of God constituting a distinctive stewardship or rule of life.”<sup>52</sup> In his first volume of *Systematic Theology*, he focused on the purpose of a “dispensation” by defining it as “a period which is identified by its relation to some particular purpose of God— a purpose to be accomplished within that period.”<sup>53</sup> In his seventh volume, he defined a “dispensation” in respect to its divine aspect by stating that it is “a specific, divine economy; a commitment from God to man of a responsibility to discharge that which God has appointed him.”<sup>54</sup> Each of these definitions helps

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<sup>50</sup> H.A. Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bros, 1989), 6.

<sup>51</sup> Clarence E. Mason, *Dispensationalism Made Simple* (Arnold, MO: Shield, 1976), 19.

<sup>52</sup> Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 127.

<sup>53</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:40.

<sup>54</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 7:122.

contribute to the overall explanation of a dispensation.<sup>55</sup>

While each of the aforementioned definitions provides helpful insight in determining what a dispensation is, perhaps the most well-known and simple one was advanced by Charles Ryrie when he stated simply that a dispensation is “a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose.”<sup>56</sup> This is the definition used for the purpose of this research.

### **Dispensationalism**

Now that a definition of a dispensation has been given, the matter of what dispensationalism is needs attention. Stanley Toussaint defined “dispensationalism” as that system of theology which “recognizes various administrations or economies in [the] outworking of God's plan in history.”<sup>57</sup> Paul Enns appeared to support this definition by stating that a dispensationalist is “simply one who recognizes that God deals differently with people in different ages or economies.”<sup>58</sup> The inadequacy found in these definitions is that even an

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<sup>55</sup> Chafer further stated that each dispensation “begins with man being divinely placed in a new position of privilege and responsibility, and each closes with the failure of man resulting in righteous judgments from God” (Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 127). He also declared, “A dispensation is normally marked off by a new divine appointment and responsibilities with which it begins and by divine judgment with which it ends” (Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 128).

<sup>56</sup> Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody, 1965), 29.

<sup>57</sup> Stanley Toussaint, “A Biblical Defense of Dispensationalism,” in *Walvoord: A Tribute*, ed. Mal Couch (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), 82-83.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 513.

admitted non-dispensationalist, Keith Mathison, acknowledged, “Virtually every system of Christian theology recognizes various administrations or economies within God's plan, yet it would be inaccurate to claim that all of these systems are dispensational.”<sup>59</sup> Charles Ryrie supported Mathison’s statement by declaring that “a man can believe in dispensations, and even see them in relation to progressive revelation without being a dispensationalist.”<sup>60</sup> But if those definitions do not constitute an effective explanation of dispensationalism or one who is a dispensationalist, “What does?” In order to properly answer this question, one must first investigate what are considered to be the elements that make up dispensationalism. There are several distinct teachings of dispensationalism, but there are primarily three which have been attested by most dispensationalists.<sup>61</sup> Ryrie labeled these the *sine qua non* of dispensationalism. *Sine qua non* is Latin for “without which is not”<sup>62</sup> and exclaims certain indispensable parts of a whole. In this case these parts make up the whole of dispensationalism.

By Ryrie’s use of this phrase, he declared that without the following three principles, dispensationalism would not exist. The first indispensable element of

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<sup>59</sup> Keith A. Mathison, *Dispensationalism: Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995), 3.

<sup>60</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 44.

<sup>61</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 41. Ryrie’s third *sine qua non*, the doxological theme of the Bible, is not the consensus of all dispensationalists.

<sup>62</sup> *Dictionary.com*, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sine+qua+non/> (accessed September 24, 2010).

dispensationalism is a literal (grammatical-historical) hermeneutic. Since this term is defined in the following section, it is merely mentioned here and not explained in detail.

The second indispensable element of dispensationalism is a distinction between Israel and the Church. Ryrie labeled this “The essence of dispensationalism.”<sup>63</sup> As Enns showed, this element of dispensationalism is born out of an adherence to the first indispensable element. He stated, “If these covenants are understood literally and unconditionally, then Israel has a future that is distinct from the Church.”<sup>64</sup> The primary support for this element of dispensationalism is the fact that there is not one Scripture in the New Testament which calls the Church “Israel” or Israel the “Church.” Because of this, dispensationalism whole-heartedly proclaims they are to be dealt with separately.<sup>65</sup>

The third indispensable element of dispensationalism is a doxological purpose of God in the history of the world. This means that while one may see many themes throughout the Word of God, the overarching purpose is to bring

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<sup>63</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 41.

<sup>64</sup> Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 523.

<sup>65</sup> Referencing the separation of Israel and the Church, Ryrie also used this indispensable element in relation to the third in his statement, by declaring, “This grows out of the dispensationalists’ consistent employment of normal or plain interpretation, and it reflects an understanding of the basic purpose of God in all His dealings with mankind as that of glorifying Himself through salvation and other purposes as well.” See Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 41.

glory to God. Walvoord supported this in his proclaiming, “All the events of the created world are designed to manifest the glory of God.”<sup>66</sup> These three principles, a literal (grammatical-historical) interpretation of the Scriptures, a distinction between Israel and the Church, and the underlying purpose of God as doxological (glorification of Him), while not directly stated in such terminology, are supported by the majority of those who consider themselves dispensationalists.<sup>67</sup>

It should be noted that within the contemporary history of dispensationalism, it has been categorized into two primary areas: classical and revised (sometimes referred to as traditional) dispensationalism.<sup>68</sup> As the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* explained, some of the differences between two groups are:

Classical dispensationalists attributed many features in the Synoptic Gospels, such as the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord’s Prayer, and the (distinctly Matthean phrase) kingdom of heaven to the earthly, legal program of God and thus without relevance (except through spiritual or moral application) to the Church.

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<sup>66</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Findlay, OH: Dunham Publishing, 1959), 92.

<sup>67</sup> One example of a theologian which differs slightly in his attestation of principles central to the development of a dispensational theology is Paul Enns. He actually only limits the arrival to dispensationalism as hinging upon the adherence to a consistently literal hermeneutic and the distinction of Israel and the Church, but not the doxological purpose of God. See Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 513.

<sup>68</sup> The researcher is aware of a possible third category of contemporary dispensationalism, “progressive dispensationalism,” but it is not his purpose to discuss this issue and all that is entailed with it.

Revised (sometimes called “traditional”) dispensationalism refers to a modification of classical dispensationalism in the 1950s and 1970s as represented by the revision of the Scofield Reference Bible (1967) and in writings by John Walvoord, Alva J. McClain, E. Schuyler English, Charles Ryrie, and J. Dwight Pentecost. Revised dispensationalists proposed different views on the kingdom of God (no longer distinguished from the kingdom of heaven), emphasized to different degrees the applicability of Christ's teachings to the Church, and rejected the idea of dual spheres of eternal salvation.<sup>69</sup>

For the purpose of this research, the term “normative dispensationalism” will be used as a way not to address the differences of “classical and revised dispensationalism” but to focus upon their similarities and also to differentiate it from “ultradispensationalism.”

Based on the acknowledgement of these three elements, theologians have posed various definitions of “dispensationalism.” One particular dispensationalist who included most of the elements of dispensationalism is Robert Lightner. In the *Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, he defined “dispensationalism” as “that system of theology which sees the Bible as the unfolding of the distinguishable economies in the outworking of God’s purpose and which sees the ultimate purpose of God to bring glory to himself in all his relations with all his creatures.”<sup>70</sup> Building upon this definition and utilizing Ryrie’s three indispensable elements, this researcher defines “dispensationalism” as that system of theology that views the world as existing throughout history under

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<sup>69</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001), 345.

<sup>70</sup> Robert P. Lightner, *Handbook of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1995), 240.

different economies operated by God which is derived from an adherence to the principles of a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, distinguishing Israel from the Church, and viewing the overarching theme of the Bible and history to be the glory of God.

### **Ultradispensationalism**

As the name implies, “ultradispensationalism” is a system of theology that differs from “normative dispensationalism” by the fact that the prefix “ultra” (sometimes “hyper”) has been ascribed to it by those critical of it. When placing the prefix “ultra” in the front of a word, it implies something more extreme than the norm.<sup>71</sup> Because of this, most theologians believe ultradispensationalism is an extreme form of dispensationalism. One author actually went so far as to define this system of theology as an “*intentional* false division of the Bible.”<sup>72</sup> It should be noted that this researcher does not use the term in any way as a means of accusing the adherents of ultradispensationalism as intentionally dividing the Bible in a false way.

Ryrie defined this system of theology as “the school of interpretation that places more than one dispensation between Pentecost and the end of the

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<sup>71</sup> Ryrie actually dislikes this use of the prefix yet he does not go so far as to rename this system of theology. See Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 197.

<sup>72</sup> Douglass D. Stauffer, *One Book Rightly Divided* (Millbrook, AL: McCowen Mills Publishers, 2000), 149.

Church age.”<sup>73</sup> Depending upon which type of ultradispensationalism one is referencing also depends on when it is taught that the dispensation of the Church began.

The two types of ultradispensationalism are extreme and moderate. Extreme dispensationalism is also commonly referred to as “Bullingerism,” named after its founder Ethelbert W. Bullinger (1837-1913).<sup>74</sup> This form of ultradispensationalism advocates the inception of the Church in Acts 28. Among other doctrines, it denies the applicableness of both water baptism and the Lord’s Supper in the Church today, it denies the commission of the Church as being found anywhere in the Gospels, it places the Gospels and the entire book of Acts in the dispensation of the law, and it only finds interpretive applicableness for the Church today as being found in the prison epistles.<sup>75</sup> From this information, “extreme ultradispensationalism” is defined as that system of theology which places the inception of the dispensation of the Church in Acts 28.

Moderate ultradispensationalism finds its historic inception with three key men: J. C. O’Hair, Cornelius Stam, and Charles Baker. These men differed in their theological system of ultradispensationalism from Bullingerism by believing

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<sup>73</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 200.

<sup>74</sup> Other extreme ultradispensationalists include Charles H. Welch, A. E. Knoch, Vladimir M. Gelesnoff, and Otis Q. Sellers.

<sup>75</sup> The prison epistles are Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. These are only seen as applicable to the Church because they were written by Paul historically after Acts 28.



the Church to have begun before Acts 28. All three men trace the inception of the dispensation of the Church with its revelation of the mystery to Paul, but they do not all agree as to the exact time in which this took place. O'Hair and Baker see this as taking place in Acts 13 with the commissioning of Paul to the Gentiles while Stam concluded it to have begun in Acts 9 with the conversion of Paul.<sup>76</sup>

In addition to this, moderate ultradispensationalism also denies the commission of the Church as being found anywhere in the Gospels, but they differ from the extreme view in which ordinances are to be practiced by the Church. Moderates do not believe that water baptism should be done by the Church today, but they do practice the Lord's Supper. This is due to the fact that they also see the other epistles of Paul as having interpretive value for the Church today.<sup>77</sup> From this information, "moderate ultradispensationalism" is defined as that system of theology which places the inception of the dispensation of the Church in Acts 9 or 13.

### **Hermeneutics**

Before delving into the matter of defining the grammatical-historical hermeneutic, it is wise to first define what "hermeneutics" itself is. The word "hermeneutics"

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<sup>76</sup> While moderates are not united on the exact chapter in the book of Acts when the Church began, their common agreement to its connection to the revelation of the μυστήριον to Paul and opposition to the extreme view places them in the same category.

<sup>77</sup> For further study into the differences and similarities of extreme and moderate ultradispensationalism, see Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 199-200.

comes from the legend of the Greek god Hermes. He was considered the son of Zeus whose job it was to bring the message of the gods to mortal men and was “the god of science, invention, eloquence, speech, writing, and art.”<sup>78</sup> In Roy Zuck’s *Basic Bible Interpretation*, he explained,

[Hermes] was responsible for transmuting what is beyond human understanding into a form that human intelligence can grasp. He is said to have discovered language and writing and was the god of literature and eloquence, among other things. He was the messenger or interpreter of the gods, and particularly of his father Zeus. Thus the verb *hermeneuo* came to refer to bringing someone to an understanding of something in his language (thus explanation) or in another language (thus translation).<sup>79</sup>

From this mythical story developed the concept of hermeneutics as “the science and art of interpretation.”<sup>80</sup> As a science “it enunciates principles, investigates the laws of thought and language, and classifies its facts and results.” As an art “it teaches what application these principles should have, and establishes their soundness by showing their practical value in the elucidation of the more difficult [writings].”<sup>81</sup> This science and art is divided into two primary categories: general and special hermeneutics. General hermeneutics refers to the interpretation of any text, and special hermeneutics refers to the

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<sup>78</sup> Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 11.

<sup>79</sup> Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1991), 19.

<sup>80</sup> Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 19.

<sup>81</sup> Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d), 20.

interpretation of the Bible. Concerning the special hermeneutic of interpreting the Bible, Bernard Ramm elaborated, "As a theological discipline hermeneutics is the science of the correct interpretation of the Bible. It is a special application of the general science of linguistics and meaning. It seeks to formulate those particular rules which pertain to the special factors connected with the Bible."<sup>82</sup>

A number of definitions for hermeneutics have been advanced, but there is one primary feature of each definition which is relevant to this research. That primary feature is the aspect of the *principles* of hermeneutics. This is seen in definitions given by Chafer, Ramm, A.A. Hodge, Zuck, Ryrie, and J.I. Packer.<sup>83</sup> It is obvious from this that the outcome of a hermeneutic is driven by the principles of it. While there are a number of hermeneutical methodologies that could be discussed, since the research only focuses upon the grammatical-historical

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<sup>82</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 11.

<sup>83</sup> Chafer defined "hermeneutics" as "The science of interpretation...which includes the recognition of the *principles* upon which a true analysis must proceed." (Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:115.) Ramm declared, "Hermeneutics is a science in that it can determine certain *principles* for discovering the meaning of a document." (Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 11.) A.A. Hodge defined "hermeneutics" as "the scientific determination of the *principles* and rules of Biblical Interpretation." [A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 21.] Zuck said this about hermeneutics: "It is the science (*principles*) and art (task) by which the meaning of the biblical text is determined." (Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 19.) Ryrie defined "hermeneutics" as "the science that furnishes the *principles* of interpretation" and "the study of the *principles* of interpretation." (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 79, 125.) Finally, J. I. Packer defined "hermeneutics" as "the study of rules or *principles* for the interpretation of particular texts." [Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer, eds., *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 293.]

hermeneutic, this section is restricted to defining and explaining it only.

As was briefly mentioned within the definition of dispensationalism, the hermeneutical methodology which arrives at a dispensational theology is the grammatical-historical hermeneutic. This is more commonly referred to as the “literal” hermeneutic. The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* defined a “literal hermeneutic” as that method of interpretation which seeks “to discover the author’s intent by focusing on the author’s words in their plain, most obvious sense.”<sup>84</sup> The literal interpretation of the Scriptures thus means that every word is given “the same meaning it would have in normal usage, whether employed in writing, speaking, or thinking.”<sup>85</sup> This form of interpretation is also labeled “normal” and “plain.” It is normal “since the literal meaning of words is the normal approach to their understanding in all languages,” and it is plain “so that no one receives the mistaken notion that the literal interpretation rules out figures of speech.” While there are many names for this method of interpretation the term “grammatical-historical” will be used. It is labeled as such because “each word is determined by grammatical and historical consideration.”<sup>86</sup>

Three primary reasons are given in support of the grammatical-historical method: biblical, logical, and philosophical. Concerning the biblical support of the

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<sup>84</sup> Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 694.

<sup>85</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 89-92; quoted in Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*.

<sup>86</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 80.

grammatical-historical method, J. P. Lange stated, “The prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the first coming of Christ—His birth, His rearing, His ministry, His death, His resurrection—were all fulfilled literally. There is no non-literal fulfillment of these prophecies in the New Testament. This argues strongly for the literal method.”<sup>87</sup> Ryrie presented the logical proof for the grammatical-historical method by positing, “If one does not use the plain, normal, or literal method of interpretation all objectivity is lost. What check would there be on the variety of interpretations which man's imagination could produce if there were not an objective standard which the literal principle provides?”<sup>88</sup> He also argued the philosophical reason for the “grammatical-historical” method by declaring, “The purpose of language itself seems to require a literal interpretation. Language was given by God for the purpose of being able to communicate with man.”<sup>89</sup> These three reasons lend much support for the grammatical-historical method as the proper method of interpreting the Scriptures.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> J. P. Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Revelation* (New York: Scribner's, 1872), 98.

<sup>88</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 88.

<sup>89</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 88.

<sup>90</sup> One accusation that has been leveled against the literal hermeneutic is that it denies the use of figurative expressions in the Bible. Paul Enns combated this by stating that “literal” refers “to interpretive method, not to the kind of language used in the interpreted literature.” Therefore he concluded, “Literal interpretation recognizes both literal and figurative language.” (Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 520) This is one reason why, though synonymous with “literal,” the term grammatical-historical will be used instead.

Combining all the aspects of the features of the grammatical-historical method of interpretation that were presented, the “grammatical-historical” method is then defined as the principles of interpretation which, according to its grammatical construction and context and historical background, allow for the meaning of the Scripture to be taken as normally and plainly as possible. This definition will allow the reader to receive more clarity when the principles of this hermeneutical methodology are then presented in the third chapter of this research.

### **Ecclesiological Terms**

The final group of words that need explaining, for the purpose of this research, deal with ecclesiology. “Ecclesiology” is the study of the Church. Ryrie considered this doctrine “the touchstone of dispensationalism.”<sup>91</sup> Since this doctrine is paramount to dispensationalism, it is extremely relevant to this research to differentiate between “normative dispensationalism” and “ultradispensationalism.” Three primary ecclesiological terms relevant to this research are defined in this section: “Church,” “baptism,” and “commission.”

**Church.** The word “Church” is the English translation of the Greek word ἐκκλησία. Interestingly, it is not an actual literal translation. Instead, the English word “Church” “is related to the Scottish word *kirk* and the German designation *kirche*, and all of these terms are derived from the Greek word *kuriakon*, the

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<sup>91</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 132.

neuter adjective of *kurios* ('Lord'), meaning 'belonging to the Lord.'"<sup>92</sup> The Greek word ἐκκλησία is the compound form of ἐκ meaning "out of" and καλέω meaning "to call or to summon."<sup>93</sup> Therefore, it literally means "to call out of."

ἐκκλησία is used in a variety of ways in writings. First, in classical Greek, the word was used to refer to a group of people called out to perform some sort of business. Norman Geisler stated, "In classical Greek, ἐκκλησία referred to an assembly of any kind, religious or secular, lawful or unlawful."<sup>94</sup> Originally, this word described an assembly of Greek citizens.<sup>95</sup> This is why in some cases it was simply translated as "assembly" as seen in its usage in Acts 19. Three times in this passage (vs. 32, 39, 41) when the word ἐκκλησία is used, it is not translated as "Church," but rather "assembly." This is because it is being used in the general, classical sense. Instead, it is referring to a group of people assembled with a commonality.<sup>96</sup>

In the Old Testament, the word ἐκκλησία is obviously not used since it was written in Hebrew, not Greek, but the word לֵהָק is many times translated as such

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<sup>92</sup> Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 347.

<sup>93</sup> Vincent, Marvin R, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Gardner Books, 2007), V1:93.

<sup>94</sup> Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2005), 4:17.

<sup>95</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Church in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999), 17-18.

<sup>96</sup> In this instance, their commonality centered on the worship of Diana in

in the Septuagint (LXX). When  $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  is translated as  $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  in the LXX “it means the assembly or congregation of Israelites, especially when gathered before the Lord for religious purposes.”<sup>97</sup> It is not used technically in these instances.

In the New Testament the word  $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  is used 114 times. In these occurrences,  $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  can be translated in a multitude of ways. One way it can be translated is in a non-technical, secular, or civil way. In these instances,  $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  should be properly translated as “an assembly” and not “Church.” An example of this, as already discussed, is in Acts 19:32, 39, and 41 when the word  $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  should be properly translated as just “assembly.”<sup>98</sup>

Another way  $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  is used in the New Testament can be seen in a technical or metaphorical way. This is where the definition for this research finds its meaning. This word can be used to refer to both a universal and local sense. In both cases though, the definition retains its basic meaning. Universally, each time  $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  is used it is referring to “all who have been saved during the present Church Age.”<sup>99</sup> Locally, each time  $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  is used it is referring to a particular group of individuals who have been saved during the present

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Ephesus.

<sup>97</sup> Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 246.

<sup>98</sup> Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 347.

<sup>99</sup> Floyd H. Barackman, *Practical Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2001), 413.



dispensation of the Church.<sup>100</sup> It can be used of individual Churches or groups of Churches, but each time it is meant to be local.<sup>101</sup>

A term commonly associated with “Church” in the New Testament is the “Body of Christ.” Clarence Larkin tied this characteristic to ἐκκλησία by stating that the Church is “not only a ‘called out Body,’ it is the body of Christ.”<sup>102</sup> From these various aspects of ἐκκλησία, Lightner defined the “Church” as “an assembly of people called together for a specific purpose.”<sup>103</sup> He further stated that it is “the body of Christ, a peculiar people especially gifted, with a distinct program.”<sup>104</sup> Dispensationally, Walvoord defined it as “a distinct body of saints in the present age having its own divine purpose and destiny and differing from the saints of the past or future ages.”<sup>105</sup> Utilizing the characteristics of the translation

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<sup>100</sup> It should be noted that 95% of the time ἐκκλησία is used it is referring to a local “church.”

<sup>101</sup> Floyd Barackman classified ἐκκλησία in the context of its secular, ethnic, and religious usage. He stated, “Its secular meaning concerns a public assembly of people (Acts 19:32,39, 41); with ethnic meaning it twice refers to Israel (Acts 7:38; Heb. 2:12); and with religious meaning it refers to groups of Christians: one, a local congregation of professing gospel believers (Acts 8:1; 14:27; 1 Cor. 1:2); two, the totality of gospel believers in a region (Acts 9:31, Gk. “Church”; Phil. 3:6); and three, our Lord’s Universal Christian Church, which is His mystical body (Eph. 1:22-23) and bride (2 Cor. 11:2).” (Barackman, *Practical Christian Theology*, 413)

<sup>102</sup> Clarence Larkin, *Rightly Dividing the Word* (Philadelphia: Fox Chase, 1921), 46.

<sup>103</sup> Lightner, *Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, 217.

<sup>104</sup> Lightner, *Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, 217.

<sup>105</sup> Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, 224.

of “Church” from ἐκκλησία, it is best defined for this research as the group of individuals called out into the assembly which is the body of Christ.

**Baptism, Baptize.** The word “baptize” is a transliteration of the Greek word βαπτίζω. Thayer’s Greek lexicon of the New Testament defined βαπτίζω as “to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk).”<sup>106</sup> This definition is also seen in secular Greek literature as being translated as “dipping, plunging, or sinking.”<sup>107</sup> Both the *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology* and *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* defined “baptism” as “the action of washing or plunging in water,”<sup>108</sup> but this word is not restricted to water as a required element in its definition. βαπτίζω and its derivatives are used several times throughout the New Testament and in several different ways. Barackman listed several different kinds of baptism in the New Testament such as the baptism of Moses (1 Cor. 10:2), the baptism of Jesus (Matt 3:13-17), the baptism of the cross (Mark 10:32-39), the baptism of ceremonial washings (Heb 6:2; 9:10), the baptism of fire (Matt 3:10-12), the baptism of repentance (Matt 3:1-2, 11), the baptism for the dead (1 Cor. 15:29), and the water baptism of believers (Matt 28:19-20).<sup>109</sup> Particularly

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<sup>106</sup> Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 94.

<sup>107</sup> H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 305.

<sup>108</sup> Everett F. Harrison, ed., *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), 83 and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 129.

<sup>109</sup> Barackman, *Practical Christian Theology*, 428.

relevant to this research is water baptism. This type of baptism is defined as the immersion of an individual into water for some religious purpose.<sup>110</sup>

**Commission:** Since one of the purposes of this research is to use the grammatical-historical method to determine the interpretation of moderate ultradispensationalism concerning the location of the commission of the Church, this section will not go into detail as to where the commission of the Church is found. Instead, this section will define what a commission itself is. The word “commission” is the compound of the two words: “com” meaning “with”<sup>111</sup> and “mission” meaning “a special assignment given to a person or group.”<sup>112</sup> Combined together, this word indicates a special assignment given to an individual or group of individuals for a specific purpose. In the ecclesiological sense, the commission of the Church (also called the Great Commission) would then be defined as the special assignment given to the Church, the group of individuals called out into the assembly which is the body of Christ, with a

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<sup>110</sup> Concerning the debate as to the proper mode of baptism, A. T. Robertson wisely explained, "It may be remarked that no Baptist has written a lexicon of the Greek language, and yet the standard lexicons. . . uniformly give the meaning of baptize as dip, immerse. They do not give pour or sprinkle. The presumption is therefore in favor of dip in the NT." See A. T. Robertson, "Baptism" in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1949,) 286. Johannes Warns added, "The Greek language has distinct words for 'sprinkle' and 'immerse.'" See Johannes Warns, *Baptism* (London: The Paternoster Press, 1957), 52.

<sup>111</sup> "Com," *Dictionary.com*, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/com/> (accessed September 27, 2010).

<sup>112</sup> "Mission," *Dictionary.com*, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/mission/> (accessed September 27, 2010).

specific purpose.

### **Significance of the Study**

There are three primary reasons why this research is significant to the area of theology. The first pertains to the issues of truth and logic. As previously stated, two theological systems, which teach drastically different ecclesiological doctrines, cannot both maintain adherence to the same hermeneutic. This appeals to the law of contradiction in that something cannot be both “X” and “non-X.” This is an issue with normative dispensationalism and ultradispensationalism.

The second reason this research is significant pertains to its circulation of literature. As will be seen in the next chapter, far more has been written by moderate ultradispensationalists than in response of it. Only one major work of literature was written solely against moderate ultradispensationalism: W. A. Haggai’s *O’Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*. In spite of the fact that this book was written in response of the oldest, primary, historic proponent of moderate ultradispensationalism, O’Hair, it only focused upon his views concerning baptism and not the origin of the Church and the commission of the Church.<sup>113</sup> This research will focus upon the ecclesiological doctrines of moderate ultradispensationalism concerning the origin of the Church, water

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<sup>113</sup> It should be noted that even though Haggai's book focuses upon the moderate ultradispensational view concerning baptism, it does not do so from the aspect of its hermeneutic. Instead, it refutes this view from the normative dispensational view. This again shows the uniqueness of this research.

baptism, and the commission of the Church (something that has yet to be done).

This not only helps illuminate the uniqueness of this research but also its need to be done.

The final reason this research is significant pertains to its methodology.

While many works of literature were written in response of ultradispensationalism in its various forms, none of them did so strictly from a hermeneutical standpoint. Instead, each major work of literature written in opposition to ultradispensationalism wrote from the standpoint of normative dispensationalism and the ecclesiological interpretations of it. In fact, of all the writers critical of ultradispensationalism, only Haggai stated that it was an interpretive issue; yet he only focused upon the issue of water baptism and did so from the standpoint of presenting the veracity of the normative dispensational view. This research will use the interpretive principles which develop a dispensational theology, the grammatical-historical method, in order to determine the validity or inaccuracies of moderate ultradispensationalism.<sup>114</sup> This will also help determine if Haggai's assumptions were correct. These three unique aspects of this research help develop the significance of it.

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<sup>114</sup> In fact, only Haggai declared that the difference in interpretations between moderate ultradispensationalism and normative dispensationalism is found in their hermeneutic. Neither Graber, Park, nor Ryrie conceded this.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is devoted to the review of literature pertinent to this research. The literature reviewed is divided into two sections: literature written by the primary, historic proponents of moderate ultradispensationalism, O'Hair, Stam, and Baker; and literature written critical of ultradispensationalism. Key issues of these works of literature are discussed in order to show what has been communicated concerning this subject, what needs to be improved concerning the subject, and what this research will do which is unique to all the others.

#### **Literature Written by Ultradispensationalists**

Since this research focuses upon several ecclesiological doctrines of moderate ultradispensationalism from the standpoint of its primary, historic proponents, O'Hair, Stam, and Baker, this section of the literature review will go through their writings and categorize them according to the primary ecclesiological doctrine which they discuss. These primary categories are as follows: (1) literature written concerning the origin of the Church; (2) literature written concerning water baptism; (3) and literature written concerning the commission of the Church. One aspect of this chapter is that in spite of the numerous writings of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker, very little has been done by way of review of their writings. This has

forced much of the reviews for this section to be limited to that of the researcher.<sup>1</sup>

Because of this, the researcher will avoid being critical of any of the writings of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker but instead will simply present the information attained from their works of literature.

#### Relevant Literature by J. C. O'Hair

The writings of O'Hair, mostly comprised of pamphlets, are vast (over 150).<sup>2</sup>

While every work of literature in which O'Hair wrote is not relevant to this research, it was observed that they all appeared very repetitive of each other. It could almost be said that if one has read one of O'Hair's writings concerning ultradispensationalism, then he has read them all.<sup>3</sup> Since there is so much repetition between the writings of O'Hair concerning the origin of the Church, baptism, and the commission of the Church; every writing which O'Hair produced is not reviewed in great detail. Instead, the following sections will review literature in which O'Hair spent the majority of his writing.

The most prominent book written by O'Hair is titled *The Unsearchable*

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<sup>1</sup> This also helps lend more support to the need for further research into this area of theology.

<sup>2</sup> A detailed list of all the writings by O'Hair can be found at [bereanbiblesociety.org/ohair](http://bereanbiblesociety.org/ohair) (Accessed July 22, 2010). They are also available for download on that site.

<sup>3</sup> This is in no way stated as a form of negative criticism since the researcher firmly believes repetition is the key to learning. O'Hair should be applauded for his passion for the Bible and his desire to put his beliefs into writing.

*Riches of Christ*.<sup>4</sup> In John Graber's dissertation on ultradispensationalism, he stated that this is O'Hair's "most extensive work...covering various dispensational subjects." He also credited moderate ultradispensationalism as receiving "its greatest impetus" through O'Hair and this book.<sup>5</sup>

### **Literature Concerning the Origin of the Church**

There are three writings of O'Hair which primarily focus upon the moderate ultradispensational view of the origin of the Church. The first, *Paul Takes Over*,<sup>6</sup> was written by O'Hair with the main purpose of explaining when he believed the Church began and why. Throughout the entire writing, O'Hair concentrated on a strictly Gentile-oriented message for today, and his belief that the dispensation of grace (the Church) and its gospel was solely committed to Paul and should be followed by Christians today.

He began this book by quoting numerous verses in an effort to support his belief that the gospel is solely for the Gentile and thereby a different dispensation.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, O'Hair did not interact with these passages. Instead, he merely quoted them and drew his conclusions. His primary reason for

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<sup>4</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1941).

<sup>5</sup> John B. Graber, "Ultra-Dispensationalism" (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1949), 49.

<sup>6</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *Paul Takes Over: Peter and Paul and the Body of Christ* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1930).

<sup>7</sup> O'Hair, *Paul Takes Over: Peter and Paul and the Body of Christ*, 1.



beginning the Church with Paul in the middle of Acts was due to his belief that this current dispensation is for the Gentiles alone; therefore, the Church did not begin until the message was noticeably shifted to them. He attempted to defend this belief by giving priority to the ministry of Paul and moving the ministry of Peter to another dispensation.

Another one of O'Hair's reasons for the origin of the Church's being after Pentecost as stated in this book was due to his interpretation of Acts 10. From this passage he concluded twice that "it was unlawful for Peter and the eleven to come unto an uncircumcised Gentile."<sup>8</sup> Again tying his belief that the gospel to the Gentiles marked the beginning of the Church, he asked and answered, "When did God show Peter that he could go to the Gentiles? Several years after Pentecost."<sup>9</sup> O'Hair used this to purport that the Church could not have begun then. He even declared that believing that the Church began at Pentecost is a "serious blunder"<sup>10</sup> and "evasive and unintelligent."<sup>11</sup>

O'Hair also used the record of Peter and the other disciple's remaining in Jerusalem as evidence that the Church could not have begun with them. He declared, "For some reason Peter and the eleven remained in Jerusalem, and so far as there is any record, in the Book of Acts, not one of them preached to

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<sup>8</sup> O'Hair, *Paul Takes Over: Peter and Paul and the Body of Christ*, 2, 5.

<sup>9</sup> O'Hair, *Paul Takes Over: Peter and Paul and the Body of Christ*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> O'Hair, *Paul Takes Over: Peter and Paul and the Body of Christ*, 20.

<sup>11</sup> O'Hair, *Paul Takes Over: Peter and Paul and the Body of Christ*, 23.

uncircumcised Gentiles before or after Peter used the kingdom key with Cornelius.”<sup>12</sup> He even appealed to the writings of Peter and James to support this by stating, “Peter wrote his first Epistle, he addressed it ‘to the dispersion’ as did James, ‘to the twelve tribes scattered abroad’ (I Peter 1:1 and 2).”<sup>13</sup> Since these two men showed a Jewish focus in their ministry and writing, O’Hair concluded that this must have meant that they were not a part of the Church program.

O’Hair’s second book that gave insight into his view on the origin of the Church is entitled *A Study of the Book of Acts*.<sup>14</sup> Although he wrote this book as more of a commentary on the book of Acts rather than a theological premise for his ecclesiological beliefs, there is an enormous amount of information contained within it that is helpful in understanding the moderate ultradispensational view concerning when the Church began.<sup>15</sup> O’Hair claimed that any reference to the Church prior to Acts 13 is a reference to something different than the current Church today. He actually used the King James translation of Acts 7:38 as what he believed to be support for not translating ἐκκλησία in that time period as

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<sup>12</sup> O’Hair, *Paul Takes Over: Peter and Paul and the Body of Christ*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> O’Hair, *Paul Takes Over: Peter and Paul and the Body of Christ*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> J. C. O’Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, 1930).

<sup>15</sup> One point that should be noted is that many of his conclusions are based upon speculation of how the disciples thought and why they acted in the ways they did throughout the book of Acts. See O’Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts*, 4.

today's dispensational Church.<sup>16</sup>

In this book, O'Hair presented three primary reasons that he believed the Church began with Paul: Peter's message at Pentecost; the use of supernatural spiritual gifts in the early portion of Acts; and the actions of the early Christians in Acts 4. Concerning the message of Pentecost, O'Hair stated that the gospel preached is the same "gospel of the kingdom" of Matthew 10. This is then used as a way to contrast the gospel of Peter and the gospel of Paul. O'Hair concluded that on this basis "we have no Scriptural right to preach" the inauguration of the Church at Pentecost.<sup>17</sup>

Also, O'Hair believed that the fact that the supernatural gifts were operable in the early portion of the book of Acts must negate the inception of the Church during this time.<sup>18</sup> Graber stated, "By placing the origin of the body of Christ, either in the middle of the book of Acts or at the close of the book, they relegate these gifts to the old dispensation, hence placing upon these gifts a dispensational interpretation."<sup>19</sup> He further declared that O'Hair's interpretation of this issue is "the only logical interpretation if any single one of these gifts is denied any place in the present dispensation."<sup>20</sup> Graber does disagree with this

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<sup>16</sup> O'Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> O'Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts*, 3-5.

<sup>18</sup> O'Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts*, 72.

<sup>19</sup> Graber, "Ultra-Dispensationalism," 115.

<sup>20</sup> Graber, "Ultra-Dispensationalism," 115.

view of O'Hair by declaring, "There is an acceptable interpretation of the extraordinary gifts which takes a mediate position between that of Pentecostalism and the dispensational interpretation of ultra-dispensationalists."<sup>21</sup> He further stated that his mediate view is a more "Biblical" one.<sup>22</sup>

The final reason for O'Hair's denial of the inception of the Church in Acts 2 is seen in his interpretation of Acts 4. O'Hair made an interesting conclusion concerning the reference of the early Christians in Acts 4. He labeled what the Christians did there as "Kingdom Communism." He then attacked adherers to the inception of the dispensation of the Church in Acts 2 for not preaching that Christians should act today in that same manner.<sup>23</sup> O'Hair inferred that in order for the Church to have begun in Acts 2, Christians today would still have to follow the example of the believers in Acts 4. As he did in *Paul Takes Over*, O'Hair appeared to have pejoratively remarked that "any intelligent, spiritual student of the Scriptures" would thereby conclude that the Church did not begin at Pentecost.<sup>24</sup>

The third book O'Hair wrote which developed his moderate ultradispensational view concerning the origin of the Church was *The Great*

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<sup>21</sup> Graber, "Ultra-Dispensationalism," 115.

<sup>22</sup> Graber, "Ultra-Dispensationalism," 115.

<sup>23</sup> O'Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> O'Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts*, 15.

*Divide*.<sup>25</sup> In this work, O'Hair expanded his case for the origin of the Church during Paul's ministry by discussing issues concerning four primary means. First, he used John 1:11 to show that Christ came to His own.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, he showed how Jesus' own rejected Him as Messiah.<sup>27</sup> Thirdly, he claimed that this rejection resulted in Israel's demise.<sup>28</sup> Fourthly, he concluded that this was when the gospel of the grace of God to the Gentiles was committed to Paul thus beginning the dispensation of the Church.

One observation of *The Great Divide* was that many of his conclusions concerning the origin of the Church were built less upon exegesis of the Scripture and more upon an assumed answer to his own questions. This can be seen when he posited:

Have you not wondered why there had to be eleven other apostles identified with Peter from Acts 1:1 to Acts 12:1, and that thereafter the Twelve were broken up and no successor was chosen to take the place of martyred James? (Compare Acts 1:17 to 26 and Acts 12:1)...Have you not wondered why only Jews on earth saw Christ after His resurrection? Or why Paul (Saul) was the only unsaved, unbelieving Jew who saw Christ after His death?...Have you not wondered, after reading the commissions of Matthew 28:19 and 20, Mark 16:14 to 18 and Acts 1:8, why, after the commission to Paul, in Acts 13:2, there is no mention of the missionary journeys of the Twelve, or any of their spiritual activities in the last sixteen chapters of Acts, except as they had dealings with Paul?<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *The Great Divide* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1930).

<sup>26</sup> O'Hair, *The Great Divide*, 1-2.

<sup>27</sup> O'Hair, *The Great Divide*, 4-5.

<sup>28</sup> O'Hair, *The Great Divide*, 7-9.

<sup>29</sup> O'Hair, *The Great Divide*, 9-10.

His answer to these questions was that this was all because the Church did not actually begin until Paul, and that was why there are apparent differences.

### **Literature Concerning Baptism**

One issue that O'Hair mentioned in almost all of his writings dealt with his view on baptism. O'Hair's material focusing upon this ecclesiological theme is categorized into three main topics: baptism related to Eph. 4:5; baptism related to sign gifts; and baptism related to salvation.

In reference to O'Hair's view concerning baptism and its relation to Eph. 4:5, the primary work of literature which gave ample attention to this subject was *Is Water Baptism a Watery Grave*.<sup>30</sup> In this book O'Hair wrote to refute Ironside's book, *Baptism: What Saith the Scriptures*.<sup>31</sup> At first, he seemed very complimentary of Ironside by showing the "common ground" that they both had in their similar beliefs but then appeared sarcastic as to the title "archbishop of fundamentalism" that has been ascribed to him.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *Is Water Baptism a Watery Grave?* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1910).

<sup>31</sup> Ironside, *Baptism: What Saith the Scriptures?* (New York: Loizeaux Bros, 1960).

<sup>32</sup> Another work of literature written by O'Hair against Ironside's views on baptism was *Wrongly Deriding the Christian Brethren* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1935). This book contains a chapter, "Puerile and Childish Diatribes: Water Baptism and the Scriptures" which was written for the specific purpose of discussing the issue of water baptism and O'Hair's desire to change Ironside's mind concerning it. He also wrote *Dispensationalism of Bullinger, Scofield and Rice* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1930) which set out to reply to various criticisms that he has received from other theologians through journals and even personal

Using Eph. 4:5, O'Hair declared that there is only one body and one baptism and that was the baptism by the Holy Spirit at salvation.<sup>33</sup> He further elaborated, "There are five baptisms in the Four Gospels, in addition to Israel's divers baptisms. (Heb. 9:10) There are equally as many in the Book of Acts. But the plain statement of Paul is, in Eph. 4:5, 'there is one baptism. Which one should a person really desire?'"<sup>34</sup> O'Hair adamantly declared that believing in water baptism would result in disunity when he stated, "We are told in Ephesians 4:3 to 6 to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit with one baptism. Our brother has two baptisms. This causes disunity."<sup>35</sup> These two baptisms in which O'Hair referenced are the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the water baptism of a believer.

In this book, O'Hair appeared to make the most pejorative remarks in that he declared any "thinking, unprejudiced readers" would be "true Bereans" by listening and believing the views that he purported.<sup>36</sup> He also proclaimed, "God

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correspondence. One fault of many authors who wrote against O'Hair was that since many of them tied him to Bullinger, O'Hair merely had to show how they were different in order to refute their writings. He even countered by showing other dispensationalists who disagree with his dispensational writers. In addition to this, O'Hair wrote *Art Thou He That Troubleth Israel?* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1935) Which contained a chapter, "The Bible Church, The Baptist Church, The Brethren Church," written for the purpose of dispelling all churches that teach any doctrine other than his own concerning baptism. See O'Hair, *Is Water Baptism a Watery Grave?*, 1.

<sup>33</sup> O'Hair, *Is Water Baptism a Watery Grave?*, 11, 14.

<sup>34</sup> O'Hair, *Is Water Baptism a Watery Grave?*, 14.

<sup>35</sup> O'Hair, *Is Water Baptism a Watery Grave?*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> O'Hair, *Is Water Baptism a Watery Grave?*, 9.

will not forgive His people for following blind leaders into false doctrines or fantastic water baptism theories.”<sup>37</sup> These were very condemnatory remarks aimed at those who disagreed with his ecclesiological conclusions.

One work that O’Hair penned which one would believe he used to promote his view was *Studies of the Epistle to the Ephesians*.<sup>38</sup> In this book, O’Hair purposed to write a commentary on the epistle of Ephesians by formatting his writing more on a topical basis than on an expository one. The most interesting observation of this book is that despite his constant plea to Eph. 4:5 as proof for the denial of water baptism today, he did not address this verse or even quote from it throughout the twenty-six pages of his commentary. Like many of his other writings, his thought process was not the easiest to follow, and many times he failed to interact with the Scriptures to which he was making reference.

Another topic concerning water baptism in which O’Hair wrote pertained to its relation to salvation. A primary book written for this topic was *Bible Truth, What We Believe and Why We Believe It*.<sup>39</sup> Graber proclaimed that O’Hair “is supposedly setting forth his doctrinal statement” but “is entirely devoted to the setting forth of the author’s ultra-dispensational position...”<sup>40</sup> In this book, O’Hair

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<sup>37</sup> O’Hair, *Is Water Baptism a Watery Grave?*, 9.

<sup>38</sup> J. C. O’Hair, *Studies in the Epistles to the Ephesians* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, 1930).

<sup>39</sup> J. C. O’Hair, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, 1930).

<sup>40</sup> Graber, "Ultra-Dispensationalism," 214-15.



constantly warned his readers not “to turn back to Pentecost” as a means to find an origination for the Church or a support for water baptism today even going so far as to purport that doing so would be motivated by Satan.<sup>41</sup> In one instance, he declared, “Nothing has been used more successfully by Satan to create discord and hatred among Christians than water baptism.”<sup>42</sup> This is largely due to his view that baptism was a means of salvation during the time when Peter was preaching at Pentecost. He claimed that a “true Berean” would arrive at the conclusion that water baptism is not for today<sup>43</sup> and that the teaching of water baptism today would only bring “confusion and disgrace.”<sup>44</sup>

O’Hair referenced two New Testament passages as a means of supporting his view that baptism was a part of salvation at Pentecost. The first is Acts 2:38. Concerning baptism and its reference in Acts 2:38, O’Hair compared it to Eph. 2:8-9 and concluded that Peter was preaching salvation by works. O’Hair questioned, “Could Peter have truthfully said on the day of Pentecost, ‘not of yourselves,’ ‘not of works,’ when he ordered them to be baptized for the remission of sins?”<sup>45</sup> O’Hair concluded that he could not have done so.

The other passage O’Hair leaned upon to promote his view that baptism

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<sup>41</sup> O’Hair, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 18-19.

<sup>42</sup> O’Hair, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 38.

<sup>43</sup> O’Hair, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 36.

<sup>44</sup> O’Hair, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 41.

<sup>45</sup> O’Hair, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 18.

was a part of salvation at Pentecost was Mark 16:16. Concerning this passage of Scripture, O'Hair believed that there was no other way to interpret this verse as teaching salvation by baptism and even criticized those who attempt to say otherwise.<sup>46</sup> He said that doing so is "neither intelligent nor honest."<sup>47</sup>

The last topic concerning baptism which O'Hair focused upon related to his view that baptism is so closely related to the sign gifts that it must not be operable today. One of O'Hair's chapters in *Wrongly Deriding the Christian Brethren*, "When is a Fine Piece of Exegesis a Vagary? Water Baptism and Sign Gifts," included a letter written to the editor of Moody Monthly in which he attempted to show that water baptism is completely tied to the temporary sign gifts.<sup>48</sup> Also, in *Are Members of the IFCA Responsible for the Disgraceful Fanaticism of the Snake-Hugging Fundamentalists?*, O'Hair wrote exclusively to refute water baptism as being applicable today on the basis of his conclusion that it is exclusively tied to the sign gifts.<sup>49</sup> He was so convinced of this connection that he concluded that all who believe in water baptism for today are "snake-hugging fundamentalists."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> O'Hair, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 37.

<sup>47</sup> O'Hair, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 43.

<sup>48</sup> O'Hair, *Wrongly Deriding the Christian Brethren*.

<sup>49</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *Are Members of the I.F.C.A. Responsible for the Disgraceful Fanaticism of the Snake-Hugging Fundamentalists?* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1947).

<sup>50</sup> O'Hair, *Are Members of the I.F.C.A. Responsible for the Disgraceful*

## Literature Concerning the Commission of the Church

In *Concerning Dispensational Bible Study* O'Hair made twenty-eight statements that he used to advance the moderate ultradispensational belief that the Church began with Paul, water baptism is not to be performed by the Church, and the commission of Matthew 28 is not applicable today.<sup>51</sup> All throughout this writing, Pauline priority is evident. Every defense mounted for the moderate ultradispensational ecclesiological views were made by referencing something about Paul.<sup>52</sup> Graber also noticed that through this book, O'Hair, along with other moderate ultradispensationalists, "are blatant in their attack" upon dispensational views such as the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church.<sup>53</sup>

O'Hair labeled the commission in Matthew 28 the "so-called great commission" and declared the great commission for today to be found in 2 Cor.

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*Fanaticism of the Snake-Hugging Fundamentalists?*, 1.

<sup>51</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *Concerning Dispensational Bible Study* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1930).

<sup>52</sup> O'Hair wrote another book concerning this issue: *Did Peter and Paul Preach Different Gospels?* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1944). As the title indicates, the premise of this pamphlet by O'Hair was to show that there were two different gospels between Peter and Paul and that the one with Paul marks the beginning of the Church. He attempted to support this by comparing messages by Peter and Paul and showing their dissimilarities. He declared that the gospel of Peter was the kingdom gospel and the gospel of Paul was the mystery gospel. See O'Hair, *Did Peter and Paul Preach Different Gospels?*, 3-9.

<sup>53</sup> Graber, "Ultra-Dispensationalism," 95.

5:19.<sup>54</sup> One reason he concluded that the commission of the church is not found in Matt 28 was because of the disciples' hesitation to take the gospel to the Gentiles.<sup>55</sup> He proclaimed, "If Peter and his fellow apostles would not eat with saved Gentiles, are we to believe that, during the Acts period, they preached to unsaved Gentiles?"<sup>56</sup> He also attempted to support his belief that the commission of the church is not found in Matthew 28 and water baptism is not to be performed today by stating that if Christians were really to obey the Great Commission then any individual would be able to baptize a new convert and not just the Church leaders.<sup>57</sup>

Another reason O'Hair would not accept the commission in Matthew 28 as being applicable to the Church today was because it instructed new believers τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν (to observe all things whatsoever [Jesus] commanded [the disciples]). O'Hair did not believe that this was possible in the current dispensation and stated, "Members of the Body of Christ today are not in the will of God in following Jesus of Nazareth in much that He did and said on earth."<sup>58</sup>

In O'Hair's work, *Bible Truth*, he concluded that since Peter was said to be

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<sup>54</sup> O'Hair, *Concerning Dispensational Bible Study*, 6, 13.

<sup>55</sup> O'Hair, *Concerning Dispensational Bible Study*, 13.

<sup>56</sup> O'Hair, *Concerning Dispensational Bible Study*, 13.

<sup>57</sup> O'Hair, *Concerning Dispensational Bible Study*, 14.

<sup>58</sup> O'Hair, *Concerning Dispensational Bible Study*, 7.

sent to the circumcised and Paul sent to the uncircumcised, then there must be two programs and thereby another commission for the Gentiles today.<sup>59</sup> He declared that returning to Matthew 28 as the commission for the Church today is not “sound Bible doctrine”<sup>60</sup> because he believed that this passage only has to do with Israel.<sup>61</sup>

One interesting method of trying to dissuade normative dispensationalists from concluding that the commission for the Church is found in Matthew 28 was seen in a letter, *Art Thou He that Troubleth Israel?*, written to Ironside in refutation of his articles on “Wrongly Dividing the Word” printed in *Serving and Waiting*.<sup>62</sup> O’Hair appealed to the writings of Darby, Pettingill, and Gaebelien whom he claimed also denied the Great Commission as found in Matthew 28.<sup>63</sup> O’Hair used this as a way to not only show that other normative dispensationalists have disagreed with the commission of the Church as being found in Matthew 28, but also as an attempt to persuade him to change his views concerning this issue.

While the preceding literary works of O’Hair were reviewed according to

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<sup>59</sup> O’Hair, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 43.

<sup>60</sup> O’Hair, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 36.

<sup>61</sup> O’Hair, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 43.

<sup>62</sup> J. C. O’Hair, *Art Thou He That Troubleth Israel?* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, 1935).

<sup>63</sup> O’Hair, *Art Thou He That Troubleth Israel?*, 3.

their special ecclesiological focus, there were other writings that were not focused upon a primary aspect of ecclesiology related to this research but were a general overview of the subject. Two of these were *Important Facts to Understanding Acts*<sup>64</sup> and *Dispensational Bible Study*.<sup>65</sup> Within the pages of these writings, Howard Park observed that O'Hair believed that his "system alone is rightly dividing the Scriptures."<sup>66</sup> He even stated that throughout all the writings of O'Hair that the reader can obviously see many "defensive overtones"<sup>67</sup> used by O'Hair against those who do not agree with him.

#### Relevant Literature by Cornelius Stam

Cornelius Stam, the most prolific writer of the three primary, historic proponents of moderate ultradispensationalism, wrote numerous works on the subject of moderate ultradispensationalism and its theological standpoints. Of the three historic proponents of moderate ultradispensationalism, Stam also wrote the

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<sup>64</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *Important Facts to Understanding Acts: The Book of Acts, the Dispensational Battle-Ground* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1900). O'Hair presented much of his argumentation for the origin of the Church with Paul, the denial of water baptism as being applicable today, and the rejection of the gospel of the Church today being found in Matthew 28 from the perspective of the Book of Acts. Though his focus is more concentrated than most pamphlets, his argumentation remained the same.

<sup>65</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *Dispensational Bible Study* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1950). This work is much more organized than the previous books which O'Hair wrote, but again present the same argumentation as previously reviewed.

<sup>66</sup> Howard D. Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX), 1960: 28.

<sup>67</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 13.

most commentaries on the books of the New Testament.<sup>68</sup> While normative dispensationalists would not agree with his theological positions on ecclesiology, he did write material that might prove helpful in opposition to other theological systems which both ultradispensationalists and normative dispensationalists would refute.<sup>69</sup>

Prior to dividing the various writings of Stam into the ecclesiological focal points of this research, a few general literary works should be noted. The first primary book written by Stam was titled *The Fundamentals of Dispensationalism*.<sup>70</sup> In R. C. Stedman's review of this book, during this timeframe, he labeled Stam as "the able spokesman of a fast-growing group of Churches that call themselves the 'grace' movement."<sup>71</sup> He then observed, "The title of this book is misleading as it is really an attack on the dispensationalism as ordinarily held by fundamentalists."<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, Stedman was quite cordial to

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<sup>68</sup> Stam wrote commentaries on the book of Acts, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 & 2 Thessalonians.

<sup>69</sup> This can be seen in his work against theonomy, *Moses and Paul* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1956), and new evangelicalism, *The Present Peril* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1968). Though these books deserve applaud for their contribution to exposing certain errors, it should be noted that there still remain traces of his ultradispensational ecclesiology throughout.

<sup>70</sup> Cornelius Stam, *The Fundamentals of Dispensationalism* (Miwaukee: Berean Searchlight, 1951).

<sup>71</sup> R. C. Stedman, "Book Reviews," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 112, no. 446 (April 1955): 176.

<sup>72</sup> Stedman, "Book Reviews," 176.

Stam in his statement that, despite the fact that they hold contrary views concerning the ministry of Paul, Stam “does not develop this theme with arrogance and conceit.”<sup>73</sup> Although, after making this statement, Stedman does set out seven flaws within Stam’s argumentation in this book.<sup>74</sup>

Another major writing of Stam which should be discussed was *Things That Differ*.<sup>75</sup> It was written with the help of J. C. O’Hair and Charles Baker whom he claimed to have “probably contributed more to the recovery of dispensational truth than any man living today.”<sup>76</sup> This is Stam’s major work for discovering the theological views of moderate ultradispensationalism which differ from normative dispensationalism. Pickering declared that this book states the case of moderate ultradispensationalism and “gathers the principal tenets of the movement.”<sup>77</sup> Stam systematized the book in a fashion with which a lay person could easily be acquainted and understand its principles. He even included quizzes at the end of

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<sup>73</sup> Stedman, "Book Reviews," 176.

<sup>74</sup> Stedman's seven errors he observed in this book concern: Stam's interpretation of Eph. 3:5; Stam's interpretation of Galatians 2; Stam's interpretation of Matthew 16; Stam's interpretation of Pentecost; Stam's interpretation of water baptism; Stam's interpretation of the great commission; and Stam's minimizing of the person of Jesus Christ. See Stedman, "Book Reviews," 177.

<sup>75</sup> Cornelius Stam, *Things That Differ* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1985).

<sup>76</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 10.

<sup>77</sup> Ernest Pickering, "Distinctive Teachings of Ultra-Dispensationalism," *Central Bible Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (October 1961): 40.



each chapter to help review the material presented in it.

Stam began this book like many other ultradispensational literature by quoting 2 Tim. 2:15 and declaring that the views that he would be presenting were in line with the teachings of Scripture.<sup>78</sup> He was also quick to declare that despite the accusations against moderate ultradispensationalism, it did not teach that salvation has been by any other means than grace in all dispensations.<sup>79</sup> Despite this claim, he made various statements throughout this book and others which appear to contradict this.

Another observation concerning this book was that, like O'Hair, while he quoted many verses in an attempt to support his views, he often did not interact with those verses to inform his reader of their meaning and why he deemed them applicable to his views.

An additional work of Stam that provided more of an overview of the ecclesiological teachings of moderate ultradispensationalism was his four volume work, *Acts Dispensationally Considered*.<sup>80</sup> John Walvoord presented a lengthy review of this book in which he concluded that Stam "represents a school of dispensationalism more extreme than Scofield, but less radical than Bullinger."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 11.

<sup>79</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 15.

<sup>80</sup> Stam, Cornelius, *Acts Dispensationally Considered*, ed. Cornelius Stam, 4 vols. (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1954).

<sup>81</sup> John F. Walvoord, "Book Reviews," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 459, no. 115 (July 1958): 225.

He even highlights some areas in the book where he believed Stam constantly “misrepresented” views of normative dispensationalists in their beliefs concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church.<sup>82</sup>

Park’s observation of this piece of literature was that it “compartmentalized Scripture” and “can only lead to an unbalanced system of interpretation.”<sup>83</sup>

A few of the key features to this book were his nine reasons why he believed there was “*no Scriptural basis whatsoever* for the premise that the Body of Christ began, historically, with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost”<sup>84</sup> and his

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<sup>82</sup> Walvoord, "Book Reviews," 225.

<sup>83</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 30.

<sup>84</sup> Stam's nine reasons were: (1) The record of Pentecost says nothing whatever about the Body of Christ; we do not read of this until we come to the epistles of Paul. (2) Pentecost was a Jewish feast day, not related in any way to the Body of Christ. (3) Only Jews were recognized in Peter's Pentecostal address (See 2:5,14,22,36) while the Body of Christ is "one new man" composed of both Jews and Gentiles reconciled to God in one body, and is the result of the breaking down of the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile. (4) The Jew, like the Gentile, had to be alienated from God before both Jews and Gentiles could be reconciled to God in one body. This is why Israel had to be cast away nationally before God could offer reconciliation to the world and form the Body of Christ. (5) The kingdom was not even offered to Israel until Pentecost; how could the Body have begun then (See Acts 2:30-39; 3:19-21). It was when Israel refused this offer that the nation was set aside and the Body formed. (6) At the feast of Pentecost there were two loaves (Lev. 23:17) representing, doubtless, Israel and Judah, which two houses, though brought together in the kingdom, will still maintain their identity. But the body of Christ is one loaf, with believing Jews and Gentiles losing their identity in Christ. (7) At Pentecost the disciples were baptized with, or in, the Spirit for power (Acts 1:8). This is quite different from baptism by the Spirit into Christ and His Body. (8) At Pentecost the Lord Jesus was the Baptizer, baptizing His people with, or in, the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:7, 8). Today the Holy Spirit is the Baptizer, baptizing believers into Christ and His Body (Gal. 3:27, 28; 1 Cor. 12:13). (9) At Pentecost only Jews were baptized with, or in, the Holy Spirit. How, then, could this have been the

nine reasons why he believed that the disciples of John were not re-baptized.<sup>85</sup>

Pinpointing a few of these issues, Pickering suggested that Stam's argumentations are a "figment of the imagination" and "false and unsupported."<sup>86</sup>

A final general work of literature which Stam penned was *The Author's Choice*.<sup>87</sup> This book covered a plethora of topics related to moderate

baptism by which "one Spirit" baptizes believers "into one body, whether they be Jews or Gentiles"? (1 Cor. 12:13) See Stam, Cornelius, *Acts 1-8, Acts Dispensationally Considered*, ed. Cornelius Stam, (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1954), 40.

<sup>85</sup> Stam's nine reasons he believed the disciples of John were not re-baptized by Paul were: (1) There was no basic difference between John's baptism and that of Peter at Pentecost. Both were baptisms of "repentance" and both were "for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4; Acts 2:38). (2) Paul's main question did not concern water baptism but the gift of the Holy Spirit. (3) Why should these few disciples alone be rebaptized? Why not the twelve apostles, Apollos and all who had been baptized before Pentecost? (4) How could the rebaptism of only these few prove the importance of "Christian baptism" over John's baptism? Would not the lack of evidence that all the others were rebaptized rather prove the opposite? (5) Why should Luke's record be interrupted to record the rebaptism of these twelve men without explaining why only these had to be rebaptized? (6) The record does not say that these men were baptized again. (7) If the popular interpretation of Verse 5 were correct it would more probably read: "When they heard this, Paul baptized them . . ." or "they were baptized again. . . ." (8) In Acts 8:12-17 there were believers who had been baptized with so-called "Christian baptism" yet, for another reason, had not received the gift of the Holy Spirit. (9) If this "last record" of water baptism in Acts proves the importance of "Christian baptism," does it not also prove that tongues and prophecy go with Christian baptism? When these disciples were "rebaptized," the Holy Spirit came upon them and "they spake with tongues and prophesied" (Ver. 6). See Stam, Cornelius, *Acts 15-21, Acts Dispensationally Considered*, ed. Cornelius Stam, (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1954), 89-93.

<sup>86</sup> Pickering, "Distinctive Teachings of Ultra-Dispensationalism," 41.

<sup>87</sup> Cornelius Stam, *The Author's Choice* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1990).

ultradispensationalism and displayed a noticeable emphasis on the ministry of Paul over any other topic in the Bible. One prominent feature of this book was that throughout it, Stam frequently quoted biblical passages with the hope of explaining his views to his readers although, again, he did not interact with them.

### **Literature Concerning the Origin of the Church**

The primary work of literature by Stam concerning the moderate ultradispensational view of the inception of the Church was titled *Paul: His Apostleship and Message*.<sup>88</sup> While this title might appear to deal with another issue, it was in complete harmony with the moderate ultradispensational view since it teaches that the Church's origin is inexplicably related to Paul. Stam stated that the purpose of this book was "to demonstrate *from the Scriptures* that God raised up Paul to be both the herald and the living demonstration of His grace to a doomed world."<sup>89</sup> In the introduction, Stam declared, "One event in history which probably stands next in importance to the death and resurrection of Christ, is the conversion and commission of Saul of Tarsus, later known as *Paul the Apostle*."<sup>90</sup> This proclamation demonstrated the incredible priority placed on Paul by Stam. Graber even observed that Stam sets out "a distinction between the earlier and later ministry of Paul" although that distinction is "a kingdom

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<sup>88</sup> Cornelius Stam, *Paul: His Apostleship and Message* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1985).

<sup>89</sup> Stam, *Paul: His Apostleship and Message*, xii.

<sup>90</sup> Stam, *Paul: His Apostleship and Message*, xi.

message over against the mystery message.”<sup>91</sup>

In this book, Stam demonstrated his disagreement with O’Hair and Baker by stating, “The conversion of Paul marked the *beginning* of the unfolding of the mystery of God’s purpose and grace.”<sup>92</sup> Though O’Hair and Baker would view the beginning of the Church with Paul at his separation to the Gentiles in Acts 13, Stam clearly believed that it reached further back into time to Paul’s conversion in Acts 9.<sup>93</sup>

Stam’s second chapter is devoted to asserting the differences between the Twelve and the apostle Paul. Like O’Hair and Baker, he used the number *twelve* to attempt to support their being sent only to Israel since *twelve* represented Israel.<sup>94</sup> Stam believed that if the Twelve would have been sent to the Gentiles, then God would not have raised up Paul.<sup>95</sup>

The most prominent feature of this book is that it is extremely Pauline focused. Stam spent most of the book addressing the uniqueness of Paul in such a way that his reader could not help but feel his being in awe of Paul. He even

<sup>91</sup> Graber, "Ultra-Dispensationalism," 108.

<sup>92</sup> Stam, *Paul: His Apostleship and Message*, 13.

<sup>93</sup> Though Stam departed from the moderate ultradispensational view of O’Hair and Baker concerning the exact chapter in which the Church began, this should not be seen as a separate ultradispensational category since the moderate ultradispensational view is based on the revelation of the mystery to Paul, not an exact chapter in the book of Acts in which this act took place.

<sup>94</sup> Stam, *Paul: His Apostleship and Message*, 22.

<sup>95</sup> Stam, *Paul: His Apostleship and Message*, 27.

devoted a section of this book to comparing Paul to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.<sup>96</sup> At the end of this book, Stam asserted that the spiritual stagnation of the Church today is due to the moderate ultradispensational belief that Christendom has misinterpreted passages pertaining to the Church.<sup>97</sup> Park even observed that “[Stam] goes on to say that by commissioning Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles and recognizing his particular ministry to them, the apostles loosed themselves from the previous commission to go into all the world.”<sup>98</sup>

Two other books by Stam which focus upon the inception of the Church from the moderate ultradispensational perspective are his commentaries on the first epistle to the Corinthians<sup>99</sup> and the epistle to the Church of Galatia.<sup>100</sup> A notable feature of his *Commentary on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* is his interpretation of 1 Cor. 12:13. Concerning the normative dispensational view that the 1 Cor. 12:13 and Acts 1:8 passages referenced the same event by the use of the Greek preposition ἐν in each verse, Stam stated that “some seek to evade the simple, precious truth of 1 Cor. 12:13 by contending that the word ‘by,’ with which the verse opens, should be ‘in.’ How this would make sense we

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<sup>96</sup> Stam, *Paul: His Apostleship and Message*, 44-46.

<sup>97</sup> Stam, *Paul: His Apostleship and Message*, 66.

<sup>98</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 18.

<sup>99</sup> Cornelius Stam, *Commentary on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1988).

<sup>100</sup> Cornelius Stam, *Commentary on Galatians* (Germantown, WI: Berean Bible Society, 1998).

utterly fail to see, but it surely destroys the clear, simple sense of the passage as it is.”<sup>101</sup> Also, in Stam’s *Commentary on Galatians* he included an appendix titled “Did the Twelve Apostles Become Members of the Body of Christ?” In this section, Stam concluded that the twelve apostles were not and never will be a part of the Body of Christ because they were the originators of the kingdom Church prior to today’s dispensation of the Church.<sup>102</sup> Both of these commentaries contained vital information to understanding the interpretation of key texts pertaining to the origin of the Church; although, Ryrie proclaimed that he still considered them “one-sided presentations” and will not “truly edify the body of Christ.”<sup>103</sup>

### **Literature Concerning Baptism**

Stam penned two primary works entirely for the purpose of discussing the issue of water baptism today. The first was *Baptism and the Bible*.<sup>104</sup> The question Stam sought to answer throughout this book was whether or not baptism should be practiced today.<sup>105</sup> In the introduction, Stam is commended for discussing the

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<sup>101</sup> Stam, *Commentary on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 166.

<sup>102</sup> Stam, *Commentary on Galatians*, 195-205.

<sup>103</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, "Book Reviews," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 115, no. 457 (January 1958): 83.

<sup>104</sup> Cornelius Stam, *Baptism and the Bible* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1981).

<sup>105</sup> Stam, *Baptism and the Bible*, 20.

similarities between normative dispensationalism and ultradispensationalism as a way to focus on the factors that the two systems of theology have in common.<sup>106</sup>

His first chapter explained how the majority of Churches throughout the centuries were wrong about baptism. He declared that “the *whole* Church has *not* practiced water baptism down through the centuries...the Church as a *whole* has practiced it, but evidently there have always been groups, as there are today, who have held that water baptism does *not* belong to God's program for the dispensation of grace.”<sup>107</sup>

One evidence Stam presented in opposition to baptism's being for today was the fact that “Paul wrote more books than all the other New Testament writers combined, yet his epistles will be searched in vain for one command, or even one exhortation to be baptized with water.”<sup>108</sup> The absence of any explicit command on the part of Paul led moderate ultradispensationalism to conclude that it is therefore not for today.

One characteristic evidenced from this book is the moderate ultradispensational view concerning the purpose of baptism. Even from the introduction Stam showed that the moderate ultradispensational view concerning baptism during Pentecost was for salvation by stating, “From John the Baptist all the way through Pentecost, water baptism was required for ‘salvation’ or ‘the

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<sup>106</sup> Stam, *Baptism and the Bible*, xii.

<sup>107</sup> Stam, *Baptism and the Bible*, 17.

<sup>108</sup> Stam, *Baptism and the Bible*, 21.



remission of sins' (See Mark 1:4; 16:16; Acts 2:38)."<sup>109</sup> Park replied to this assertion by proclaiming, "However when Christ was baptized it was not for the remission of sins but to identify Him with sinful man in his needy position. There is no spiritual benefit in the physical baptism of Christ."<sup>110</sup>

Stam attempted to justify<sup>111</sup> this interpretation in order to have salvation by grace through faith in all dispensations when he stated, "*Essentially it is through faith* that men have been saved in every age. But when God required repentance and baptism 'for the remission of sins' faith could respond only by repenting and

<sup>109</sup> Stam, *Baptism and the Bible*, xiii.

<sup>110</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 15.

<sup>111</sup> An illustration presented by Stam to support his conclusions was: "If I drive a screw into a piece of wood with a screwdriver, does the screwdriver do the work, or do I? Shall we say that we each did part of it? No. In one sense the screwdriver did it all, for I did not even touch the screw in the operation. But then, the screwdriver was merely the instrument I used, so essentially it was I who did it all. So it was with salvation before the dispensation of grace was ushered in. When God required water baptism for the remission of sins, for example, men could get their sins remitted only by submitting to baptism. Thus instrumentally it was their baptism that procured for them the remission of sins, yet essentially it was God who saved them by grace when He saw their faith. It may be argued that the believer in such a case had exercised faith in his heart before being baptized, so that baptism had nothing whatever to do with his salvation. The answer is that he believed that being baptized he would be accepted, and so was, in his heart, already baptized. This is the answer to problems where impossibilities to fulfill [*sic*] the stated requirements are involved. Suppose, for example, a man, exercising true faith, was on his way to offer a sacrifice or to be baptized and, on his way, suddenly fell dead. Would he not be accepted? Surely he would; simply because he had come in faith to fulfill [*sic*] the requirement. Thus the thief on the cross was saved without water baptism in a day when baptism was required for the remission of sins, but who can doubt that he would have rejoiced at the opportunity to be baptized had he not been nailed to a cross?" See Stam, *Things That Differ*, 30.

being baptized.”<sup>112</sup> Stam declared that those who attempt to interpret Acts 2:38 in any way other than it appeared “might alter other important Scriptures.”<sup>113</sup>

In this book Stam also addressed the baptisms of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), Paul himself (as recorded in Acts 22), Cornelius and his household (Acts 10), Lydia, the Philippian jailor, many Corinthians, and the disciples of John (Acts 19).<sup>114</sup> During this section, he referred his readers to his volume on Acts, especially concerning the baptism of John’s disciples. He even referenced back to his nine arguments that the disciples of John were not “re-baptized” from *Acts Dispensationally Considered*.<sup>115</sup>

In response to the normative dispensational opposition to the moderate ultradispensational view concerning baptism because Paul himself was baptized, Stam responded, “Yes, he did, but stop a moment and recall: he also spoke with tongues, healed the sick, cast out demons and circumcised Timothy.”<sup>116</sup> This is used as a way to conclude that since speaking in tongues, healing the sick, casting out demons, and circumcision are not profitable today then neither is baptism.

The second writing of Stam devoted to the issue of baptism is *The*

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<sup>112</sup> Stam, *Baptism and the Bible*, 25.

<sup>113</sup> Stam, *Baptism and the Bible*, 26.

<sup>114</sup> Stam, *Baptism and the Bible*, 38-42.

<sup>115</sup> Stam, *Baptism and the Bible*, 42-44.

<sup>116</sup> Stam, *Baptism and the Bible*, 28.

*Controversy*.<sup>117</sup> Written as an overview of the debates between Ironside and Bullinger and O'Hair and John R. Rice, Stam began his book by declaring that it "will prove beyond reasonable doubt that for many years there has been a determined attempt on the part of some of our most outstanding Fundamentalist leaders to suppress that body of truth which, more than any other, would serve to unite the Church, now so confused and divided."<sup>118</sup> He then concluded, "Such may *pray* for a spiritual revival in the Body of Christ, but they do not *deserve* one, for spiritual indolence is exactly what *prevents* revival."<sup>119</sup>

In its beginning, Stam laid out what he believed concerning the Bible and then addressed what he perceived to be the primary difference he has with normative dispensationalism: water baptism.<sup>120</sup> While commenting on this book, Park observed, "Without exception, the unifying force of ultradispensationalism is the removal of all obligation to observe water baptism as an ordinance of the Church."<sup>121</sup> This is a major departure from normative dispensationalism.

Stam rejected the idea that his teaching against water baptism for the Church today is warrant for claiming moderate ultradispensationalism to be

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<sup>117</sup> Cornelius Stam, *The Controversy* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1963).

<sup>118</sup> Stam, *The Controversy*, 7.

<sup>119</sup> Stam, *The Controversy*, 7.

<sup>120</sup> Stam, *The Controversy*, 8-9.

<sup>121</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 15.

heresy since there has been a great divide over the issue of baptism within Christendom.<sup>122</sup> Stam further stated that water baptism “was included in God's program-indeed, was required, along with faith and repentance, for the remission of sins.”<sup>123</sup> He then proclaimed that “when Christ's kingdom - with which water baptism was associated - was finally rejected under the ministry of the twelve, God raised up *another* apostle to proclaim ‘the preaching of the cross’ (as glad news) in ‘the gospel of the grace of God.’”<sup>124</sup> The apostle to whom he referred was Paul.

### **Literature Concerning the Commission of the Church**

Stam wrote one primary book on the issue of the commission for the Church: *Our Great Commission: What is it?*<sup>125</sup> This is a great resource concerning the moderate ultradispensational view as to why they do not believe that the commission in Matthew 28 is applicable for today and their reasoning behind choosing another commission from the writings of Paul (2 Cor. 5:14-21).

Referring to Matthew 28, Stam claimed, “If pastors and Bible teachers faithfully studied and explained these important commands of our Lord in detail, they would soon find that it is difficult, yes, impossible to reconcile them with the

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<sup>122</sup> Stam, *The Controversy*, 9.

<sup>123</sup> Stam, *The Controversy*, 9.

<sup>124</sup> Stam, *The Controversy*, 9.

<sup>125</sup> Cornelius Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?* (Stevens Point, WI: Worzalla Publishing Company, 1974).

epistles of Paul *unless* we recognize a change in dispensation with the raising up of Paul, God's appointed apostle of grace.”<sup>126</sup> He further elaborated, “Surely the legalism of Matthew's account, the baptism for salvation and the miraculous demonstrations of Mark's, the ‘Jerusalem first’ of Luke and the Acts, and the apostolic forgiveness of sins of John's record are not compatible with the glorious truths later set forth in the Pauline epistles.”<sup>127</sup> Stam assumed that the reason so many Christians use Matthew 28 as their commission is “because *they have heard it said so often*” and not because it is biblical.<sup>128</sup> As O’Hair did, Stam also attempted to support this view by referencing various dispensationalists who also did not believe the commission of the Church was found in Matthew.<sup>129</sup>

In the third chapter of this book, Stam presented various arguments against the commission of the Church being found in Matthew. First, he declared that the statement by Christ to teach converts τηρεῖν πάντα (to observe all things) could not be applicable today. Stam stated that if one were to do that today then, “we will surely bind our hearers hand and foot with the law of Moses, its sabbath observance its sacrifices and all the other ceremonies.”<sup>130</sup> He did not believe that this commission could be carried out today unless the convert was brought under

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<sup>126</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 13.

<sup>127</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 13.

<sup>128</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 18.

<sup>129</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 13-17.

<sup>130</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 20.

the Mosaic Law.<sup>131</sup> He also quoted Luke 12:33 and Matthew 10 as further support for this since he reasoned that one would have to sell all in order to truly obey the Matthew 28 commission.<sup>132</sup>

Secondly, Stam believed that the command for baptism was further proof that the Matthew 28 commission is not for today. He concluded this because “the apostles baptized for the remission of sin.”<sup>133</sup> Thirdly, the use of the word “gospel” compelled Stam to conclude that the gospel that Matthew 28 propagated is different than the one of the Church today. He even declared that it is “illogical” to state that the two gospels are the same.<sup>134</sup>

Fourthly, Stam returned to the argument of baptism being required in the Matthew 28 commission to attempt to discredit it for today. He stated, “How shallow is the argument that the latter part of this verse somehow changes the meaning of the former simply because our Lord did *not* say: ‘He that believeth not and *is not baptized* shall be damned!’”<sup>135</sup> He even declared that any interpretation which shows that baptism was not required for salvation under the Matthew 28 commission is “altering the Scriptures.”<sup>136</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 20.

<sup>132</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 22.

<sup>133</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 22.

<sup>134</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 23.

<sup>135</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 24.

<sup>136</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 24.

Fifthly, Stam tied the evidence of sign gifts as reason why the Matthew 28 commission is not for today. He concluded that “water baptism was a *requirement* for salvation, and miraculous signs the *evidences* of salvation. If this commission is binding upon us today, then this author is not even saved, for he was not baptized when he believed, nor does he work miracles.”<sup>137</sup> From these five arguments, Stam concluded that “all this proves with the greatest clarity that God did not usher in the present dispensation of grace at the crucifixion, or the resurrection, or at Pentecost, but later through Paul.”<sup>138</sup> These evidences presented by Stam greatly illuminate the ecclesiology of moderate ultradispensationalism concerning the commission of the Church.

#### Relevant Literature by Charles Baker

There are eight primary writings of Baker that are relevant to this study which this section will review. This section will divide his writings into literature concerning the origin of the Church, baptism, the commission of the Church, and general literature. One admirable aspect of his writings was that they were very organized and systematic.

#### **Literature Concerning the Origin of the Church**

Baker wrote three primary works focused upon the ecclesiological topic of the origin of the Church. In *A Dispensational Theology*, Baker declared that he wrote

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<sup>137</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 27.

<sup>138</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 32.

this work in order to express “the position that the present dispensation began with the Apostle Paul before he wrote his first epistle.”<sup>139</sup> In Ryrie’s review of this book, he commends Baker for his commitment “to the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture” and illuminates Baker’s commitment to “pretribulational and premillennial” doctrine throughout the book.<sup>140</sup> This book could be considered moderate ultradispensationalism’s theological textbook because of the manner in which it was systematized.<sup>141</sup>

In Baker’s forward, he denied the “ultra/hyper” label that has been placed upon this system of theology by declaring that this book was “dispensationally oriented.”<sup>142</sup> This was used by Baker as a way to purport that the ultradispensational system is true dispensationalism. One aspect of this writing that should be noted is that Baker was very cordial and complementary of normative dispensationalists despite his disagreements with them concerning certain areas in ecclesiology.<sup>143</sup>

Ryrie observed that throughout *A Dispensational Theology*, Baker “feels

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<sup>139</sup> Charles Baker, *A Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College, 1971), 15.

<sup>140</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, “Book Reviews,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 123, no. 511 (July 1971): 279.

<sup>141</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 10.

<sup>142</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 8.

<sup>143</sup> Another interesting observation taken from this book was that much of Baker’s theological conclusions were drawn from his positions concerning other ecclesiological doctrines.



that the Scripture does not state specifically when the body of Christ began," but it could not have been in Acts 2.<sup>144</sup> Baker presented five reasons why he believed the Church could not have begun in Acts 2. The first evidence Baker presented was that "Pentecost was in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy."<sup>145</sup> The second reason he believed the Church could not have begun at Pentecost was because "this dispensation is a joint-body of Jews and Gentiles, but the ministry of Pentecost and for some seven or eight years thereafter was to the Jews only. (Ephesians 3:6 cf. Acts 2:14, 22; 3:12, 25, 26; 4:8; 5:31; 11:19)"<sup>146</sup> Thirdly, Baker proclaimed, "Pentecost ushered in the last days of Israel (Acts 2:17)" and "there is no hint that Pentecost was the first day of a new and hitherto unpredicted dispensation."<sup>147</sup> Fourthly, "The first real offer of the kingdom was given to Israel after the day of Pentecost (Acts 3:19-21)." The final reason for Baker concluding that the Church could not have begun on the day of Pentecost was because "Paul teaches that it was because of Israel's being cast aside that reconciliation was sent to the Gentiles, which marked the beginning of this dispensation (Romans 11:11, 12, 15). But Israel was not cast aside at Pentecost; rather the message was sent to them first of all (Acts 3:26)."<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ryrie, "Book Reviews," 279.

<sup>145</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 15.

<sup>146</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 16.

<sup>147</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 16.

<sup>148</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 16.

Later in this book, Baker added seven additional reasons why the Church could not have begun in Acts 2. They were:

1. There was already a Church in existence at Pentecost. The Scripture does not say that the believers at Pentecost were formed into the Church. It says that they were *added* to the Church (Acts 2:41). A thing must first exist before anything can be added to it. 2. The title, "the Church which is His Body," is distinctive with Paul." 3. Pentecost was one of the annual Jewish feast days which depict God's redemptive dealings with Israel in the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. 4. A part of the Pentecostal celebration was the presentation of the two "wave loaves" as described in Leviticus 23:17-20. 5. At Pentecost the believers received water baptism for the remission of sins. 6. At Pentecost there is no indication that the Spirit baptism was forming a new Body. 7. At Pentecost Christ was the Baptizer, baptizing with or in the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 the Holy Spirit is the Baptizer, baptizing into Christ.<sup>149</sup>

Baker used these observations combined with the others to conclude that they "are fully supported by the Scripture and surely overweigh any evidence to the contrary that the Body of Christ and the dispensation of the Mystery began on Israel's feast of Pentecost."<sup>150</sup>

In another section, Baker evaluated the reasoning behind the normative dispensational view concerning the origin of the Church and its connection to Spirit baptism.<sup>151</sup> Much like the verbiage used in references to the commission in Matthew 28, Baker called the normative dispensational view of Spirit baptism in Acts 2 the "so-called Spirit baptism" because he denied this as a legitimate event

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<sup>149</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 464-67.

<sup>150</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 467.

<sup>151</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 463.

of true Spirit baptism.<sup>152</sup> He declared, "There is nothing in the context of the passages dealing with the Holy Spirit's baptizing into the Body of Christ which relates to a time element, so that if we are to discover whether this work took place at Pentecost or at some subsequent date, we must search elsewhere for the evidence."<sup>153</sup> The place which Baker would conclude to be evidence for this inception of the Church would be Acts 13. Interestingly, Ryrie did observe that "[Baker] makes the startling admission that perhaps the body might have been begun (albeit secretly) before then."<sup>154</sup> He concluded his review of this book by declaring, "It is not what most understand to be dispensational theology."<sup>155</sup>

In addition to *A Dispensational Theology*, Baker also wrote *Understanding the Body of Christ*<sup>156</sup> and *Dispensational Relationships*<sup>157</sup> which focused upon the origin of the Church. *Understanding the Body of Christ* was written as a verse by verse commentary on the books of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Baker entitled this book as such from his standpoint that the Body of Christ

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<sup>152</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 456.

<sup>153</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 464.

<sup>154</sup> Ryrie, "Book Reviews," 279 referencing Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 505.

<sup>155</sup> Ryrie, "Book Reviews," 280.

<sup>156</sup> Charles Baker, *Understanding the Body of Christ: A Pauline Trilogy* (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College, 1985).

<sup>157</sup> Charles Baker, *Dispensational Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Grace Line Bible Lessons, 1970).

began with Paul; therefore one can only glean understanding of that Body from his writings, especially these three epistles.<sup>158</sup> The most relevant aspects of the book for this research pertained to Baker's interaction with the use of *μυστήριον* in Paul's letters to the Churches in Ephesians and Colossians<sup>159</sup> and his interpretation of with Eph 4:5.<sup>160</sup>

Baker designed *Dispensational Relationships* to be used as a Bible study curriculum. It consisted of 12 lessons on issues related to moderate ultradispensationalism with a review section at the end of each lesson. Baker did well in explaining the teachings of moderate ultradispensationalism on a lay-person's level. Concerning the dispensation of the Church, Baker concluded, "Historically, the dispensation of Grace began with the separation of the apostle Paul to the ministry for which God had called him, although doctrinally it is based upon the death and resurrection of Christ."<sup>161</sup> In this book, Baker gave two primary reasons he believed that the Church began with Paul. "First, Scripture plainly states the Church, the Body of Christ was a secret never revealed before it was made known to Paul...second...the obvious truth that the Body of Christ is plainly set forth in the early epistles of Paul (I Corinthians 12:13, 27; Romans

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<sup>158</sup> Baker, *Understanding the Body of Christ: A Pauline Trilogy*, 5.

<sup>159</sup> Baker, *Understanding the Body of Christ: A Pauline Trilogy*, 5, 108.

<sup>160</sup> Baker, *Understanding the Body of Christ: A Pauline Trilogy*, 35.

<sup>161</sup> Baker, *Dispensational Relationships*, 15.

12:5).”<sup>162</sup>

### **Literature Concerning Baptism**

One book was written by Baker for the sole purpose of discussing the moderate ultradispensational view concerning baptism: *Real Baptism*.<sup>163</sup> Instead of writing it in a topical fashion, Baker addressed this issue as more of a brief commentary on every reference in the New Testament concerning the use of the word “baptism.” While the entire book is noteworthy, two sections within it were relevant to this research.

First, in the sixth chapter he addressed the water baptism referenced on the day of Pentecost. Here Baker detailed the various views concerning this baptism and then gave special attention to the views of normative dispensationalism and moderate ultradispensationalism. Baker claimed, “This difference of interpretation is due to the difference between Peter's and Paul's ministries, and the failure to distinguish this difference.”<sup>164</sup> Then he declared, “Peter's message at Pentecost makes baptism to be necessary. Paul's message makes it plain that salvation is by grace apart from all religious works of righteousness.”<sup>165</sup> This showed that the reason he denied water baptism as

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<sup>162</sup> Baker, *Understanding the Body of Christ: A Pauline Trilogy*, 47.

<sup>163</sup> Charles Baker, *Real Baptism* (Milwaukee, WI: C.F. Baker, 1991).

<sup>164</sup> Baker, *Real Baptism*, 58.

<sup>165</sup> Baker, *Real Baptism*, 58.

being applicable today is due to his belief that Peter and Paul preached different messages.

During this section, Baker correctly attributed the normative dispensational view concerning this by declaring, “The evangelical...also seeing no difference between Peter's and Paul's gospels, reasons that we must take Paul's statements literally and interpret the Gospel commissions and Peter's preaching in the light of Paul's Epistles.”<sup>166</sup> Baker adamantly opposed this interpretation by stating, “Peter and Paul were given two distinctive ministries, and therefore we can take both Peter and Paul literally. Water baptism was essential under Peter's ministry. Under Paul's ministry, it was not only not necessary, but it was not even a part of the distinctive revelation of the gospel of the grace of God.”<sup>167</sup>

The second notable section to this research is found in the ninth chapter. There, Baker discussed the moderate ultradispensational view as to why Paul himself baptized. He began this chapter by comparing the statement of Paul when he stated that Christ sent him not to baptize, and then he claimed that the moderate ultradispensational interpretation of this passage is the proper interpretation in that it sees this as Paul's way of showing that baptism was not important in this dispensation.<sup>168</sup> Pickering observed that throughout this section of Baker's book, he seemed “obliged to apologize for Paul at this point saying

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<sup>166</sup> Baker, *Real Baptism*, 58.

<sup>167</sup> Baker, *Real Baptism*, 58.

<sup>168</sup> Baker, *Real Baptism*, 75.

that he was gradually emerging from the older economy."<sup>169</sup> He then concluded, "Paul however makes no apology for his administration of baptism."<sup>170</sup>

Baker later presented several arguments in favor of the moderate ultradispensational view concerning baptism. One reason he offered was that if baptism were important for today, then "how could Paul in any sense of the word say: '*I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius.*'"<sup>171</sup> Baker appealed to the absence of any instruction concerning baptism in the writings of Paul as further evidence for the inappropriateness of water baptism for today. He posited that if Paul saw fit to address the ordinance of the Lord's Supper then he would have also addressed baptism if it were important for the Church today.<sup>172</sup> Baker concluded that any other view concerning this subject was aligning itself with "modernists and spiritualizers who choose to make any other part of the Bible to mean something different from what it says."<sup>173</sup>

### **Literature Concerning the Commission of the Church**

Though *Understanding the Gospels*<sup>174</sup> is not titled as such, Baker penned it with

<sup>169</sup> Pickering, "Distinctive Teachings of Ultra-Dispensationalism," 42.

<sup>170</sup> Pickering, "Distinctive Teachings of Ultra-Dispensationalism," 42.

<sup>171</sup> Baker, *Real Baptism*, 75.

<sup>172</sup> Baker, *Real Baptism*, 75.

<sup>173</sup> Baker, *Real Baptism*, 75.

<sup>174</sup> Charles Baker, *Understanding the Gospels: A Different Approach* (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College, 1978).

the purpose of not only explaining the moderate ultradispensational view of the Gospels, but also its view concerning the commission of the Church. Instead of writing this book as a book-by-book commentary, Baker addressed the Gospels as in the harmony of their writings.<sup>175</sup> The most notable aspect of this book in relation to this research pertained to Baker's presentation of why the commission for the Church today is not found in the Gospels. Baker, like O'Hair and Stam, called the Matthew 28 commission the "so-called" Great Commission, but unlike O'Hair he graciously explained this designation by declaring that he did "not in any way to belittle the greatness of this commission, but to call attention to the fact that there are other great commissions in the Bible. All of God's commissions are great, and to call just one of them great is to belittle the others."<sup>176</sup>

Baker expressed seven reasons why he did not believe that the commission for the Church today is found in the gospels. First, he stated the Matthew 28 gospel was limited to Israel. Secondly, he believed the order of the Matthew 28 commission as explained in Acts 1:8 refuted against it for today. Thirdly, Matthew 28's mention of water baptism is seen by Baker as further refutation against its applicableness today.<sup>177</sup> Fourthly, Baker believed that since

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<sup>175</sup> Baker, *Understanding the Gospels: A Different Approach*, 10.

<sup>176</sup> Baker, *Understanding the Gospels: A Different Approach*, 239. While this declaration has warrant to it, it should be noted that normative dispensationalists do not call this the "Great Commission" because it believes any other command in the Bible is subservient to it as Baker would suggest.

<sup>177</sup> Like Stam, one confusing issue brought up by Baker is that he saw the commission in Mark as requiring "faith and water baptism for salvation," but only



the “commission commanded the teaching of all things which Christ had commanded while He was on earth” it could not be applicable for today. Fifthly, he believed that the Matthew 28 commission is the commission of “the Gospel of the Kingdom.” Sixthly, the mention of “miraculous signs and wonders” accompanying the fulfilling of the commission is seen as militating against this being applicable today. Seventhly, Baker declared that the passages of Rom. 16:25-26 and 2 Cor. 5:14-21 stand in opposition to the Matt 28 commission and therefore could not be applicable today.<sup>178</sup>

Of all three historic proponents of moderate ultradispensationalism, this book of Baker’s does the most thorough job of not only explaining the moderate ultradispensational position concerning the commission of the Church today, but also discussing why it believes so in a simplistic way.

### **General Literature**

Now that several works of Baker were separated into the ecclesiological focuses of this research, three general writings of Baker are discussed in this section. Each of the three writings discussed the moderate ultradispensational view of ecclesiology as a whole instead of in parts but also had a primary purpose that made them quite unique from the others.

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a few sentences later proclaimed, “This was not baptismal regeneration, but simply the appointed means of expressing faith” (Baker, *Understanding the Gospels: A Different Approach*, 240).

<sup>178</sup> Baker, *Understanding the Gospels: A Different Approach*, 240-241.

First, Baker's book, *Bible Truth*,<sup>179</sup> according to Park, "is a statement of the doctrinal position of moderate ultradispensationalism."<sup>180</sup> Baker discussed a number of theological issues in this book, but spent most of his writing focusing on his ecclesiology. Baker declared that there is "only one true Church" and that it "began with the Apostle Paul before he wrote his first epistle"<sup>181</sup> and that only Paul's epistles are applicable to the Church today. Pickering commented, "To so curtail the message of God to His people is a serious error indeed."<sup>182</sup>

Interestingly though, Baker did believe that there are three Churches in the Bible. First, he taught Israel was a Church in the OT. Secondly, he believed there was a Church mentioned in Matthew 16 and realized in Acts 2. Thirdly, he believed there is the Church today which he called the body of Christ.<sup>183</sup> He declared that any who believe otherwise are in error and "bound to bring great confusion into Church doctrine for today."<sup>184</sup>

One observation of this book is that all throughout it Baker constantly referred back to his "evidence" presented. However, like O'Hair and Stam, many

<sup>179</sup> Charles Baker, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It* (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College, 1963).

<sup>180</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 13.

<sup>181</sup> Baker, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 38.

<sup>182</sup> Pickering, "Distinctive Teachings of Ultra-Dispensationalism," 44.

<sup>183</sup> Baker, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 39.

<sup>184</sup> Baker, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 39.

times he did nothing more than quote a verse and then compose a conclusion concerning that passage without giving any noticeable exegesis of it. Despite this observation, Park's conclusion concerning this book is that it is still "valuable as a brief summary of the doctrinal position of moderate ultradispensationalism."<sup>185</sup>

Secondly, Baker wrote *Understanding the Book of Acts*<sup>186</sup> as a verse-by-verse commentary on the book of Acts from the perspective of moderate ultradispensationalism. In it, he presented an excellent timeline of the biblical accounts in the book of Acts while withholding his personal views concerning his theological conclusions about them.<sup>187</sup> Because of the way in which Baker wrote this literature, it served as an excellent resource to refer in order to better understand the teachings of moderate ultradispensationalism concerning its ecclesiology and also examine answers to the various questions brought up by normative dispensationalism in opposition to this view.

Lastly, *A Dispensational Synopsis of the New Testament*<sup>188</sup> was compiled by Baker from a series of articles he wrote in *Truth* magazine. Baker wrote it from a biblical theological standpoint by addressing each book of the New Testament from a moderate ultradispensational perspective. He declared that the purpose of

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<sup>185</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 13.

<sup>186</sup> Charles Baker, *Understanding the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College, 1981).

<sup>187</sup> Baker, *Understanding the Book of Acts*, 19-22.

<sup>188</sup> Charles Baker, *A Dispensational Synopsis of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Grace Publications, 1989).

the book was “to briefly show the dispensational structure and relationship of the subjects within each book.”<sup>189</sup> This was accomplished by Baker from a strict moderate ultradispensational viewpoint.

One interesting factor concerning his synopsis of Matthew is that Baker did not address the Great Commission in great detail. Instead, he focused upon the promise of Jesus and stated, “His final promise to them is that He will be with them even unto the end of the age. This will be literally true, for He will reign upon the earth for the whole of that millennial age.”<sup>190</sup> This quote demonstrated the moderate ultradispensational interpretation of this key passage in Scripture as meaning that they interpret this promise of Jesus to be applicable in the dispensation of the Millennium and not the Church.

It is not until his synopsis on the epistles to the Church of Corinth when one discovers that Baker believed the commission for the Church to be found in 2 Corinthians 5. He stated,

The latter half of Chapter 5 gives us the true commission for members of the Body of Christ. In fact, we have the word "commit" in this commission whereas it is not found in the so-called Great Commission in the Gospel records. There is nothing amiss with this latter commission. It was given by Christ to His disciples for the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom with the miracles and outward physical signs which were to follow them that believe (Mark 16:15-18). The only thing it has in common with our commission is that it was world-wide in its proclamation. In contrast, its message was the gospel of the kingdom with water baptism for the remission of sins, whereas our commission is the message of

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<sup>189</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Synopsis of the New Testament*, 6.

<sup>190</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Synopsis of the New Testament*, 10.

reconciliation apart from water baptism (1 Corinthians 1:17).<sup>191</sup>

A final aspect of this book that warrants discussion was found in Baker's synopsis on the book of Acts. Here he gave four reasons why he believed the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 10) was the same as Peter's message at Pentecost. First, he declared that it is "still directed only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5, compare Acts 2:5, 14, 22, 36)." Secondly, it "still has to do with the establishment of the millennial kingdom (Matthew 4:17, 23; 10:7, compare Acts 1:6; 2:16, 30; 3:19-26)." Thirdly, it "still includes miracles, signs, and wonders (Matthew 10:8; Mark 16:17, 18 compare, Acts 4:30)." Fourthly, it is "still the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Luke 3:3, compare Acts 2:38)."<sup>192</sup> This argumentation along with Baker's argumentation as previously discussed helps develop a more clear picture of the moderate ultradispensational views concerning the origin of the Church, baptism, and the commission of the Church.

### **Literature Written Critical of Ultradispensationalism**

Now that the relevant writings of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker pertaining to the moderate ultradispensational interpretations concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church were reviewed, this section will review the various works of literature that were written in response of

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<sup>191</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Synopsis of the New Testament*, 45.

<sup>192</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Synopsis of the New Testament*, 23.

ultradispensationalism. As will be seen, the quantity of literature written against this subject is minimal. Because of that, this section is divided into books written critical of ultradispensationalism, the theses and dissertations written critical of ultradispensationalism, and articles written critical of ultradispensationalism.<sup>193</sup>

### Books Written Critical of Ultradispensationalism

There were four books written with the sole purpose of critiquing ultradispensationalism. The first, published in 1930, was entitled *O'Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*.<sup>194</sup> This book by W. A. Haggai was written after the publishing of much of O'Hair's materials and prior to that of Baker and Stam. Haggai wrote this book to refute one particular view of moderate ultradispensationalism as propagated by O'Hair (though the title appears to be a refutation of all the doctrinal beliefs of O'Hair): water baptism. Haggai focused upon what he called the eight pillars of moderate ultradispensationalism as they pertain to water baptism.<sup>195</sup> While each pillar is not directly related to this research, they did contribute much to the area of refuting ultradispensationalism.

Haggai began the book by outlining some ecclesiological doctrines of moderate ultradispensationalism. He even went so far as to proclaim, "*O'Hairism*

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<sup>193</sup> As will be seen, only one piece of literature has been written specifically against the moderate form of ultradispensationalism: W. A. Haggai, *O'Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word* (Binghamton, NY: Calvary Baptist Church, 1930).

<sup>194</sup> Haggai, *O'Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*.

<sup>195</sup> Haggai, *O'Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*, 6.

is a new garment for the older heresy of *Bullingerism*.”<sup>196</sup> He also ridiculed the moderate ultradispensational belief that their interpretive conclusions are the only ones that correctly divide the Scripture.<sup>197</sup>

Within this book, Haggai addressed the moderate ultradispensational interpretation of Eph. 3:5,<sup>198</sup> the alleged differences between Paul’s ministry and that of Peter and the eleven,<sup>199</sup> the interpretation of 1 Cor. 1:17,<sup>200</sup> the postponement of the Great Commission,<sup>201</sup> their interpretations of Spirit baptism and water baptism,<sup>202</sup> and O’Hair’s teachings concerning Old Testament “washings.”<sup>203</sup> In one instance, Haggai claimed that O’Hair’s conclusions were based upon “his system of interpretation.”<sup>204</sup> Though he does an excellent job of addressing the interpretations of O’Hair, he did not analyze or evaluate them as to reveal why they were accurate or inaccurate. Haggai concluded that moderate ultradispensationalists have “a form of Scripturalness but are void of the power

<sup>196</sup> Haggai, *O’Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*, 4.

<sup>197</sup> Haggai, *O’Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*, 4.

<sup>198</sup> Haggai, *O’Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*, 7-8.

<sup>199</sup> Haggai, *O’Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*, 9-11.

<sup>200</sup> Haggai, *O’Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*, 12-17.

<sup>201</sup> Haggai, *O’Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*, 18-25.

<sup>202</sup> Haggai, *O’Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*, 26-31.

<sup>203</sup> Haggai, *O’Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*, 35-37.

<sup>204</sup> Haggai, *O’Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*, 13. As will be seen, this proclamation is vital to this research.

thereof.”<sup>205</sup>

The most well-known book written against ultradispensationalism was H.A. Ironside’s *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*.<sup>206</sup> This piece of literature is referenced in every piece of literature written in response of ultradispensationalism. Despite the fact that it is focused more upon the extreme type than the moderate, it still contained helpful information to better understand the views of ultradispensationalism as a whole.

Ironside organized his material by asking a series of questions pertaining to the views of ultradispensationalism. Then he proceeded to give the ultradispensational answers followed by what he believed to be the biblical ones. Within the content of his answers to ultradispensational questions, Ironside addressed the three principal issues pertaining to this research: the origin of the Church; baptism; and the commission of the Church.

Concerning the origin of the Church, Ironside addressed whether or not the Church of Acts 2 was a part of the Bride of Christ against which ultradispensationalism taught. He did an adequate job presenting the dispensational view concerning the origin of the Church on the day of Pentecost, but he made one statement that appeared to allow him to fall into the pejorative trap in which O’Hair and other ultradispensationalists repeatedly found

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<sup>205</sup> Haggai, *O’Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*, 41.

<sup>206</sup> H.A. Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bros., 1930).



themselves. Ironside claimed that anyone who comes to a different conclusion other than the normative dispensational one is not a “rational and spiritually-minded person.”<sup>207</sup> While it is true that only one view concerning these issues can be correct, there is no warrant in condemning those who hold to the view which an author believes is erroneous.

Another relevant issue pertaining to the ultradispensational view concerning the origin of the Church pertained to Ironside’s addressing of the revelation of the mystery of the body to Paul. Since ultradispensationalism believes that this revelation was solely tied to Paul, the proponents also conclude that this indicates the beginning of that mystery. Ironside declared that their interpretation of this issue “is higher criticism of the worst type and impugns the perfection of the word of God.”<sup>208</sup> He then showed how this mystery was also revealed to the apostles John and Peter in opposition to this belief of ultradispensationalism.<sup>209</sup> In an article by Arthur Farstad, he commented that this reasoning by Ironside against the ultradispensational view concerning the origin of the Church is “ably refuted” by him.<sup>210</sup>

Concerning the issue of water baptism as being applicable for the Church

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<sup>207</sup> Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 21.

<sup>208</sup> Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 30.

<sup>209</sup> Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 38.

<sup>210</sup> Arthur L. Farstad, "We Believe In: Water Baptism," *Journal of Grace Evangelical Society* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 10.

today, Ironside addressed the ultradispensational view concerning Mark 16 and water baptism's connection to the sign gifts. He concluded that "ignoring the context, [ultradispensationalists] insist that the commission given in verses 15 and 18 could only apply during the days of the book of Acts, inasmuch as certain signs were to follow them that believe."<sup>211</sup> He then declared that the signs mentioned are in strict application to the apostles and not to today's Christian converts.<sup>212</sup> Ironside also addressed the ultradispensational belief that baptism was a requirement of salvation prior to the dispensation of the Church and ultradispensationalism's view concerning Paul's use of baptism and the "faulty kind of exegesis" employed by them.<sup>213</sup> Park applauds Ironside's logic in this respect.<sup>214</sup>

Ironside believed that water baptism is referred to in Rom. 6:3-4, Col. 2:12, Eph. 4:5, and Gal. 3:27 and concluded that the "one baptism" of Eph. 4:5 was water baptism. He declared, "Without disputing whether the term 'one baptism' is to be confined to the baptism of the Spirit or the baptism of water, it is evident that it at least implies water."<sup>215</sup>

Concerning the commission of the Church, Ironside addressed the

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<sup>211</sup> Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 18.

<sup>212</sup> Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 19.

<sup>213</sup> Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 54.

<sup>214</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 36.

<sup>215</sup> Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 56.

ultradispensational belief that the commissions of Matthew 28 and Mark 16 were Jewish by declaring, “This would seem to indicate worldwide evangelism, a proclamation of the glad glorious gospel of God to lost men everywhere.”<sup>216</sup> He then concluded, “Our Lord commissioned the eleven, sending them forth to go to the ends of the earth preaching the gospel to every creature. There is nothing limited here. It is not a Jewish commission.”<sup>217</sup>

Throughout the book, Ironside did well in giving a rebuttal to many ultradispensational doctrines, but he did not do so from a hermeneutical standpoint. An example of this is seen when he refuted the belief that the Church’s commission passage of Mark 16:16 taught salvation by baptism. In response to this Ironside stated, “He did not say: ‘He that is not baptized shall be damned,’ because baptism was simply an outward confession of their faith, but he did say ‘He that believeth not shall be damned.’”<sup>218</sup> Instead of addressing what the passage itself says, he focused more upon what it did not say.

While Ironside discussed a few misinterpretations of ultradispensationalism, he focused more of his writing upon the presentation of the normative dispensational view concerning these ecclesiological issues rather than explaining why the interpretations of ultradispensationalism were incorrect from their interpretations. Not only did Ironside’s book provide refutation to

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<sup>216</sup> Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 18.

<sup>217</sup> Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 19.

<sup>218</sup> Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 19.

ultradispensationalism from a normative dispensational standpoint, but it also motivated moderate ultradispensationalist O'Hair to write *Wrongly Deriding the Christian Brethren*,<sup>219</sup> *Art Thou He That Troubleth Israel*,<sup>220</sup> and *The Dispensational Razzle-Dazzle*<sup>221</sup> since O'Hair announced that he penned all three of these books as a way to refute the claims of Ironside in *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*.

Another book written for the sole purpose of refuting ultradispensationalism was *Ultra-Dispensationalism is Modernism*.<sup>222</sup> Written by Paul Fisher, he stated that the purpose of his book "is not directly to refute Ultra-Dispensationalism" but "to bring out clearly the fact that in its origin, methods, and ultimate tendencies Ultra-Dispensationalism is closely parallel with Modernism and Higher Criticism, and that the leading propositions upon which the theory is based first appeared among the Higher Critics."<sup>223</sup> Fisher's impression of ultradispensationalism is not gleaming. He believed it "will probably never appeal to a very large section of the Christian Church. It is highly technical

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<sup>219</sup> O'Hair, *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren*.

<sup>220</sup> O'Hair, *Art Thou He That Troubleth Israel?*

<sup>221</sup> J. C. O'Hair, *The Dispensational Razzle-Dazzle: Mystery! Mystery! Who's Got the Mystery? A Scriptural Investigation of the Case Bulingerism Vs. Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1938).

<sup>222</sup> Paul B. Fischer, *Ultra-Dispensationalism is Modernism: Exposing a Heresy Among Fundamentalists* (Chicago: Weir Brothers, 1936).

<sup>223</sup> Fischer, *Ultra-Dispensationalism is Modernism: Exposing a Heresy Among Fundamentalists*, 8.

and very complicated. There is no message for the heart, and its very subtle and acute methods of differentiation, classification, and elimination make it very difficult for a non-technical mind to grasp.”<sup>224</sup>

The focus of Fisher’s book was due to his proclamation that Ironside’s work, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, had done a thorough enough job addressing the errors of ultradispensationalism.<sup>225</sup> While this researcher would not disagree that Ironside did well in writing against it, he does believe that the failure on the part of various writers to specifically address the conclusions of ultradispensationalism from their interpretations warrant further research into it.

Concerning the Pauline priority given by ultradispensationalism, Fisher observed, “For the Ultra-Dispensationalist to speak and write slightly and almost sneeringly of Jesus of Nazareth and to praise and exalt the Apostle Paul to the point where, almost if not actually, he is presented as a substitute for Jesus Christ himself.”<sup>226</sup> He also stated, “The zeal and relish with which Ultra-Dispensationalists gloat over and broadcast the supposed differences between Paul and Peter are, however, fully as evident as that which was displayed by the early Higher Critics in their own efforts to prove this contradiction between the

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<sup>224</sup> Fischer, *Ultra-Dispensationalism is Modernism: Exposing a Heresy Among Fundamentalists*, 7.

<sup>225</sup> Fischer, *Ultra-Dispensationalism is Modernism: Exposing a Heresy Among Fundamentalists*, 6.

<sup>226</sup> Fischer, *Ultra-Dispensationalism is Modernism: Exposing a Heresy Among Fundamentalists*, 30.

two great apostles.”<sup>227</sup>

The final book written against ultradispensationalism was *Ultra-Dispensationalism Tested by Scripture*.<sup>228</sup> Ray Standly wrote this work against Bullingerism for the purpose of showing “how dangerous this teaching really is.”<sup>229</sup> This book is not written against all the teachings of extreme ultradispensationalism; instead, Standly focused upon the extreme form concerning certain aspects related to the origin of the Church. He did this by presenting Scripture in opposition to ultradispensational doctrine, yet he did not interact with the reasons why Bullinger believed what he did concerning this issue.

It should also be mentioned that, although Charles Ryrie's book *Dispensationalism*<sup>230</sup> was not written with the sole purpose of refuting ultradispensationalism, he did devote a chapter of this book to addressing the issues of ultradispensationalism and the problems it poses to normative dispensationalism. In Robert Gromacki's review of this book, he proclaimed that Ryrie's interpretations were “Biblical” and dogmatically recommended it by

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<sup>227</sup> Fischer, *Ultra-Dispensationalism is Modernism: Exposing a Heresy Among Fundamentalists*, 31.

<sup>228</sup> Ray Standly, *Ultra-Dispensationalism Tested by Scripture* (Minneapolis: Ray Standly, 1960).

<sup>229</sup> Ray Standly, *Ultra-Dispensationalism Tested by Scripture* (Minneapolis: Ray Standly, 1960), 2.

<sup>230</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*.

declaring, “All ministers and alert laymen (both dispensational and non-dispensational) should add this book to their personal libraries.”<sup>231</sup> This high view of Ryrie’s *Dispensationalism* was echoed by the other pieces of literature in this section of the research.

Ryrie stated that his purpose for including a chapter in his book on this topic is because of the need to show its contrasts with normative dispensationalism and also to refute the idea that “ultradispensationalism is only dispensationalism carried to its logical conclusion.”<sup>232</sup> After giving the reason for addressing this topic, he immediately highlighted the similarities between normative dispensationalism and ultradispensationalism. One interesting comment that he made is that “both [dispensationalism and ultradispensationalism] interpret the bible literally.”<sup>233</sup> If this is correct, then it begs the question, “How and why then do they disagree in their ecclesiology?” This research will investigate that very question and will determine whether Haggai was correct in his assertion that the differences are interpretive, or as Ryrie appears to state, they are not interpretive differences.

After discussing the similarities between normative dispensationalism and ultradispensationalism, Ryrie discussed its origin, types, definition, and errors.

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<sup>231</sup> Robert Gromacki, "Book Reviews," *Grace Journal* 6, no. 3 (Fall 1965): 43.

<sup>232</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 197.

<sup>233</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 197.

Concerning its origin, Ryrie credited the inception of all forms of ultradispensationalism with Ethelbert W. Bullinger and then gave a biographical sketch of Bullinger's life and beliefs. During his presentation of the types of ultradispensationalism, Ryrie presented a simple comparison of the extreme and moderate views by showing points of agreement and disagreement.<sup>234</sup> Then he discussed four errors of ultradispensationalism. The first is their erroneous concept of a dispensation, the second is their erroneous exegesis of key passages, the third is their problematic understanding of "mystery," and the last is their misunderstanding of the baptism "in" the Spirit.<sup>235</sup> This section will help contribute to this research but much will be added to the findings.

#### Theses and Dissertation Written Critical of Ultradispensationalism

Only one catalogued<sup>236</sup> dissertation and two catalogued master's theses were written on the topic of ultradispensationalism.<sup>237</sup> Even though none of them were written primarily to discuss moderate ultradispensationalism, they did contain relevant material for this research. John B. Graber wrote his dissertation, "Ultra-

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<sup>234</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 199-200.

<sup>235</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 201-206.

<sup>236</sup> The term "catalogued" is used here to refer to those works of literature which have been placed in scholarly dissertation databases for reference by other institutions. These works are also available for interlibrary loan.

<sup>237</sup> Unfortunately, Frank Edward Cole's *Ultra-Dispensationalism* (a master's thesis for Columbia Bible College, 1950) was involved in a library fire and unable to be acquired for this research.



Dispensationalism,” to describe and refute ultradispensationalism.<sup>238</sup> While his work was more focused on the extreme view, it still contained applicable material for this research into the moderate form. Graber’s dissertation is a key work concerning the issues of ultradispensationalism. He is even frequently cited in the theses written concerning this issue. In Park’s thesis, he refers to much of Graber’s reasoning as “enlightening.”<sup>239</sup>

Within this work, Graber refuted various views related to moderate ultradispensationalism including: Pentecost being only Jewish; Pentecost fulfilling Joel 2; the baptism of the Holy Spirit; the re-offer of the Kingdom; baptism’s connection to sign gifts; and the mystery solely being revealed to Paul. Though he refuted these views, he did so from the standpoint of presenting the normative dispensational view as opposed to examining their interpretations to determine their validity. In fact, one interesting conclusion he drew from his research was that when it comes to the differences between dispensationalism and ultradispensationalism, “the problem does not revolve around a principle of interpretation.”<sup>240</sup> He further elaborated upon this claim, “By this assertion we mean that those who hold these ultra-dispensational views, adhere, for the most part, to all the general principles of sound hermeneutics [*sic*].”<sup>241</sup> In a way, this

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<sup>238</sup> Graber, "Ultra-Dispensationalism", 1949.

<sup>239</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 40.

<sup>240</sup> Graber, "Ultra-Dispensationalism", 1.

<sup>241</sup> Graber, "Ultra-Dispensationalism", 1.

appears to contradict his previous statement since one could question how they “adhere, for the most part” yet still have the same “principle of interpretation.” He later described these principles of hermeneutics: “The three most important of these hermeneutical [*sic*] principles are: (1) to interpret grammatically; (2) to interpret contextually, and, (3) to interpret by the comparison of Scripture with Scripture.”<sup>242</sup> While this researcher would applaud the work done by Graber toward this subject, his hypothesis will challenge Graber to determine if moderate ultradispensationalism truly adheres to these principles as he stated.

The one catalogued master’s thesis which this researcher was able to acquire was “Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism.”<sup>243</sup> Howard Park wrote this thesis on the issues pertaining to water baptism and its denial by ultradispensationalism. In a phone conversation with Park, he informed the researcher that he received much of his guidance on this topic from his personal interactions with ultradispensationalism since he was formerly a member of a moderate ultradispensational Church.<sup>244</sup>

He organized his thesis by showing the need for his research, presenting historical background to the study, declaring the present position of ultradispensationalism, and concluding by giving an exceptional evaluation of this theological system. Park’s thesis declared that the undertaking of exposing the

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<sup>242</sup> Graber, "Ultra-Dispensationalism", 1.

<sup>243</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 1960.

<sup>244</sup> Howard Park, interview by author, June 25, 2010, phone conversation.

errors of ultradispensationalism is important because if left to itself, it “would pervert dispensationalism from within.”<sup>245</sup> He believed that an issue that ultradispensationalism must confront was that “it is universally taught that baptism was practiced in the early Church and is a sacrament to be observed today.”<sup>246</sup>

Throughout the thesis, Park did an excellent job giving the views of all three primary, historic proponents of moderate ultradispensationalism. One unique observation Park made was seen in his agreement with the moderate ultradispensationalists and their belief that the baptism prophesied in Acts 1:5 concerning Acts 2 and the baptism of 1 Cor. 12:13 were not the same baptisms even though he admitted that the words are the same in the Greek. He proclaimed that the Acts 1:5 baptism was “entirely separate and distinct from that which places a believer into the body of Christ.”<sup>247</sup>

Another issue Park presented is in reference to his observations concerning the interpretive method of moderate ultradispensationalism. He stated, “The system of ultradispensationalism does not vary from the normal dispensational approach in the matters of scriptural authority or basic principles of interpretation.”<sup>248</sup> He even went as far as to state that the proponents of

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<sup>245</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 1.

<sup>246</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 2.

<sup>247</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 21.

<sup>248</sup> Park, "Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism," 27.

moderate ultradispensationalism “attempt to interpret grammatically, contextually, and by comparison of Scripture with Scripture.”<sup>249</sup> Park’s conclusion concerning its use of the basic principles of interpretation is questionable considering the fact that if they were the same and moderate ultradispensationalists adhered to them then there would be no differences between their views and the views of normative dispensationalism.

In Park’s research, he believed moderate ultradispensationalism has failed in three main areas. First, it has failed in its “concept of the nature of a dispensation.” Secondly, it failed “to observe the continuity and unity of the Scriptures.” Thirdly, it lacked a “proper recognition of the work of Christ.”<sup>250</sup> This demonstrated that the conclusions made by Park and Graber vary significantly from that which this research will explore.

#### Articles Written Critical of Ultradispensationalism

Now that the researcher has reviewed the literature written critical of ultradispensationalism in the form of books, theses and dissertations, this section will review various articles written against it. In *Light and Liberty*, William Hoste wrote a number of articles against ultradispensationalism entitled “Bullingerism or Ultra-Dispensationalism Exposed” (later compiled and published as a book).<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Park, “Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism,” 27.

<sup>250</sup> Park, “Ritual Baptism in Ultradispensationalism,” 29-30.

<sup>251</sup> William Hoste, *Bullingerism or Ultra-Dispensationalism Exposed* (Fort Dodge, IO: Walterick Print Co, 1950).

Particularly relevant to this research was Hoste's treatment of the ultradispensational view of water baptism. Since both moderate and extreme ultradispensationalists do not believe that water baptism is applicable for the Church today, this chapter provided great insight into the evidence contrary to such a view.

Hoste presented two primary arguments against ultradispensationalism which were relevant to this research. The first pertained to the historic fact of water baptism. To combat the ultradispensational claim that the practice of water baptism was unscriptural, Hoste stated, "It is difficult to believe that what the universal Church has practiced: Fathers, Martyrs, Reformers and saints of the whole Christian era, should prove on the authority of Dr. Bullinger and his friends a universal mistake."<sup>252</sup> This showed an appeal on his part to Church history as a means of evaluating the truthfulness of ultradispensationalism.

The second argument made in these articles against ultradispensationalism dealt with Paul's baptizing. In response to the ultradispensational belief that Paul's lack of a command for baptism in his writings was evidence against it as being applicable today, Hoste stated, "Much is made as to the silence as to baptisms in chapters 13 and 14 but the argument *ex silentio* is notoriously unsafe. Paul must have escaped so far the influence of the twelve (!). Why do we find him baptizing in chapters 16, 18 and 19?"<sup>253</sup> This

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<sup>252</sup> Hoste, *Bullingerism or Ultra-Dispensationalism Exposed*, 29.

<sup>253</sup> Hoste, *Bullingerism or Ultra-Dispensationalism Exposed*, ?.

showed that he observed that a questionable practice of ultradispensationalism was arguing from the silence of a passage instead of what it said.

Also, concerning the passage in which ultradispensationalism claimed Paul condemned baptism, Hoste posited, “Buy why? Because he undervalued baptism? No, but ‘lest any should say that he had baptized in his own name,’ and then he adds the words that these men cling to, as a drowning man to a straw; ‘For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.’”<sup>254</sup>

Not only did Hoste publish articles against ultradispensationalism, but Ernest Pickering did as well in the *Central Conservative Baptist Quarterly* titled “Distinctive Teachings of Ultra-Dispensationalism.” Pickering did a thorough job developing the origin of ultradispensationalism, forms of ultradispensationalism, and ecclesiological teachings of ultradispensationalism. He also did well in his presentation of what he believed to be the errors of the ecclesiological beliefs of ultradispensationalism immediately after presenting their views.

Like other writers against ultradispensationalism, Pickering began by declaring the soundness of ultradispensationalism in some areas of doctrine, but focused primarily upon its ecclesiological problems. He stated, “It is chiefly in the area of ecclesiology, the doctrine of the Church, where their errors appear, and these errors have such an impact upon the teaching and practice of the New Testament faith that careful attention must be given to them.”<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Hoste, *Bullingerism or Ultra-Dispensationalism Exposed*, ?.

<sup>255</sup> Pickering, "Distinctive Teachings of Ultra-Dispensationalism," 40.

He rebuked ultradispensationalism for promoting salvation by anything other than faith and declared, "To suggest, furthermore, that salvation in any dispensation was ever dependent upon water baptism (as do ultradispensationalists) is to undermine the doctrine of salvation by grace."<sup>256</sup> Then, in response to the accusations of ultradispensationalism that Acts 2:38 and Mark 16:16 teach salvation by baptism, Pickering briefly attempted to resolve this by appealing to the grammatical construction of the passage.<sup>257</sup>

He asked a valid question concerning water baptism, "If water baptism had no relationship to the 'Pauline' gospel of grace, then why did the great exponent of grace baptize? If the baptism of John the Baptist and the baptism of the apostles were the same, why did Paul instruct the believers at Ephesus to be baptized (Acts 19:1-5)?"<sup>258</sup> He then concluded,

If he baptized on his own authority, he was disobedient indeed. If he baptized upon the authority of the Great Commission, then he was ministering in obedience to the Great Commission and was not the unique exponent of a "gospel of grace" which excludes water baptism. The fact is evident that Paul baptized because Christ commanded His apostles to baptize their converts, and Paul was a bona-fide and obedient apostle."<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Pickering, "Distinctive Teachings of Ultra-Dispensationalism," 40.

<sup>257</sup> Pickering, "Distinctive Teachings of Ultra-Dispensationalism," 40.

<sup>258</sup> Pickering, "Distinctive Teachings of Ultra-Dispensationalism," 42.

<sup>259</sup> Pickering, "Distinctive Teachings of Ultra-Dispensationalism," 42.

## Conclusions

The review of the various writings of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning their ecclesiological views of the inception of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church along with the literature written critical of ultradispensationalism cultivated a few conclusions that demonstrate the need and uniqueness of this research. The first unique aspect of this research pertains to its method. While many works of literature were written in response of ultradispensationalism in its various forms, none of them did so strictly from a hermeneutical standpoint. Instead, each major work of literature written in opposition to ultradispensationalism wrote from the standpoint of normative dispensationalism and the ecclesiological interpretations of it. In fact, of all the writers critical of ultradispensationalism, only Haggai stated that it was an interpretive issue; yet he only focused upon the issue of water baptism and did so from the standpoint of presenting the veracity of the normative dispensational view. This research will use the interpretive principles which develop a dispensational theology, the grammatical-historical method, in order to determine the validity or inaccuracies of moderate ultradispensationalism.<sup>260</sup> This will also help determine if Haggai's assumptions were correct.

The second unique aspect of this research pertains to its focus. As was already revealed, only one major work of literature was written solely against

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<sup>260</sup> In fact, only Haggai declared that the difference in interpretations between moderate ultradispensationalism and normative dispensationalism is found in their hermeneutic. Neither Graber, Park, nor Ryrie conceded this.



moderate ultradispensationalism: Haggai's *O'Hairism Under the Searchlight of the Word*. In spite of the fact that this book was written against the oldest, primary, historic proponent of moderate ultradispensationalism, O'Hair; it only focused upon his views concerning baptism and not the origin of the Church and the commission of the Church.<sup>261</sup> This research will focus upon the ecclesiological doctrines of moderate ultradispensationalism concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church (something that has yet to be done). These two aspects of this research not only help demonstrate the uniqueness of this research but also its need to be performed.

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<sup>261</sup> It should be noted that even though Haggai's book focuses upon the moderate ultradispensational view concerning baptism, it does not do so from the aspect of its hermeneutic. Instead, it refutes this view from the normative dispensational view. This again shows the uniqueness of this research.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF RESEARCH

The review of literature pertinent to this research revealed that, while some individuals' writings did address the ecclesiological views of moderate ultradispensationalism, none employed a method for analyzing and evaluating its actual interpretations. Since "hermeneutics" is the "the science and art of interpretation,"<sup>1</sup> then this chapter will utilize the principles of that science as the method in order to propose a method design, or criteria, for evaluating the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the origin of the Church, baptism, and the commission of the Church. The method design will be based on the principles of the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the "Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics" hereafter known as the CSBH. These principles will be presented as "questions of inquiry" for the evaluation of the data presented concerning O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's interpretations.

As one noted in the "Clarification of Terms" section in Chapter One, a central tenet of all definitions and explanations of hermeneutics is the *principles* which underlie them. Chafer defined "hermeneutics" as "the science of interpretation...which includes the recognition of the *principles* upon which a true

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<sup>1</sup> Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 19.

analysis must proceed.”<sup>2</sup> Ramm declared, “Hermeneutics is a science in that it can determine certain *principles* for discovering the meaning of a document.”<sup>3</sup>

A.A. Hodge identified “hermeneutics” as “the scientific determination of the *principles* and rules of Biblical Interpretation.”<sup>4</sup> Zuck stated the following about “hermeneutics”: “It is the science (*principles*) and art (task) by which the meaning of the biblical text is determined.”<sup>5</sup> Ryrie explained that “hermeneutics” is “the science that furnishes the *principles* of interpretation” and “the study of the *principles* of interpretation.”<sup>6</sup> Finally, Sinclair B. Ferguson, David Wright, and J.I. Packer defined “hermeneutics” as “the study of rules or *principles* for the interpretation of particular texts.”<sup>7</sup>

From these definitions it is thereby determined that each hermeneutical methodology is governed by the principles upon which it interprets a body of text. These principles are what will allow the method design to have an ordered system through which the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker can be

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<sup>2</sup> Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:115.

<sup>3</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 11; emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> A.A Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 21; emphasis added.

<sup>5</sup> Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 19; emphasis added.

<sup>6</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 79, 125; emphasis added.

<sup>7</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer, eds., *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 293; emphasis added.

analyzed. They will therefore serve as the parameters for analysis and evaluation.

### **Background to the Method Design**

Before one delves into exactly what the principles of the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH entail, he needs to understand a brief background pertaining to each of them.

#### **The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics**

On October 26-28, 1978, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy<sup>8</sup> (ICBI) met in Chicago “for the purpose of affirming afresh the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, making clear the understanding of it and warning against its denial.”<sup>9</sup> This meeting became known as Summit I. As Norman Geisler explained, “The work of Summit I had hardly been completed when it became evident that there was yet another major task to be tackled. While we recognize that belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is basic to maintaining its authority, the values of that commitment are only as real as one's understanding of the meaning of Scripture. Thus, the need for Summit II.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The ICBI was instituted in 1977 for the purpose of explaining and protecting the doctrine of biblical inerrancy.

<sup>9</sup> Norman L. Geisler, “Explaining Hermeneutics: A Commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics Articles of Affirmation and Denial,” in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, eds. E. Radmacher and R. Preuse (Oakland, CA: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1983), 889.

<sup>10</sup> Geisler, “Explaining Hermeneutics: A Commentary on the Chicago

This next summit also took place in Chicago, but four years later on November 10-13, 1982, the summit was recalled in order “to discuss guidelines for principles of interpreting the Bible.”<sup>11</sup> From this meeting emerged twenty-five articles that presented affirmations and denials of issues pertaining to a biblical hermeneutic.<sup>12</sup> Geisler declared that the principles of this summit “do not claim completeness or systematic treatment of the entire subject, but these affirmations and denials represent a consensus of the approximately one hundred participants and observers gathered at this conference.”<sup>13</sup> While not all of the articles of the CSBH will be utilized for this research, many of the principles will serve as foundational to the method of evaluation.<sup>14</sup>

#### The Grammatical-Historical Method of Hermeneutics

One of the articles of the CSBH transitions perfectly into this next essential part of the methodology of this research by proclaiming, “We affirm the necessity of

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Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics Articles of Affirmation and Denial,” 889.

<sup>11</sup> Geisler, “Explaining Hermeneutics: A Commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics Articles of Affirmation and Denial,” 889.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix E for a full citation of the “Articles of Affirmation and Denials” of the *Chicago Statement of Biblical Hermeneutics*.

<sup>13</sup> Geisler “Explaining Hermeneutics: A Commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics Articles of Affirmation and Denial,” 889.

<sup>14</sup> A final summit of the ICBI was convened in Chicago on December 10-13, 1986 in order to adopt principles pertaining to the application of Scripture. The document that emerged from this meeting was the “Chicago Statement on Biblical Application.”

interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text.”<sup>15</sup> The “Clarification of Terms” section in Chapter One defined the “grammatical-historical hermeneutic” as the principles of interpretation which, according to its grammatical construction and context and historical background, allow for the meaning of the Scripture to be taken as normally and plainly as possible thereby permitting the Scripture to interpret itself.

As the aforementioned tenet of CSBH stated, the grammatical-historical method of interpretation is commonly referred to as the literal hermeneutic. One author, who does not adhere to this hermeneutic yet produced a valid explanation of it, explicated that the term “literal” “comes from the Latin *litera* meaning ‘letter’”<sup>16</sup> therefore this method gives “attention to the *litera* or to the letters and words which are being used.”<sup>17</sup> Roy Zuck declared that this method “fully honors the verbal inspiration of Scripture.”<sup>18</sup>

Three primary reasons are given in support of the grammatical-historical

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<sup>15</sup> See Appendix E, Article XV.

<sup>16</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 49.

<sup>17</sup> Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 49.

<sup>18</sup> Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 99.

method: biblical, logical, and philosophical. Concerning the biblical support of the grammatical-historical method, J.P. Lange stated, “The prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the first coming of Christ—His birth, His rearing, His ministry, His death, His resurrection—were all fulfilled literally. There is no non-literal fulfillment of these prophecies in the New Testament. This argues strongly for the literal method.”<sup>19</sup> Charles Ryrie presented the logical proof for the grammatical-historical method by positing, “If one does not use the plain, normal, or literal method of interpretation all objectivity is lost. What check would there be on the variety of interpretations which man's imagination could produce if there were not an objective standard which the literal principle provides?”<sup>20</sup> He also argued for the philosophical reason for the grammatical-historical method by declaring that “the purpose of language itself seems to require a literal interpretation. Language was given by God for the purpose of being able to communicate with man.”<sup>21</sup> These three reasons lend much support for the grammatical-historical method as the proper method of interpreting the Scriptures.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Revelation*, 98.

<sup>20</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 88.

<sup>21</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 88.

<sup>22</sup> One accusation that has been leveled against the literal hermeneutic is that it denies the use of figurative expressions in the Bible. Paul Enns combated this by stating that “literal” refers “to interpretive method, not to the kind of language used in the interpreted literature.” Therefore he concluded, “Literal interpretation recognizes both literal and figurative language.” See Enns, *The*

Milton Terry penned that the title “grammatical-historical” “is believed to have originated with Karl A. G. Keil.”<sup>23</sup> While the exact title may be relatively current, its methodology has deep-rooted usage and had resurgence during the Reformation. Zuck called the reemphasis of this method “the hallmark of the Reformation.”<sup>24</sup> In his commentary on this period of Church history, he observed,

[The grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture] was in direct opposition to the approach to the Bible that had been in vogue for hundreds of years — the view that ignored the normal meaning of words in their grammatical sense and let words and sentences mean whatever the readers wanted them to mean.

In the Middle Ages words, phrases, and sentences in the Bible had taken on multiple meanings, losing all sense of objectivity. How, then, the Reformers asked, could the Bible be a clear revelation from God?<sup>25</sup>

The answer to this question inevitably became the grammatical-historical method.

R. C. Sproul credited the emphasis on this method of interpretation to Martin Luther’s second rule of hermeneutics, *sensus literalis*, which proclaimed that the Bible should be interpreted in a literal sense which is a synonym for grammatical-historical.<sup>26</sup> This is done by interpreting the text according to the principles of the grammatical-historical method.

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*Moody Handbook of Theology*, 520. This is one reason why, though synonymous with “literal,” the term grammatical-historical will be used instead.

<sup>23</sup> Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 203.

<sup>24</sup> Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 98.

<sup>25</sup> Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 98.

<sup>26</sup> Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 48.



This method of interpretation is even utilized by the judicial branch of the United States government. Sproul observed that the Supreme Court “theoretically functions as the supreme board of hermeneutics for our land” and “one of its primary tasks is to interpret the Constitution of the United States.”<sup>27</sup> The hermeneutical method in which the Supreme Court employs in its interpretation of this foundational document is the grammatical-historical hermeneutic. Like the governing law interpreters of this land, the grammatical-historical method of interpretation will be employed by this research in order to evaluate the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker.

### **Principles of the Method Design**

From the “Clarification of Terms” section in Chapter One of this research, it was determined that the very definition of a hermeneutical system is determined by the principles employed by that hermeneutic. For this research, the principles used to evaluate the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker will be based upon the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH.

Various writers have proposed essential principles to interpreting the Bible grammatically-historically, yet each appeared to be lacking when taken solitarily. Rollin Thomas Chafer presented four principles which he called “rules,” for interpreting Scripture: (1) grammatically; (2) contextually; (3) literary genre; and

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<sup>27</sup> Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 45-46.

(4) Scripturally.<sup>28</sup> John Walvoord offered five principles of the grammatical-historical method of hermeneutics: (1) word understanding; (2) contextually; (3) historically; (4) grammatically; and (5) figurative expressions.<sup>29</sup> William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard also submitted five principles for interpreting grammatically-historically: (1) contextually; (2) historically; (3) word meanings, (4) grammatical relationships; and (5) literary genre.<sup>30</sup>

Five fundamental principles can be developed from the CSBH which are used as the foundation for the method of this research. They are as follows: (1) interpreting Scripture in light of its context; (2) interpreting Scripture in light of other Scripture; (3) interpreting Scripture in light of its grammatical construction; (4) interpreting Scripture in light of its historical background; and (5) interpreting Scripture in light of its literary genre. The following sections will present these principles, give an explanation of them, and provide examples of how these principles are used.

### Context

The first principle of the CSBH and the grammatical-historical method which will

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<sup>28</sup> Rolin Thomas Chafer, "Four General Rules of Interpretation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 94, no. 376 (October 1937): 476-79.

<sup>29</sup> John F. Walvoord, "Basic Considerations in Interpreting Prophecy," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139, no. 553 (January 1982): 8.

<sup>30</sup> William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, & Robert L. Hubbard, Jr, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 214.

be examined is the interpretation of a passage in light of its context. The word *context* comes from the Latin words *con*, meaning “together,” and *textus*, meaning “woven.”<sup>31</sup> Therefore this word “denotes something that is woven together, and, applied to a written document, it means the connection of thought supposed to run through every passage which constitutes by itself a whole.”<sup>32</sup> Floyd Barackman simply defined “context” as “that which precedes and/or which follows the text to be interpreted.”<sup>33</sup> A. Berkeley Mickelsen observed that interpreting a passage according to its context is vital because it “forces the interpreter to examine the entire line of thought of the writer.”<sup>34</sup> Barackman further illustrated that interpreting a passage as such “gives meaning to a piece of a jig-saw puzzle...apart from its context a text might mean anything that one might imagine.”<sup>35</sup> This illustration demonstrates the need for the interpretation of passages of text according to its context so that an accurate portrayal of a writing can be ascertained.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 210.

<sup>32</sup> Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 210.

<sup>33</sup> Floyd H. Barackman, *How to Interpret the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989), 23.

<sup>34</sup> A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 100.

<sup>35</sup> Barackman, *How to Interpret the Bible*, 24.

<sup>36</sup> Zuck gives three reasons why he deemed the contextual interpretation as crucial. “First, words, phrases, and clauses may have multiple meanings, as already discussed, and examining how they are used in a given context can help

Several examples could be given that illustrate the necessity of the contextual interpretation of a text. A humorous example would be that of an individual who opened his Bible to Matt. 27:5 and discovered that Judas hanged himself; then he went to Luke 10:37 and read to “go and do thou likewise.” Ignoring the context of these two passages would be fatal. A more practical example would be that of Psalm 14. Ignoring the context of verse 1, an individual could conclude that “there is no God.” But once the portion of this verse is taken in light of its immediate context, it is determined that the “fool” says that “there is no God.”

There are three primary parts of the context that each interpreter should consider in determining the meaning of a text.<sup>37</sup> The first is the *immediate context* of the passage. This category of *context* is defined as “the material presented immediately before and after the passage under study.”<sup>38</sup> As seen in Psalm 14, the immediate context of the clause “there is no God” is the declaration that “the fool has said in his heart.” Taken without its immediate context, this verse could be interpreted as an atheistic proclamation, but within its immediate context, it is instead understood as a statement of observation.

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determine which of several meanings is more likely. Second, thoughts are usually expressed by a series of words or sentences, that is, in association, not isolation. Third, false interpretations often arise from ignoring the context” (See Zuck, BBI, 106).

<sup>37</sup> Another part is the context of the Bible, but this will be considered in another principle of this method.

<sup>38</sup> Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 220.

Much emphasis has been placed on the importance of interpreting a passage in accordance to its immediate context. Klein considered this to be the “most important control over the meaning of a specific passage”<sup>39</sup> and in similar fashion, Robertson McQuilkin viewed it as “the most important guideline for determining the meaning of a passage.”<sup>40</sup>

After the *immediate context*, the second category of a text’s *context* is the *larger context* of the passage. Terry called this the “remote context” of a passage and defined it as “that which is less closely connected, and may embrace a whole paragraph or section.”<sup>41</sup> The *larger context* of Psalm 14 is God’s view of the wickedness of man upon the earth. When this is taken into account, the fact that one would say that “there is no God” is a further testimony to how evil man can become. This is derived by taking the text’s larger context into account.

The third category of a *context* is the *entire context* of the book. This is also known as the “scope” or “literary context” of a text. It is defined as “the end or purpose which that writer has in view.”<sup>42</sup> Terry explained that “a whole section may depend, for its proper exposition, upon our understanding the scope and

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<sup>39</sup> Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 220.

<sup>40</sup> Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1992), 161.

<sup>41</sup> Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 210.

<sup>42</sup> Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 210.

plan of the writer's argument."<sup>43</sup> Klein supported this by declaring, "Ultimately, the whole book in which a passage appears is its controlling context."<sup>44</sup> He further explained that in order to understand a passage properly, one must "understand it in terms of the whole book in which it occurs."<sup>45</sup> Referring to Psalm 14, despite the depravity to which man is susceptible even to the point of attacking God's very existence, the theme of the book of Psalms which is praise, gives comfort to its readers.

Mickelsen concluded that by interpreting a passage in light of its context; immediate, larger, and entire; "the interpreter has greater opportunity to see what the writer was seeking to convey to his original readers."<sup>46</sup> This is the reason for the first principle of the grammatical-historical method of interpretation and the CSBH.

### Scripture with Scripture

The second principle of the CSBH and the grammatical-historical method is that a passage should be interpreted in light of other Scripture. This could be considered another form of context, but it is notable enough to beckon its own special section. The seventeenth article of the CSBH states, "We affirm the unity,

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<sup>43</sup> Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 219.

<sup>44</sup> Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 214.

<sup>45</sup> Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 223.

<sup>46</sup> Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, 104.

harmony and consistency of Scripture and declare that it is its own best interpreter.”<sup>47</sup> As John Phillips explained, “Because truth has been revealed progressively, no one passage of Scripture can be considered in isolation from other passages related to it.”<sup>48</sup> This is to say that all passages should be interpreted in light of the entire body of Scripture. The CSBH further supported this by affirming that “the Bible's own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating from, but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text.”<sup>49</sup>

This principle is said to have received its most notable attention during the Reformation. Ramm explained, “The Reformers rejected the claim of the Roman Catholic Church that it had the gift of grace and illumination to know what the Holy Scripture taught. In place of an appeal to the teaching magisterium of the Church, the Reformers proclaimed that Scripture interprets Scripture.”<sup>50</sup> The Reformers who broke away from the interpretive issues of Catholicism proclaimed the slogan *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone). This was also called “the analogy of faith.”<sup>51</sup> Thomas Horne defined this as meaning “the constant and

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<sup>47</sup> See Appendix E, Article XVII.

<sup>48</sup> John Phillips, *Bible Explorer's Guide: How to Understand and Interpret the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 71.

<sup>49</sup> See Appendix E, Article XVIII.

<sup>50</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 104-05.

<sup>51</sup> Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 12.

perpetual harmony of Scripture in the fundamental points of faith and practice deduced from those passages in which they were discussed by the inspired penmen either directly or expressly, and in clear, plain, and intelligible language."<sup>52</sup> Simply put, this means that the Bible is the best interpreter of itself.

This principle is so foundational to interpretation because “no part of Scripture can be interpreted in such a way as to render it in conflict with what is clearly taught elsewhere in Scripture.”<sup>53</sup> Klein provided an excellent explanation of this when he stated, “The Bible possesses an overall unity despite its diversity of human authors...the correct meaning of every portion of Scripture will be *consistent* with the rest of the teaching of the Bible on that subject. One passage will not contradict the clear teaching of the rest of the Bible on that subject.”<sup>54</sup> This is why the Bible is to be not only considered instrumental in the interpretation of itself, but it is also a reliable interpreter of itself.

An illustration of this principle can be seen by observing Matt. 26:51-52. In this text of Scripture, it is reported that an unknown companion of Jesus drew his sword and cut off the ear of an unknown servant of the high priest. If this passage of Scripture is taken by itself, one would have far from enough

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas Hartwell Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), 342.

<sup>53</sup> Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 46-47.

<sup>54</sup> Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 225-26.



information to ascertain who drew the sword and especially whose ear was cut off. But by applying this principle of the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH, one is compelled to look to other portions of Scripture which would address this situation. Upon this investigation, it would then be discovered that according to John 18:10, not only is the name of Jesus' companion revealed, to be Peter, but also the identity of the high priest's servant who was Malcus. This illustration supports Ramm's claim that "what is said in one part of Scripture may illuminate what is said in another part of Scripture."<sup>55</sup> This allows the Scripture to interpret itself.

#### Grammatical Considerations

The fifteenth article of the CSBH declares that the Bible should be interpreted grammatically and historically. As the first part of the grammatical-historical method implies, each passage of Scripture should be interpreted in light of its grammatical considerations.<sup>56</sup> When speaking of the principle of interpreting the Scripture grammatically, Zuck concluded that this refers to two primary things: first, the grammatical construction of a passage; and second, the meaning of words in a passage.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 140.

<sup>56</sup> Despite the title being "grammatical-historical," this method should not be deemed as restrictive to only the grammatical and historical considerations of a text. Other aspects, which could be considered as subcategories of grammatical or historical or separate from them, are still utilized by this method.

<sup>57</sup> Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 100.

## Grammatical Construction

Barackman concluded that interpreting a passage in light of its grammatical construction “is absolutely necessary for accurate biblical interpretation.”<sup>58</sup> One way this principle helps in the arrival of a grammatical-historical hermeneutic is that it “determines whether words are to be taken as questions (interrogative), commands (imperative) or declarative (indicative).”<sup>59</sup> Other ways this method is implemented are by examining aspects such as pronoun/antecedent agreement, subject/verb agreement, and countless other principles. While this section will not give an extensive list of grammatical rules for construction, the next chapter will present various ones as they relate to the interpretations of moderate ultradispensationalism.

An example of this can be seen in the interpretation of Eph. 2:8. This passage declares, τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ τῆς<sup>60</sup> πίστεως, καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν· θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον (For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God). The interpretation of this passage has brought about much debate. Some have asserted that the word δῶρον (gift) refers back to the πίστεως (faith) mentioned previously. The issue with this view is that when viewed in light of its grammatical construction, it is determined that

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<sup>58</sup> Barackman, *How to Interpret the Bible*, 12.

<sup>59</sup> Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 56.

<sup>60</sup> Variant with NA/UBS: τῆς (the) ♦ - (n/a).

in the Greek, the words δῶρον and πίστει only agree in number but not case and gender. δῶρον appears in the nominative, neuter, singular form while πίστει appears in the genitive, feminine, singular form. Therefore, interpreting the πίστει as the antecedent of δῶρον violates the grammatical construction of the passage since the two words do not agree in case and gender.

### **Word Meanings**

Not only does the aspect of the grammatical construction of a passage aid in the arrival of the grammatical-historical hermeneutic, but the understanding of word meanings does as well. Hermeneutically speaking, “words” have been defined as “the basic building blocks for understanding the meaning of any passage,”<sup>61</sup> or “the units of thought in most of our thinking and writing; they are the bricks of our conceptual formulation,”<sup>62</sup> and even more simply as “a basic unit of language that has meaning.”<sup>63</sup>

Concerning the meaning of words in a text, the CSBH declares that “the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, definite and fixed.”<sup>64</sup> This is to say that each word has but one meaning in each passage even though this does not mean that every word has the same meaning in other contexts. McQuilkin

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<sup>61</sup> McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible*, 109.

<sup>62</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 128.

<sup>63</sup> Barackman, *How to Interpret the Bible*, 11.

<sup>64</sup> See Appendix E, Article VII.

supported this in his declaration that words “seldom have a precise meaning that is identical in all contexts. Rather, they have a range of meaning, so that in one context an emphasis, or even a meaning, differs from that intended by the use of that same word in a different context.”<sup>65</sup>

One might inquire as to why the meaning of words is so vital in interpreting Scripture. Zuck proclaimed that in order “to determine God's thoughts we need to study His words and how they are associated in sentences. If we neglect the meanings of words and how they are used, we have no way of knowing whose interpretations are correct.”<sup>66</sup> Rollin Chafer even felt so adamant about this principle that he went so far as to charge, “No other fundamental principle related to hermeneutics is more often violated than this one by ignoring the qualifying words chosen by the Holy Spirit to distinguish the use of a word in varying contexts.”<sup>67</sup> These stirring assertions beg the use of this principle in developing one's interpretation of a passage.

Not only is the aspect of the reason why this principle of the grammatical-historical method is important, but how it is implemented is as well.<sup>68</sup> Ramm

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<sup>65</sup> McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible*, 109.

<sup>66</sup> Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 99.

<sup>67</sup> Rollin Thomas Chafer, "Some Axioms of General Hermeneutics," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 93, no. 371 (July 1936): 333.

<sup>68</sup> While this may seem elementary, it should still be stated that when referencing the meaning of words, the researcher is referring to their usage in the original languages of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

presented three primary ways of using this method in the determination of word meanings: etymologically; comparatively; and culturally.<sup>69</sup>

“Etymology” is “the study of the roots or primitive forms from which words are derived.”<sup>70</sup> By using this principle, Ramm explained that this means “we attempt to understand the word by the way it is formed.”<sup>71</sup> An example of this is observed in the translation of οἰκονομία (dispensation). As the “Clarification of Terms” section of Chapter One explained, this word is best understood when explained etymologically. οἰκονομία is derived from the combination of two root Greek words: οἶκος meaning “house”<sup>72</sup> and νόμος meaning, “law.”<sup>73</sup> When understood according to this principle, one can determine that οἰκονομία literally means “rules of a house.”

An investigation of a word’s meaning comparatively means determining the use of a word based upon its various usages. As Robert Traina encouraged, this can be done by using both “Biblical and extra-Biblical writings.”<sup>74</sup> An example of this can be seen by the use of the phrases “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of

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<sup>69</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 129-135.

<sup>70</sup> Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, 120.

<sup>71</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 129.

<sup>72</sup> Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 441.

<sup>73</sup> Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 427.

<sup>74</sup> Robert A. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 140.

heaven” in the gospels. Upon first glance, one might conclude that these two terms are two separate spheres of rulership, but when the comparative principle of word meaning is applied, it is determined that the two phrases are actually synonymous. One way this is seen is by comparing Matt. 13:11 with Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:10. While Jesus is speaking to His disciples, Matthew recorded that Jesus explained the use of parables to them by stating that the secrets of the ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (kingdom of heaven) were only revealed to them. When this passage is compared to Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:10, it is observed that while recording the same instance, they instead use the phrase ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (kingdom of God). This comparative analysis reveals that these are not two separate realms but one in the same.

A final method of determining the meaning of a word in order to arrive at a proper interpretation is culturally. Klein explained, “Word meanings do not remain fixed: they change over time. New meanings develop through usage, and old ones become obsolete.”<sup>75</sup> In order to take this into account properly, one must determine the meaning of a word when it was originally written and how the original readers would have understood it.

Ramm used the example of the Greek word οἶκος (house) in his explanation of this principle. He said, “We may look at such a Greek word as oikos and say that that it is the word for house, or the word oikia and say it is the

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<sup>75</sup> Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 224.

word for household. However, how we today understand a house, and how a house or household was understood in the first Christian century, may be different.”<sup>76</sup> This can help shed light upon passages such as Matthew 9 and Mark 2 where it is recorded that four friends of a paralytic went so far as to remove a roof in order to get their friend to Jesus. In today’s culture one would inevitably picture these four men demolishing shingles, plywood, and drywall to accomplish this feat, but when this word is interpreted culturally, it is discovered that houses during this time and in this culture were much different than today’s. The men merely rolled up the awning which typically covered the center of a house during the rainy season or lifted up a square tile in the roof, depending on which type of house this was, and then they let their friend down. Therefore, no harm was done to the owner’s property in order to see this man healed.

When the etymology, comparison, and cultural aspects in determining the meaning of a word still leave room for various interpretations, one must then refer to the context of the passage in order to receive illumination. When there are various possibilities in word meanings, Henry Virkler stated the context as “the best source of data”<sup>77</sup> which can be utilized.<sup>78</sup> McQuilkin actually considered this

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<sup>76</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 133.

<sup>77</sup> Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 97.

<sup>78</sup> Zuck presented six other observations of this principle of the grammatical method of interpretation: “1. A word does not usually mean what it originally meant, nor is its meaning often determined by its component parts. 2. The meanings of words in English should not be read back into the biblical

"the most important element in a word study."<sup>79</sup>

### Historical Background

As the second part of the title "grammatical-historical" implies, each passage of Scripture should be interpreted in light of its historical background. H.H. Rowley proclaimed, "A religion which is thus rooted and grounded in history cannot ignore history."<sup>80</sup> The goal of determining the historical features of a text as Klein stated is "to comprehend, the historical setting and cultural features of the specific passage as clearly as possible."<sup>81</sup>

Various factors are involved in the ascertaining of historical information pertinent in the interpretation of a text. Terry included the author of the text, when it was written, the place of its writing, circumstances of the writing, and the addresses of the writing in the gathering of historical information for interpreting a passage of Scripture.<sup>82</sup> Traina added the "contemporary literature, customs, and

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meanings. 3. The same word may have different meanings in its various occurrences in the Bible. 4. Each word or phrase normally has only one meaning, which is indicated by its usage in the sentence and/or one of several contexts. 5. The same word in the Bible does not always mean the same thing. 6. A word should not be given all its shades of meaning in any one occurrence." See Zuck, *Basics of Bible Interpretation*, 111.

<sup>79</sup> McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible*, 153.

<sup>80</sup> H.H. Rowley, "The Relevance of Biblical Interpretation," *Interpretation* 1, no. 1 (January 1947): 8.

<sup>81</sup> Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 240.

<sup>82</sup> Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 231.



beliefs; the social, political, geographical, and spiritual environment”<sup>83</sup> as other factors to be considered part of the background information of a passage.

An additional feature of the historical background of a passage is its cultural aspects. Culture involves “the ways, methods, manners, tools, institutions, and literary productions of any people.”<sup>84</sup> Ramm explained that anthropologically, culture is divided into two categories: material culture and social culture.<sup>85</sup> He stated that material culture refers to “tools, objects, dwellings, weapons, garments, and so forth — that the given people use in the maintenance of its life.”<sup>86</sup> He then clarified that social culture “refers to all the customs, practices, rites, and so forth, that a society observes in the societal on-going of the people.”<sup>87</sup> Knowledge of these features gives aid in ascertaining the cultural background of a passage and thereby assists in the interpretation thereof.

An example of this principle of the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH is illustrated by examining 1 Thess. 5:26. In this passage, Paul instructs his readers to greet each other with ἀφιλήματι ἁγίῳ (holy kiss). This was and still is in some places, a custom of Paul’s day that signified a greeting. The question

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<sup>83</sup> Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*, 153.

<sup>84</sup> Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, 160.

<sup>85</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 155-56.

<sup>86</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 155.

<sup>87</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 156.

concerning this verse is whether or not this should be done today by Christians?

As Barackman explained,

While the cultural means of expressing Christian greeting varies like shaking hands or hugging, the principle remains that we are to greet one another in a suitable, holy way. The practice of the holy kiss is cultural; Christian greetings are transcultural. The adjective “holy” implies that this greeting, with its purity, warmth, and sincerity, is something that is reserved especially for others of like faith.<sup>88</sup>

This understanding of the texts helps one avoid the improper interpretation of this passage as meaning that Christians are instructed to kiss each other as a greeting.<sup>89</sup>

### Literary Genre

The final principle of the CSBH and the grammatical-historical method of

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<sup>88</sup> Barackman, *How to Interpret the Bible*, 37.

<sup>89</sup> Mickelson presented eight other principles which aid in the development of a proper historical sketch of a text: “1. Know the people or peoples who are involved in the section being interpreted. 2. Determine what period is the most likely temporal setting for the materials to be interpreted. Remember that it is more important to know the historical situation than the precise historical date. 3. Check the place or places which provide the geographical setting. 4. Note the customs, objects of material culture, or social-religious relationships that are evident in the narrative or that lie behind the narrative. 5. Recognize how the history which took place before the times of the original hearers or readers influenced their responses and attitudes. 6. Examine the forces that brought about stability or instability of the economy. 7. See how the narrative transcends its surroundings. Some scholars who are well trained in history and culture spend most of their time showing similarities between the biblical narrative and the surrounding history and culture. The differences are important too. 8. Be aware of the similarities and differences between the historical-cultural elements surrounding the original writer and his readers and the historical-cultural elements surrounding the interpreter. We must recognize these similarities and differences if we are to convey the message to our contemporaries.” See, Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, 176.

hermeneutics is interpreting a passage in light of its literary genre. The CSBH affirms that “awareness of the literary categories, formal and stylistic, of the various parts of Scripture is essential for proper exegesis, and hence we value genre criticism as one of the many disciplines of biblical study.”<sup>90</sup> The term “genre” is a French word that is derived from the Latin *genus* which means “way, style, or fashion”<sup>91</sup> and “refers to the category or the kind of writing characterized by a particular form(s) and/or content.”<sup>92</sup>

The interpretation of a passage in accordance to its genre “involves the study of such things as literary forms, figures of speech and style.”<sup>93</sup> He further demonstrated that this principle is employed in the interpretation of contemporary writings as well when he stated, “We distinguish between lyric poetry and legal briefs, between newspaper accounts of current events and epic poems. We distinguish between the style of historical narratives and sermons, between realistic graphic description and hyperbole.”<sup>94</sup> This method is not only needed in the interpretation of modern texts, but also the Holy Writ.

There are a number of types of genre which have bearing upon the

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<sup>90</sup> See Appendix E, Article XIII.

<sup>91</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 142.

<sup>92</sup> Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 126.

<sup>93</sup> Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 49.

<sup>94</sup> Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 49.

interpretation of a text. Some of these include historical narratives (e.g. Acts),<sup>95</sup> prophetic (e.g. Revelation),<sup>96</sup> poetry (e.g. Psalms),<sup>97</sup> wisdom sayings (e.g.

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<sup>95</sup> Zuck presented six types of narratives: "a. Tragedy. A tragedy is a story of the decline of a person from verity to catastrophe. Samson, Saul, and Solomon are examples of tragedy narrative. b. Epic. An epic is a long narrative with a series of episodes unified around an individual or a group of people. An example of this is Israel's wilderness wanderings. c. Romance. A romance is a narrative in which the romantic relationship between a man and a woman is narrated. The Books of Ruth and the Song of Songs are illustrations of this kind of narrative. d. Heroic. A heroic narrative is a story built around the life and exploits of a hero or a protagonist, an individual who sometimes is a representative of others or an example for others. Examples are Abraham, Gideon, David, Daniel, and Paul. e. Satire. A satirical narrative is an exposure of human vice or folly through ridicule or rebuke. The Book of Jonah is a satire because Jonah, as a representative of Israel, is ridiculed for his refusal to accept God's universal love. Ironically he was more concerned about a plant than he was about the pagans in Nineveh. Also it is ironic that God had compassion on Jonah, though the prophet did not have compassion on the Ninevites. Many readers of the Book of Jonah have noted that it ends in an abrupt way with the problem of the prophet's anger seemingly unresolved. The reason for this is that this is often the way a satire concludes. Jonah's humiliation is an appropriate ending for a satire, and the Israelites would be challenged to see themselves and their own attitude toward pagan nations in Jonah's attitude. (The fact that the Book of Jonah is written as a satire in no way nullifies the book's historicity.) f. Polemic, A polemic narrative is an aggressive attack against or refuting of the views of others. Examples of this are Elijah's "contest" with the 450 Baal prophets (1 Kings 18:16-46), and the 10 plagues against the gods and goddesses of Egypt." See Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 129-130.

<sup>96</sup> Zuck defined this as "material that includes predictions of the future at the time of the writing of the material with injunctions often included that those who hear the prophecy adjust their lives in light of the predictions." See Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 134.

<sup>97</sup> Zuck explained, "The Books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs are the five major poetical books of the Old Testament. However, poetry is included in many of the prophetic books.... A distinct feature of the poetry of the Bible is that two (and sometimes three or four) lines are stated in parallel form. This contrasts with English poetry which is usually characterized by meter and rhyme, neither of which occurs as a regular feature of Hebrew poetry. Scholars have debated extensively over the question of meter

Proverbs),<sup>98</sup> gospels,<sup>99</sup> and epistolary (e.g. Ephesians).<sup>100</sup> Ramm also included “parables, allegories, fables, myths, and riddles” as other forms of genre which beckon a different interpretive approach to them.<sup>101</sup> To help explain this principle, Klein stated, “Teaching in Acts is often more indirect than in the Epistles, and

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in Hebrew poetry. Their inability to come to a consensus on the issue points to the absence of a recognized meter in the Bible's poetry. Occasionally rhyme occurs in some poetic verses, but this is rare.” See Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 130.

<sup>98</sup> Zuck stated, “The Wisdom books are Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. (Some also include the Song of Songs in this group.) All Wisdom literature is poetry, but not all poetic material is Wisdom literature. Two kinds of Wisdom literature are seen in these books. One is proverbial literature, seen in the Book of Proverbs.... A second kind of Wisdom literature is reflective. This involves a discussion of mysteries in life, as in Job and Ecclesiastes.” See Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 131-132.

<sup>99</sup> Zuck proclaimed, “Some people approach the four Gospels as historical narratives, as if the books were written simply to record biographical information on the life of Christ. Obviously they are not biographies in the normal sense in that they exclude much material from the life of Christ which one would normally expect to find in a historical biography. The Gospels include a good bit of biographical material on Christ, but they are more than biographies. They are both doctrine and narrative, presented to set forth information on the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus' teachings in parables and in direct discourse are interspersed with the records of His miracles and encounters with individuals.” See Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 132.

<sup>100</sup> Zuck declared, “This genre of biblical literature is also called epistolary literature and refers to the epistles of the New Testament, Romans through Jude. The Epistles generally include two kinds of material: (a) expository discourse, which expounds certain truths or doctrines, often with logical support for those truths, and (b) hortatory discourse, which includes exhortations to follow certain courses of action or to develop certain characteristics in light of the truths presented in the expository discourse material.” See Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 134.

<sup>101</sup> Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 143.

apocalyptic differs from straightforward historical narrative.”<sup>102</sup> These differences in literature illustrate the need to approach these writings differently.

An example of this principle can be seen in Prov. 11:14. This passage declares, יועץ ברב ותשועה עם יפל תחבלות באין (Where no counsel *is*, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors *there is* safety). Upon first glance, this appears to be a warning of failure for advice evaders and a promise of help for advice seekers, but once this verse is examined in light of its literary genre, a better interpretation develops. Since the genre of writing in which Proverbs is found is wisdom literature, then one could conclude that this verse is more of a maxim than a mandate. While it is wise for individuals to seek the advice of others, this does not guarantee that the outcomes will be attractive or vice versa. The genre of the writing indicates that this maxim is more of helpful advice than an obligatory command.<sup>103</sup>

### **Implementation of the Method Design**

Now that the principles of the grammatical-historical method of hermeneutic and the CSBH were presented, this section will propose the implementation of the method by which these principles will be used to evaluate the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church. Questions of inquiry will be presented and a

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<sup>102</sup> Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 448.

<sup>103</sup> Daniel J. Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 219.

means of evaluating the data will be explained. A chart for monitoring the results will also be provided.

### Questions of Inquiry

From the examination of the principles of the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH, questions of inquiry were derived. Each of these questions will serve as the parameters in order to determine the adherence of the interpretations to the principles of the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH. Since the first principle of the grammatical-historical method was that a passage should be interpreted in light of its context, the first question of inquiry will be “Is this interpretation in concert with the *context* of the text?”

The second question of inquiry derived from the second principle of the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH will be “Is this interpretation in concert with the *other Scripture*?”

The third principle of the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH is that each passage should be interpreted in light of its grammatical considerations. From this principle, the question of inquiry will be “Is this interpretation in concert with the *grammatical considerations* of the text?”

The fourth question of inquiry, resulting from the fourth principle of the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH which is to interpret the passage in light of its historical background, will be “Is this interpretation in concert with the *historical background* of the text?”

The fifth principle of the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH is

that each passage needs interpretation in light of its genre. As done with the previous questions of inquiry, it will be developed from this principle. Therefore, the final question of inquiry will be: “Is this interpretation in light with the *genre* of the text?” When each of these questions is answered, an interpretation will inevitably be found in harmony or out of harmony with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.<sup>104</sup>

### Evaluation of Data

Now that the questions of inquiry for the evaluation were presented and the means for evaluation was explained, this section focuses upon the means of observing the results of the research. This is accomplished through the use of the below chart:

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?			
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?			
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?			
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?			

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<sup>104</sup> These questions and the following chart could also be used prior to interpreting a passage by asking: What is the context of the passage? What do other portions of Scripture teach about this? What is the grammatical construction of the passage? What is the historical background of the passage? and What is the literary genre of the passage?



5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?			

This chart is divided into three primary sections. The first section lists the questions of inquiry as already detailed. The second section provides an area to mark whether or not the question is answered in the affirmative (“Yes”), negative (“No”), or unknown/not applicable (“N/A”). A “Yes” would mean that the interpretation is in harmony with the question of inquiry, a “No” would mean that the interpretation is not in harmony with the question of inquiry, and a “N/A” would mean that there is not enough information to determine whether or not the interpretation is or is not in harmony with the question of inquiry.

The final section presents an overall evaluation of the data. This section will give the conclusion of the evaluation. No grade is assigned to each interpretation. If an interpretation receives a “No” to any question of inquiry, then this will cast doubt upon the interpretation of the passage, thereby causing it to be questioned overall. If an interpretation does not receive a “Yes” to any question of inquiry, then this will cast doubt upon the actual hermeneutic employed in arriving at an interpretation.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Utilizing the method design for evaluating the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church from the previous chapter, this portion of the research will analyze their primary tenets and evaluate them accordingly. This will aid in the determination of their adherence to the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section addresses the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the origin of the Church. The second section pertains to their interpretations of water baptism. Finally, the third section relates to with their beliefs concerning the commission of the Church. After their interpretations are presented, the proposed design for evaluating them is then employed.

#### **Concerning the Origin of the Church**

The first ecclesiological interpretation of moderate ultradispensationalism this research will analyze and evaluate concerns when the Church began. There were three primary reasons O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concluded that the Church began in either Acts 9 or 13. First, they believed that the *μυστήριον* (mystery) of the Church was only revealed to Paul, thereby concluding that it started with him. Secondly, they taught that the works of the believers in Acts 2 reveal a different

dispensation than that of today. Finally, since the Church in Acts 2 practiced water baptism, they concluded that the Church could not have started until later. The following sections will analyze these interpretations as presented by O'Hair, Stam, and Baker and evaluate them according to the design of Chapter Three.

### The Μυστήριον of the Church Revealed to Paul

One of the foremost reasons O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concluded that the Church received its inception with Paul was on the charge that only he received revelation concerning the μυστήριον of the Church and the Church's beginning hinged upon that revelation. This is the most central belief of moderate ultradispensationalism which motivated its adherents to conclude that the Church began in either Acts 9 or 13.<sup>1</sup>

The primary passage O'Hair, Stam, and Baker used to support this was Eph. 3:3.<sup>2</sup> Stam declared that Paul "was specially chosen of God" to whom "the mystery was to be revealed."<sup>3</sup> He also opined, "It is important to notice that not until Paul do we read of God's '*having made known unto us the mystery of His*

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<sup>1</sup> The reason for O'Hair, Stam, and Baker not taking an adamant stance on Acts 9 or 13 is because they were not entirely sure when the mystery was revealed to Paul. O'Hair and Baker taught that this was done in Acts 13 while Stam leaned toward Acts 9; though none of them were dogmatic on the point.

<sup>2</sup> O'Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts*, 13. They also reference Rom. 16:24 and Col. 1:25-26.

<sup>3</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 38.

*will*.”<sup>4</sup> From this information Baker concluded that “since it was a mystery and not the subject of prophecy, and since its truth was committed to Paul, it is reasonable and logical to believe this new Body and new dispensation began with Paul at Antioch and not with Peter at Pentecost.”<sup>5</sup> Now that the interpretation was analyzed, in order to determine if this interpretation is in harmony with the grammatical-historical method of hermeneutics and the CSBH they will receive evaluation.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the context of the passage?* The identity of the μυστήριον in Ephesians 3 has received various propositions. Moderate ultradispensationalism interprets this μυστήριον as the Church, one author suggested that it signifies Paul’s reference to the gift of grace,<sup>6</sup> while another that it is the “motivation” of God demonstrated by grace.<sup>7</sup> Although other opinions concerning the identity of the μυστήριον exist, the exploration of the immediate context of the passage revealed two aspects of it that aid in this evaluation.

First, in Eph. 3:6, only three verses after the reference to the μυστήριον, Paul penned, εἶναι τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμετοχα τῆς

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<sup>4</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 54.

<sup>5</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Synopsis of the New Testament*, 27; and Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 477.

<sup>6</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, by Frank Thielman (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 547.

<sup>7</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring Ephesians and Philippians*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1995), 81-82.

ἐπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ<sup>8</sup> ἐν τῷ χριστῷ, διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel). A significant aspect of this verse is that τὰ ἔθνη (the Gentiles) are συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμετόχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ χριστῷ (fellowheirs of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ). Charles Ryrie explained, the notion that Gentiles would be συγκληρονόμα (fellow heirs) with the Jews “was revealed in the Old Testament (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 42:6-7), so that truth is no mystery. But that there would be a joint body in which Jews and Gentiles would share was not revealed in the Old Testament.”<sup>9</sup> Harold Hoehner supported this interpretation by illuminating Paul’s use of the prefix συν in the three adjectives συγκληρονόμα, σύσσωμα (same body), and συμμετόχα (partakers). He declared that this is used to “emphasize the union between Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ” and “not only brings continuity in the Greek, but also to reinforce the idea of union.”<sup>10</sup>

John MacArthur agreed with this conclusion and explained this to mean that “there is no longer any distinction”<sup>11</sup> between the two groups, and they are

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<sup>8</sup> Variant with NA/UBS: αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ χριστῷ ♦ ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

<sup>9</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 463.

<sup>10</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 445.

<sup>11</sup> John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 86.

“one in God’s sight”<sup>12</sup> existing as the Church today. MacArthur further explained,

The clues they had in the Old Testament were a mystery to them because too much information was lacking. That is why Jews in the early Church—even the apostle Peter (see Acts 10)—had such a difficult time accepting Gentile believers as being completely on the same spiritual level as Jews. And that is why Paul was concerned in this letter to the Ephesians to state and restate, to explain and explain again, that great truth.<sup>13</sup>

While the joining of both Jews and Gentiles as one body is a pivotal aspect of the Church, the context of Ephesians 3 does not support the assertion that the *μυστήριον* is the Church itself; rather, it is one facet of the Church.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the context identifying the *μυστήριον* as τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμετοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ, another aspect of the *μυστήριον* is discovered by examining Paul’s use of σύσσωμα. This is the only use of this word in the entire New Testament and Hoehner suggested that it “may well have been coined by Paul.”<sup>15</sup> He explained this to mean, “Both believing Jews and Gentiles are in the body of Christ, so Gentiles are fellow

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<sup>12</sup> MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 89.

<sup>13</sup> MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 91.

<sup>14</sup> R. Kent Hughes believed that the identity of the “mystery” by concluded that this joining of Gentile and Jewish believers was that “Jews and Gentiles are 1) ‘heirs together,’ 2) ‘members together’ (sussoma, a new word coined by Paul because no word could adequately describe the mystery of Gentiles being on the same footing with Jews, and 3) ‘sharers together’ — fellow partakers.” See R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word: Ephesians* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 106.

<sup>15</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 446.

members of the body with Jews.”<sup>16</sup> Since an aspect of the μυστήριον was the union of Gentile believers into the σύσσωμα of Jewish believers, this logically requires the prior existence of that “body”; since, in order for something to be added to another it must already be present. This preexistent Jewish body was not the nation of Israel, for as John Phillips explained, this assimilation “ignored the special privileges the Jews had enjoyed for some thousand years. Gentiles were not going to be added to the existing corporate body of the Jewish people, the nation of Israel. There would be an entirely new body to which Jews and Gentiles would be added on equal terms.”<sup>17</sup> This is understood as the Church that was already established prior to Acts 9 and 13. This greatly conflicts the assertions of moderate ultradispensationalism.

A final aspect of the context of Ephesians 3 renders itself by examining the singularity of the revelation of the μυστήριον to Paul. In Eph. 3:5 the μυστήριον is proclaimed by Paul as ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις ἐν πνεύματι (revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit). This is an unequivocal declaration of the revelation of the μυστήριον to others in addition to Paul. A question that one may raise is, “To whom was Paul referring in Eph. 3:5?” In a *Bibliotheca Sacra* article, Gary W. Derickson addressed this well when he affirmed,

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<sup>16</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 446.

<sup>17</sup> Phillips, *Exploring Ephesians and Philippians*, 82.

[Paul] was not saying 'Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles.' Rather, he was describing the two groups—New Testament prophets and New Testament apostles—through whom God communicated truths to the first-century Church, and therefore through whom He was revealing His previously kept secrets about His plans and purposes for the Church.<sup>18</sup>

Derickson supported this in his declaration, "Since it was 'hidden in God,' it could not have been revealed to or through the Old Testament prophets. So it is not a matter of the prophets failing to understand or of God intending deeper truths beyond their scope of understanding. Rather the 'mystery' Paul described was information kept from the prophets and thus from Israel as well."<sup>19</sup> The apostles and prophets were New Testament apostles and prophets.

One important aspect of the revelation of this μυστήριον to the apostles and prophets concerns from whom they received it. In Eph. 3:5, Paul identified the authority who revealed it to them as the πνεύματι (Spirit). This not only negates the assertion that only Paul received the revelation of the μυστήριον but also any argument that requires Paul as the only revealer of it to others. This contextual information caused Frank Van Dyke to wisely conclude, "To say that God revealed a thing to Paul is not to say that he revealed it first or exclusively to Paul."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Gary W. Derickson, "The New Testament Church As A Mystery," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166 (October 2009): 439-40.

<sup>19</sup> Derickson, "The New Testament Church As A Mystery," 440.

<sup>20</sup> Frank Van Dyke, "A Critical Analysis of the Mystery Revealed to Paul," *Restoration Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1958): 5.



Therefore, from the contextual information ascertained concerning the identity of the μυστήριον and the revealer of the μυστήριον, it is concluded that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the μυστήριον of Ephesians 3 is not in harmony with the context of the passage (article XVIII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the other Scripture?* The word μυστήριον appears twenty-seven times in the New Testament. Matthew, Mark, and Luke used it once, John used it four times, and Paul twenty. Though each of these instances is not synonymous with the intent of Ephesians 3, one instance in particular beckons attention for this research. After one of the rejections of Jesus as Messiah by the Jewish leaders, He turned His method of speaking from the simple sermons to the prolific parables as recorded in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8. Jesus explained to His disciples that these parables revealed τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας (the mysteries of the kingdom). This is when, according to Thielman, "The mystery of God's purposes gains greater specificity."<sup>21</sup> The first parable which Jesus recounted pertained to what He explained as an example of the preaching of the Word of God and the different reactions to that Word by individuals. This is seen as a picture of how Christendom would begin and flourish.<sup>22</sup> Hoehner commented that while "the Jews had expected God to bring

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<sup>21</sup> Elwell, ed., *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, 546.

<sup>22</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2001), 390-91, 626-28.

in his physical kingdom” the revelation of this mystery showed the disciples that “this kingdom would first appear in a spiritual form beginning with Jesus’ ministry and last until his return.”<sup>23</sup> This demonstrates that not only was the μυστήριον not solely revealed to Paul, but he was also not the first to receive information concerning it. It was partially revealed to the disciples, although they did not yet understand what they heard.

An additional location in Scripture that one can discover allusions to the content of the μυστήριον is Acts 10. In this passage, the resurrected Christ appeared to Peter in a trance and commanded him to kill and eat a plethora of animals forbidden to be devoured by the law of the Old Testament. After Peter’s thrice resistance, he then interprets the occurrence as representative of the applicableness in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. As John Eadie concluded, this “vindicated his mission to Cornelius,”<sup>24</sup> thereby opening Peter’s mind toward the Gentiles’ receiving the gospel.

While this passage does not expressly mention the term μυστήριον, the content of it, the heirship and union of Jewish and Gentile believers, is evidenced by observing the resistance to this concept as witnessed in Acts 15. During the debate as to whether the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, Peter explained his vision and its interpretation. Peter’s declaration that God οὐδὲν

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<sup>23</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 430.

<sup>24</sup> John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1955), 221.

διέκρινεν μεταξύ ἡμῶν τε καὶ αὐτῶν (put no difference between [Gentiles] and [Jews]) greatly impacts this evaluation. By making this statement, it greatly resembles Paul's σύσσωμα in Eph. 3:6. There was no longer a distinction between Jew and Gentile for they are now a part of the same body (a mystery in the Old Testament, yet revealed in the New).

Since Jesus symbolically mentioned the μυστήριον to His disciples during His earthly ministry and He revealed to Peter that the Gentiles should receive the same gospel of which the Jews partook because there is no more a difference between them, it is concluded that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that only Paul received the revelation of the μυστήριον and that revelation marked the inception of the Church is not in harmony with other passages of Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the passage?* By O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's interpretation that the Church began when it was revealed to Paul, they therefore define the term μυστήριον in a way that establishes its revelation with its actualization. A simple dictionary search for the term "mystery" produces the definition of "anything that is kept secret or remains unexplained or unknown."<sup>25</sup> This meaning corresponds with both the lexical definition found in Thayer, "hidden purpose or counsel; secret will,"<sup>26</sup> and

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<sup>25</sup> *Dictionary.com*, "Mystery," <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/mystery/> (accessed January 6, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 420.

in the classical Greek as observed by Ryrie<sup>27</sup> to imply something secretive or concealed but still evident.<sup>28</sup> From this definition, two primary aspects are brought to light. First, the term μυστήριον denotes something unknown. The concept of Gentiles receiving salvation along with the Jews was not a new concept to them, but the knowledge that they were also members of the same body and fellowheirs with the Jews was truly something “unknown until revealed.” As Steven Waterhouse explained,

As one traces the uses of the word *mystery* through the New Testament, it becomes clear that the Church was a brand new aspect to God's work in the world. Truths about the Church were completely unknown to the Old Testament saints who lived under the Law of Moses. This establishes that a great distinction exists between Israel and the Church. When God inaugurated the Church, He was initiating a completely new administration in His divine government.<sup>29</sup>

Second, the term μυστήριον denotes something that must be revealed in order to be understood. This does not mean “something in itself incomprehensible”<sup>30</sup> but rather “something which cannot be discovered by human

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<sup>27</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 463.

<sup>28</sup> This is evidenced through the epic tragedy of Oedipus. After the death of his father, Oedipus set out on a journey to discover the mystery of death and the issue of evil. Through his travels he experienced the mystery of death and paradoxically discovers that evil is not a principle, but yet another mystery. See Roger D. Dawe, trans. *Oedipus Rex*, by Sophocles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Steven Waterhouse, *Not By Bread Alone* (Amarillo, TX: Westcliff Press, 2003), 318.

<sup>30</sup> Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, 213.

reason, but which could only be attained by revelation.”<sup>31</sup> As Derickson explained, once the mystery was made known “it is understandable. But until God chose to reveal His secret plan it remained unknown and unknowable.”<sup>32</sup>

A contemporary way of illustrating this is to view the μυστήριον like one would a murder novel. While reading the novel, one is confronted with a series of events and in many cases unaware of the individual or individuals who caused the events to transpire. This is considered the “mystery” portion of the book. Until the author reveals enough details to allow his readers to ascertain the identities of the characters, there is no way of comprehending all the details of the book. However, once these details are revealed, the “mystery” has now become attainable knowledge. Applying this to the way O’Hair, Stam, and Baker define μυστήριον, they erred by placing too much emphasis on the revelation of that mystery. Just as in the novel, the murder of the individual is not incumbent upon the revelation of the “mystery” of the murderer. The murder logically had to have transpired in order for the mystery to exist. In this illustration, the μυστήριον of Gentiles’ being members of the same body and fellowheirs with the Jews already transpired prior to anyone’s complete understanding of the events. Therefore, the definition of μυστήριον only lends itself to the revelation of an event, not its origination. This is in disparity with the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker.

Therefore, the definition of μυστήριον reveals that the interpretation of

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<sup>31</sup> Charles Hodge, *Ephesians* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 102.

<sup>32</sup> Derickson, "The New Testament Church As A Mystery," 437.

O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the inception of the Church as dependent upon the revelation of the *μυστήριον* is not in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the text (article XV of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the historical background of the passage?*

An aid in understanding the concept of the *μυστήριον* about which Paul was writing is developed by investigating the historical context of the author and his recipients. Thielman explained that the term *μυστήριον* was used “in ancient Hellenistic mystery religions. In these cults the term was used to signify the esoteric knowledge that initiates were instructed, with threats of severe punishment, not to reveal to the uninitiated.”<sup>33</sup> While in today's terminology, *μυστήριον* carries with it a basic idea of a secret, in Paul's era “it designated the sacred rites of the Greek mystery religions, secrets that only the initiated shared.”<sup>34</sup> James Montgomery Boice further elaborated that “the word is used in this way of ancient mystery religions—the mysteries of Mithra, Isis and Osiris, Dionysius, and Eleusis. People in general did not know what went on in these religious cults, but the ‘mysteries’ were revealed to the initiates.”<sup>35</sup> A contemporary example of this concept of a *μυστήριον* is observed in the charters of the Masonic Lodge. There are many “mysteries” concerning this group, of

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<sup>33</sup> Elwell, ed., *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, 547.

<sup>34</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 463.

<sup>35</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resources Library, 1988), 88.

which only its initiates are fully aware. Once an individual attains a certain level in their organization, then these mysteries are revealed.<sup>36</sup> Applying this to the issue of moderate ultradispensationalism's interpretation of the μυστήριον, just as in the ancient days of mystery religions, the absence of that revelation did not negate the reality of the mystery's information. Paul's readers would have understood this on account of their knowledge of the culture in which they lived.

In addition to the mystery religions of Paul's day, Hoehner explicated that "Jewish apocalyptic literature constantly emphasizes the fact that God's being and actions are great mysteries to humans (1 Enoch 63:3). It was considered that these mysteries which were kept in heaven were revealed to an enraptured seer (71:3-5; cf. also 9:6; 40:2; 46:2)."<sup>37</sup> The fact God's actions were prevalent, howbeit unrevealed, illustrates that Paul's readers would have understood this to mean that the μυστήριον already transpired; Paul was merely the "seer" to whom God chose to reveal this. These evidences demonstrate that the interpretation of μυστήριον as meaning that its revelation signified the institution of the Church is not in harmony with the historical background of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the genre of the passage?* The final question which the method design requires inquiry pertains to whether or not the

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<sup>36</sup> W. A. Criswell, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 101.

<sup>37</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 430.

genre of a passage (article XIII of the CSBH) confirms or negates an interpretation. In this case, there is neither enough information on the part of O’Hair, Stam, or Baker nor enough information concerning the genre of Ephesians to properly assess this question. If the apostle directly proclaimed the equation of the revelation of the *μυστήριον* with the inception of the church, then this would be considered definitive proof in favor of moderate ultradispensationalism; but since he did not, the method design for this question of inquiry is conferred the classification of “N/A.”

*Overall Evaluation: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?* From the information gathered during the questions of inquiry in the method design and illustrated by the chart below, it is determined that the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the *μυστήριον* are not in harmony with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?		X	
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	



## The Events of the Acts 2 Church

The next primary tenet O'Hair, Stam, and Baker promoted concerning the origin of the Church pertained to the events of Acts 2. There are primarily two events during this time that caused them to question this dispensation's commencement prior to Acts 9 or 13. They are the use of sign gifts on the Day of Pentecost and the alleged communistic tendencies of believers shortly thereafter.<sup>38</sup>

### **Sign Gifts on the Day of Pentecost**

The operation of sign gifts was the first event that transpired concerning the believers of Acts 2 which O'Hair, Stam, and Baker interpreted as evidence against the Church's beginning during that time period. O'Hair taught, "During the 'Acts' overlapping period, during the years when God's order was 'to the Jew first,' there were signs, miracles, visions, tongues, sign-gifts and religious ceremonies. But after the close of the transition period these ceased in accordance with I Corinthians 13:8 to 11."<sup>39</sup> Baker concluded that once this transition took place from the Jewish believers to the Gentile Church, "No longer was there a place for sign-gifts. No longer was there need for the gift of prophecy, for God's revelation for the Body was now complete."<sup>40</sup> This cessation

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<sup>38</sup> Another event that they would categorize in this section is that the believers on the day of Pentecost were baptized; but because it is such an integral part of moderate ultradispensationalism's theology, it will be placed as a point to itself.

<sup>39</sup> O'Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts*, 21.

<sup>40</sup> Baker, *Understanding the Book of Acts*, 72-73.

was interpreted as proof for the origin of the Church.

Moderate ultradispensationalism considers this transition period the evolving from Jewish believers of the early Acts period to the Gentile Church of today. This tenet finds its foundation in the denial of the operation of sign gifts during the inception of the Church. Baker directly stated that “if the Body of Christ came into being on the day of Pentecost, it would appear logical to go back to Pentecost to discover the program and message which the Church should be practicing.”<sup>41</sup> By this he proclaimed that if the Church began prior to Acts 9 or 13, then the Church today would be exemplified by the operation of sign gifts. Now that the interpretations were analyzed, in the following sections, these interpretations are evaluated in order to determine whether or not they are harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH.<sup>42</sup>

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the context of the passage?* One aspect concerning the claims of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker that needs not refuting is the fact that sign gifts were operable in the early portion of Acts. The most notable occurrence of this is the use of tongues in Acts 2. It is undeniable that the gift of tongues was operable during this period in Bible history, but the claim that this event should exemplify the Church today if this is when the Church began

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<sup>41</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 476.

<sup>42</sup> It needs pronouncing that the intention of this research is not to address all the issues pertaining to whether or not the sign gifts are operable today; rather, this research focuses more upon the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker that these gifts could not have been evidenced in the early Church.

necessitates evaluation.

In order to substantiate their interpretation, one would expect that each time believers were converted in the early portion of Acts, the use of sign gifts would receive exemplification (especially the speaking in tongues since that is the prominent sign gift in operation on the day of Pentecost). However, only three of the four instances in the book of Acts record the operation of this sign gift with the conversion of individuals (Acts 2, 10, and 19 do so, but Acts 8 does not). Commenting on the Acts 8 passage, A. C. Gaebelein acknowledged, “There is no record here that the gift of the Spirit was attended by outward signs, such as speaking in tongues.”<sup>43</sup> On account of this, while addressing the charge that the conversion of the lost is exemplified by the speaking of tongues, one author observed that since “only three times in all of the NT do tongues appear at someone's conversion or baptism (Ac 2:4, 10:46, 19:6),” then “speaking in tongues cannot serve as a criterion of salvation or even of Christian maturity.”<sup>44</sup> While this research seeks not to address the issue of tongues speaking today, this form of logic lends itself to answering the moderate ultradispensational claim that these signs would also evidence themselves today if Acts 2 was when the church began.

From the context of the book of Acts, specifically Acts 8, the realization

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<sup>43</sup> A. C. Gaebelein, *Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1961), 151.

<sup>44</sup> Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 425.

that an instance prior to moderate ultradispensationalism's alleged institution of the Church does not have the manifestation of sign gifts during the conversion of individuals demonstrates the inability to conclude that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker is in harmony with the context of the passage (article XVIII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the other Scripture?* Three passages of Scripture are notable for this area of research; two were actually written by the apostle Paul himself. The first is 1 Cor. 14:22. In this passage, the apostle Paul addressed one specific sign gift and proclaimed, Ὡστε αἱ γλῶσσαι εἰς σημεῖόν εἰσιν (Wherefore tongues are for a sign). The adverb Ὡστε refers back to the previous verse in which Paul declared, Ἐν τῷ νόμῳ γέγραπται ὅτι Ἐν ἑτερογλώσσοις καὶ ἐν χείλεσιν ἑτέροις λαλήσω τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ, καὶ οὐδ' οὕτως εἰσακούσονται μου, λέγει κύριος (In the law it is written, With *men of* other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord). Albert Barnes explained that this verse is a quotation of Isa. 28:11-12 and directly related to the Jews.<sup>45</sup> This passage pertained to Isaiah's message that "God would teach the rebellious and refractory Jews submission to himself, by punishing them amidst a people of another language, by removing them to a land—the land of Chaldea—where they

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<sup>45</sup> Albert Barnes, *1 Corinthians*, Barnes on the New Testament, ed. Robert Frew (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 268.

would hear only a language that to them would be unintelligible and barbarous.”<sup>46</sup>

Paul applied this passage to the New Testament usage of tongues and as John Napier explained, “Because Israel of old had rejected the message and ministry of Isaiah, the Lord gave a prophecy to Israel that he would get their attention through the tongues of foreigners. In other words, because of Israel's unbelief, foreign powers would come and conquer Israel. Foreign languages (i.e., tongues) would be heard in the villages, towns and cities of Israel.”<sup>47</sup> The sign was one of judgment upon the Jewish people. On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 “as soon as the Jews heard the gift of tongues being manifested in the assemblies of the followers of Jesus and at Pentecost, they should have been warned that the nation was under judgment and they had better repent.”<sup>48</sup> While the message of salvation received previous proclamation through the Hebrew language for many years, this speaking in other languages showed that “no longer would God confine Himself to one people as a channel; no longer would God operate His work of grace through one nation and speak one language.”<sup>49</sup> Since this manifestation of the sign gift of tongues illustrated judgment upon the Jews, the

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<sup>46</sup> Barnes, *1 Corinthians*, 268.

<sup>47</sup> John Napier, *Charismatic Challenge* (Australia: Lancer Publishing, 1991), 29.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph Dillow, *Speaking in Tongues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 29.

<sup>49</sup> John MacArthur, *The Charismatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 161.

claim of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker that this was another offer of the Kingdom, thereby nullifying the possibility for the inception of the church, is unsubstantiated.

In addition to 1 Cor. 14:22, Paul declared in 1Cor. 14:18, Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου,<sup>50</sup> πάντων ὑμῶν μᾶλλον γλώσσαις λαλῶν (I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all). In this passage Paul offered guidance to the Corinthian believers about how to use their spiritual gifts and the gift of tongues in particular. During this instruction, Paul exclaimed that he πάντων ὑμῶν μᾶλλον γλώσσαις λαλῶν and that was Εὐχαριστῶ for it. F. W. Grosheide explained that Paul’s use of πάντων ὑμῶν μᾶλλον meant “not merely ‘more than one of you,’ but rather, ‘more than occurs among you.’”<sup>51</sup> This evidences that Paul, the one moderate ultradispensationalism inseparably links to the formation of the Church, actually used a sign gift which O’Hair, Stam, and Baker separate from today’s dispensation. This seems anomalous to their interpretation.

The final passage pertaining to the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the use of sign gifts is Jas. 5:14-15. In this verse, the half-brother of Jesus instructed, Ἀσθενεῖ τις ἐν ὑμῖν; Προσκαλεσάσθω τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας, καὶ προσευξάσθωσαν ἐπ’ αὐτόν, ἀλείψαντες

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<sup>50</sup> Variant with NA/UBS: μου (of me) ♦ -

<sup>51</sup> F. W. Grosheide, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 39.

αὐτὸν ἐλαίῳ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου· καὶ ἡ εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως σώσει τὸν κάμνοντα, καὶ ἐγερεῖ αὐτὸν ὁ κύριος· κὰν ἁμαρτίας ᾗ πεποιηκώς, ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ (Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him). Thomas Edgar explained that this verse “does not instruct the sick to look for a healer or for someone with the ability to heal. Rather it instructs the sick to call for the elders and they are to pray for him.”<sup>52</sup> The key to receiving this healing was not a miraculous gift administered by an individual but ἡ εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως (the prayer of faith). Alexander Ross avowed, “It is the prayer of faith that heals, and the faith is not only the faith of the elders, but surely also that of the sick man, who ought to pray for himself, according to verse 13.”<sup>53</sup> Considering moderate ultradispensationalism’s claim that the epistle of James was composed to who they consider the Jewish body which manifested the sign gifts,<sup>54</sup> it is interesting to observe that James did not request their seeking of a healer; instead, he admonished them toward prayer.

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas R. Edgar, "Cessation of Sign Gifts," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (October 1988): 382.

<sup>53</sup> Alexander Ross, *The Epistle of James and John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 100.

<sup>54</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Synopsis of the New Testament*, 107-11.

These three passages present sufficient evidence to conclude that O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's claim, concerning the operation of sign gifts' not having connection to the institution of the Church, is not in harmony with other Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the passage?* Investigation of the passages concerning the operation of sign gifts did not present enough information to determine if the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker is or is not in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the text (article XV of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the historical background of the passage?*

The operation of sign gifts was not a new occurrence throughout the history of the Bible. There were two previous periods when these acts were temporarily evident. The time periods were from Moses to Joshua, from Elijah to Elisha, and from Jesus to the apostles. Mark 16:20 reveals that the purpose for the operation of these miracles was to introduce a new revelation and to authenticate the messenger of that revelation. From this verse MacArthur concluded, "Tongues, healings, and miracles all served as signs to authenticate an era of new revelation."<sup>55</sup> As William Bellshaw stated in an article in *Bibliotheca Sacra* concerning the use of tongues on the day of Pentecost, "This gift was needed to

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<sup>55</sup> MacArthur, *The Charismatics*, 27.



validate the message which was being preached.”<sup>56</sup>

Two primary passages that necessitate referencing when considering the sign gifts and their authentication of a message are 2 Cor. 12:2 and Heb. 2:3-4. 2 Cor. 12:12 states, Τὰ μὲν σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου κατειργάσθη ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν πάσῃ ὑπομονῇ, ἐν<sup>57</sup> σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν (Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds). Commenting on this verse, Donald Burdick explained, “In some sense Paul views miracles as being related to the apostolic office...They were used to give God's stamp of approval to the new movement, the New Testament Church.”<sup>58</sup>

Heb. 2:3-4 declares, πῶς ἡμεῖς ἐκφευξόμεθα τηλικαύτης ἀμελήσαντες σωτηρίας; Ἦτις, ἀρχὴν λαβοῦσα λαλεῖσθαι διὰ τοῦ κυρίου, ὑπὸ τῶν ἀκουσάντων εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐβεβαιώθη, συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος τοῦ θεοῦ σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασιν, καὶ ποικίλαις δυνάμεσιν, καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου μερισμοῖς, κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ θέλησιν (How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was *confirmed* unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with *signs* and *wonders*, and with divers

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<sup>56</sup> William G. Bellshaw, "The Confusion of Tongues," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 120 (April 1963): 151.

<sup>57</sup> Variant with NA/UBS: ἐν σημείοις ♦ σημείοις τε

<sup>58</sup> Donald W. Burdick, *Tongues: To Speak or Not to Speak* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 37.

*miracles*, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?) [emphasis added]. This passage expressly affirms that the display of miraculous signs offered confirmation of those who first heard the Lord. Napier explained that these gifts authenticated the apostolic ministry because the Jews would challenge the disciples over their “new”<sup>59</sup> message, and they would point to the Old Testament Scriptures and twenty centuries of religious history to vindicate their Judaism. Therefore the early Church needed “credentials”<sup>60</sup> to confirm that their message and ministry was of the Lord. As they had no Scriptures which particularly defended their position, these signs and wonders personified the necessary qualifications to show the multitudes that their message was from God.<sup>61</sup> For that reason, the Jews thereby needed some miraculous manifestation to “confirm” their message as divine truth.

The Greek word ἐβεβαιώθη in verse 3 is the aorist tense of βεβαιόω. Burdick asserted that this is “equivalent to our simple past.”<sup>62</sup> Dillow stated that the use of this verb tense “implies a completed, once and for all event in past time.”<sup>63</sup> From this usage of the Greek verb, Burdick concluded that “when the author of Hebrews wrote, both the eyewitness testimony and the miraculous

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<sup>59</sup> Napier, 15.

<sup>60</sup> Napier, 15.

<sup>61</sup> Burdick, 37.

<sup>62</sup> Burdick, 38.

<sup>63</sup> Dillow, 145.

corroboration were past events.”<sup>64</sup> These previous events are better found in Acts 2 than in Acts 9 or 13. Therefore, the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the use of sign gifts is not in harmony with the historical background of the text (article XV of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the genre of the passage?* The genre of the book of Acts is historical and, as such, interpreted as a narrative, not as a doctrinal work that gives the norm for the outworkings after conversion of individuals in the Church today. MacArthur defined Acts’ interpretation as a “narrative” to mean “a report of what happened in this incredible period of transition as the Church was born and established among all kinds of people: Jews, half-breeds (Samaritans), and Gentiles.”<sup>65</sup> In answer to how then the book of Acts necessitates viewing in light of its genre, MacArthur declared, “The only teachings in the Book of Acts that can be called normative (absolute) for the Church are those that are doctrinally confirmed elsewhere in Scripture.”<sup>66</sup> The researcher would also add that the messages of the apostles throughout the book beckon consideration as normative as well. In either case, Edgar concluded, “The development of theology on the basis of narrative rather than on

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<sup>64</sup> Burdick, 38.

<sup>65</sup> MacArthur, *The Charismatics*, 102.

<sup>66</sup> MacArthur, *The Charismatics*, 85.

direct teaching of Scripture is always a precarious methodology.”<sup>67</sup>

Even a proponent of the continuation of the sign gifts, D. A. Carson,<sup>68</sup> in his work *Showing the Spirit*, declared, “The essentially salvation-historical structure of the Book of Acts is too often overlooked...The way Luke tells the story, Acts provides not a paradigm for individual Christian experience, but the account of the gospel's outward movement, geographically, racially, and above all theologically.”<sup>69</sup> Concerning the actions of Acts 2 and their applicableness today, Carson admitted that “even if this text affirms that all who were filled with the Spirit spoke in tongues...it does not follow that this is the normative New Testament stance.”<sup>70</sup> As MacArthur observed,

It is true that Christians at Pentecost (Acts 2), Gentiles in Cornelius's household (chap. 10), and Jews at Ephesus who had “only the baptism of John” (chap. 19) received the Holy Spirit and tongues followed. But because these three events occurred in the Book of Acts does not mean that they are to be the standard for every other Christian. In fact, none of the Acts passages (2, 8, 10, or 19) ever makes a command that such an experience is to be had by anybody else.<sup>71</sup>

Therefore, the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker that the outworkings of these events necessitates exemplification today in order for the Church to have

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<sup>67</sup> Edgar, “Cessation of Sign Gifts,” 372.

<sup>68</sup> D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 67-72.

<sup>69</sup> Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 150.

<sup>70</sup> Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 142.

<sup>71</sup> MacArthur, *The Charismatics*, 88.

received its inception during the early portion of Acts is not in harmony with the genre of the book (article XIII of the CSBH).

*Overall Evaluation: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?* From the information gathered during the questions of inquiry in the method design and illustrated by the chart below, it is determined that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the denial of the Church's inception prior to Acts 9 or 13 on account of the use of sign gifts during this time period is not in harmony with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?			X
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?		X	
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

### Works of the Acts 2 Believers

Not only was the use of sign gifts on the day of Pentecost an event which caused O'Hair, Stam, and Baker to conclude that the Church originated in Acts 9 or 13, but the generous financial efforts of the believers in Acts 2-4 were as well. In

these passages the Jerusalem believers which received salvation on the day of Pentecost are recorded as taking great financial strides in order to help each other. Luke recorded in Acts 2:44-45, Πάντες δὲ οἱ πιστεύοντες ἦσαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, καὶ εἶχον ἅπαντα κοινά, καὶ τὰ κτήματα καὶ τὰς ὑπάρξεις ἐπίπρασκον, καὶ διμερίζον αὐτὰ πᾶσιν, καθότι ἂν τις χρεῖαν εἶχεν (And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need). Also in Acts 4:32-35 he noted,

Τοῦ δὲ πλήθους τῶν πιστευσάντων ἦν ἡ καρδία καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ μία· καὶ οὐδὲ εἷς τι τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτῶν<sup>72</sup> ἔλεγεν ἴδιον εἶναι, ἀλλ' ἦν αὐτοῖς ἅπαντα κοινά. Καὶ μεγάλη δυνάμει ἀπεδίδουν τὸ μαρτύριον οἱ ἀπόστολοι τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, χάρις τε μεγάλη ἦν ἐπὶ πάντας αὐτούς. Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδεής τις ὑπῆρχεν<sup>73</sup> ἐν αὐτοῖς· ὅσοι γὰρ κτήτορες χωρίων ἢ οἰκιῶν ὑπῆρχον, πωλοῦντες ἔφερον τὰς τιμὰς τῶν πιπρασκομένων, καὶ ἐτίθουν παρὰ τοὺς πόδας τῶν ἀποστόλων· διεδίδото δὲ ἐκάστῳ καθότι ἂν τις χρεῖαν εἶχεν.<sup>74</sup>

From these passages, O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concluded that if the Church truly began in Acts 2, then this would require the Church today to exemplify the benevolent acts of these early Christians.

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<sup>72</sup> Variant with NA/UBS: αὐτῶν ♦ αὐτῷ

<sup>73</sup> Variant with NA/UBS: ὑπῆρχεν ♦ ἦν

<sup>74</sup> "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

Baker labeled these actions of the early Acts Christians “a true communism...which will prevail in the Millennial Kingdom,”<sup>75</sup> and Stam supposed that they were “a foretaste of the wonderful kingdom of Christ,”<sup>76</sup> O’Hair charged that none who claim the Church’s inception in Acts 2 “neither practice this communism nor preach it for this dispensation.”<sup>77</sup> Stam further asserted that once the Church began in Acts 9 then this “order” was “rescinded.”<sup>78</sup> Now that the interpretations were analyzed the following sections will evaluate these interpretations in order to determine if they are in harmony with the context, other Scripture, grammatical considerations, historical background, and genre of the passages.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the passage?* Prior to addressing the context of these passages, their grammatical considerations need addressing in order to properly evaluate the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker. The first word which necessitates defining does not appear in the text itself, yet is frequently ascribed to the actions of these early Acts Christians by O’Hair, Stam, and Baker: “communism.” Moderate ultradispensationalism claims that these actions were communistic and thereby

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<sup>75</sup> Baker, *Understanding the Book of Acts*, 31.

<sup>76</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 41-42.

<sup>77</sup> O’Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts*, 9-10.

<sup>78</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 125.

binding upon all Christians in the Church today if it began during that time. A simple definition of “communism” is “a theory or system of social organization based on the holding of all property in common, actual ownership being ascribed to the community as a whole or to the state.”<sup>79</sup> A key aspect of this socialistic system is its involuntary nature. The people of this community do not volunteer their goods to be distributed; they are forced to do such. In order to substantiate the claims of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker one must observe this in the text.

Luke recorded in Acts 2:44 and 4:32 that the believers in Jerusalem εἶχον ἅπαντα κοινά (had all things common). The Greek word κοινά is the root form of the word κοινωμία<sup>80</sup> meaning “fellowship, association, communion, joint participation.”<sup>81</sup> Nowhere in Scripture is fellowship seen as an obligatory, forcible action. Ralph Earle explained that this word carries with it the sense of “partnership.”<sup>82</sup> A partnership is purely voluntary. Therefore, in this case, the actions of the early Christians as recorded in Acts were in no way a “communistic” endeavor, but rather a voluntary, benevolent partnership aiding those in need.

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<sup>79</sup> *Dictionary.com*, “Communism,” <http://www.dictionary.reference.com//browse/communism//> (accessed January 8, 2010).

<sup>80</sup> H. K. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 234.

<sup>81</sup> Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 441.

<sup>82</sup> Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 272.



In addition to the meaning of κοινά the verb tenses in the following verb also abets in the evaluation of the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker. Acts 4:34 declares, Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδεής τις ὑπῆρχεν<sup>83</sup> ἐν αὐτοῖς· ὅσοι γὰρ κτήτορες χωρίων ἢ οἰκιῶν ὑπῆρχον, πωλοῦντες ἔφερον τὰς τιμὰς τῶν πιπρασκομένων (Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold). In response to the accusation that this teaches the reception of monetary funds into a common treasury, Earle declared, “By the use of the five imperfects, plus a present participle, this mistaken interpretation is clearly proved wrong.”<sup>84</sup> Daniel Wallace expounded that the use of the imperfect tense provides “a *motion picture*, portraying the action as it unfolds. As such, the imperfect is often incomplete and focuses on the *process* of the action.”<sup>85</sup> These verb tenses demonstrate a recurring process of giving not a onetime collection of wealth for redistribution. T. C. Smith agreed with this conclusion and further explained that the verb uses in these verses “forces us to conclude that selling possessions in the early Church was not a compulsory action but rather voluntary on the part of the members of the group.”<sup>86</sup> These observances demonstrate that the actions of

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<sup>83</sup> Variant with NA/UBS: ὑπῆρχεν ♦ ἦν

<sup>84</sup> Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, 272.

<sup>85</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 541.

<sup>86</sup> T. C. Smith, *Acts-1 Corinthians*, The Broadman Bible Commentary, ed. Clifton J. Allen, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), 21.

the early Christians were not communistic thereby illustrating that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker is not in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the context of the passage?* As the grammatical considerations explained, "communism" is the involuntary distribution of one's property and assets to a community or government. Upon first observation, Acts 2:44-45 does appear to show that the early Acts' believers sold everything they possessed to share with each other; but further investigation of the text demonstrates that some ownership and property were withheld. Norman Geisler noted, "The text implies that they sold only extra land and other possessions, not that they sold their only place of residence. After all, they all eventually left Jerusalem, to which they had come for the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:1), and went back to their homes which were scattered all over the world (cf. Acts 2:5-13)."<sup>87</sup>

Not only was this not a total liquidation of the early believers' assets, but the context also shows that it was not a forcible action either. Geisler commented, "There is no indication in the text that this was a compulsory arrangement. It was apparently simply a temporary and voluntary convenience for the furtherance of the Gospel in those early and crucial days of the Christian

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<sup>87</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *When Critics Ask* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 429-30.

Church.”<sup>88</sup> Observation of Acts 5 and the issue pertaining to Ananias and Sapphira also supports this. Immediately after the accounts of the financial generosity of the early Acts’ Christians, the tragedy of Ananias and Sapphira transpires and provides direction for determining the context of these passages. As Walter Kaiser observed, “In Acts 5:3-4 the author makes it plain that such generosity was not a legal requirement; it was the lie, not the failure to give, for which Ananias and Sapphira are condemned.”<sup>89</sup> The withholding of property from the community was not the demise of Ananias’ and Sapphira’s; it was their lack of truthfulness to the Holy Spirit.

Based upon these evidences it is concluded that the context of the passages (article XVIII of the CSBH) do not support the claim that the early Acts believers were communistic thereby deducing the inability of the inception of the Church during this time.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the other Scripture?* The financial generosity believers expressed toward one another was not a new concept to the early Acts’ believers; neither is it one that ceased with them. The New Testament records multiple occurrences of benevolence. Even the very people whom O’Hair, Baker, and Stam accuse of communism received financial provisions just a short time later; and the very individual who orchestrates this benevolence was the apostle

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<sup>88</sup> Geisler, *When Critics Ask*, 429-30.

<sup>89</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 518.

Paul himself (1 Corinthians 16).

T. C. Smith commented that the “support for the needy in Jerusalem and Judea came from the Christians in Antioch and through a collection which Paul obtained from the various Churches as a means to cement relations between Jewish and Gentile converts.”<sup>90</sup> While the finances of Jerusalem obviously saw their decline, the benevolent process did not. Moved to gather a monetary gift to help these early Christians in the way they previously helped each other, Paul enlisted the help of believers in Antioch.

A relevant issue to this research pertains to the time of this collection. According to Barnes, the best place to date this event is around A.D. 56 (between what is recorded in Acts 19:22-23).<sup>91</sup> Since this enlistment so closely resembled that of Acts 2 and 4, according to the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker, this would also limit the Church’s inception to after this event as well.

Other passages also teach the generosity a believer should express toward other Christians. While this section will not provide an exhaustive commentary on these instances, a few notable teachings of Paul summon examination. In 1 Tim. 6:18, Paul instructed Timothy to παράγγελλε (charge) the wealthy ἀγαθοεργεῖν, πλουτεῖν ἐν ἔργοις καλοῖς, εὐμεταδότους εἶναι, κοινωνικούς (That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate). Two key words in this passage are κοινωνικούς (willing to

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<sup>90</sup> Smith, *Acts-1 Corinthians*, 31-32.

communicate) and εὐμεταδότες (ready to distribute). κοινωνικούς is a derivative of the word κοινά used in Acts 4:34 and εὐμεταδότες is similar to the very communistic outworking that the early Acts' believers exemplified. Since O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concluded that these actions in Acts 4 were indicative of a different dispensation today, then, if their interpretations were accurate, this would demonstrate that the Church was still uncreated at the time of Paul's writings to Timothy.

Also, in 2 Corinthians 8 Paul commended the Macedonian Church for giving beyond their ability, despite their poverty, to provide for other believers (2 Cor. 8:1). Paul even compared their benevolent act to that of Jesus Christ Himself (2 Cor. 8:9). If the believers in Macedonia gave of their possessions in order to advance the gospel, and the Lord Jesus became poor so that believers might become rich, then one can conclude that the actions of the early Acts' believers were not only modeled by others afterward but were even exemplified beforehand by the Savior Himself. Therefore, the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the actions of the early Acts' Christians as communistic and thereby nullifying to the Church's inception during this time is not in harmony with any other Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the historical background of the passage?*

There lacks enough information concerning the historical background of this

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<sup>91</sup> Barnes, *1 Corinthians*, vi-vii.

passage (article XV of the CSBH) to support or nullify the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the origin of the Church and its connections to the actions of the early Acts' believers; therefore, it is given an evaluation of "N/A" in the method design.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the genre of the passage?* As previously explained during the interaction with O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's interpretations concerning the use of sign gifts in early Acts, the genre of the book of Acts does not warrant the record of events within it to be taught as the norm unless otherwise supported in other Scripture. This is the same issue with the actions of the early Acts' believers and the conclusion that, if the Church began during that time period, then believers today should model the same deeds. As Kaiser commented, "Acts, of course, is giving us historical precedents, not a pattern to be slavishly imitated. It shows what happened when the Spirit was present in power, not necessarily how the Church must live today."<sup>92</sup> Geisler supported this by pronouncing that "these passages are not *prescriptive*, but are simply *descriptive*. Nowhere does it lay this down as normative. It simply describes what the believers were doing."<sup>93</sup> Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart explained that "unless Scripture explicitly tells us we must do something, what is only narrated

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<sup>92</sup> Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, 518-19.

<sup>93</sup> Geisler, *When Critics Ask*, 429.

or described does not function in a normative way."<sup>94</sup> This is the case with the charge of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker and is thereby considered unsupported by the genre of the text (article XIII of the CSBH).

*Overall Evaluation: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?* The information gathered during the questions of inquiry from the method design, as illustrated by the chart below, demonstrate that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the denial of the Church's inception prior to Acts 9 or 13 on account of the actions of early Acts' believers and the alleged obligation for their observance today, is not in harmony with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?		X	
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?			X
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?		X	
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

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<sup>94</sup> Gordon D. Fee and Douglas K. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 106.

### Baptism of the Acts 2 Believers

The final evidence presented by O’Hair, Stam, and Baker as to why the Church began in Acts 9 or 13 pertained to their interpretation of water baptism. Since believers in the early portion of Acts were baptized with water, then they concluded this to mean that they were operating in a different dispensation than that of today. On account of the complexity of this topic, the next section will aid in the analysis and evaluation of this interpretation.

### Concerning Water Baptism

The second tenet of moderate ultradispensationalism as presented by O’Hair, Stam, and Baker pertains to their interpretations concerning water baptism. From their writings, they presented four primary reasons as to why the Church should not practice water baptism today. Their arguments were as follows: (1) water baptism was required for salvation in the past; (2) Paul opposed water baptism in his epistles; (3) the ἓν βάπτισμα (one baptism) of Eph. 4:5 nullifies water baptism; and (4) water baptism was performed in relation to the sign gifts.

### Water Baptism Required for Salvation

The primary explanation presented by O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning their denial of water baptism as applicable today was that they interpreted it as a requirement for salvation in previous dispensations. They derived this conclusion from their interpretation of Acts 2:38 in which Peter declared, Μετανοήσατε, καὶ<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Variant with NA/UBS: Μετανοήσατε ♦ Μετανοήσατε [φησὶν]



βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν,<sup>96</sup>  
καὶ λήψεσθε τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος (Repent, and be baptized every  
one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall  
receive the gift of the Holy Ghost). In O’Hair’s writings, he stated that the  
salvation of the Jews in Acts 2 was accomplished through “repentance and  
WATER BAPTISM.”<sup>97</sup> Stam also concluded that during the occasion of Acts 2,  
“*repentance and baptism were required for the remission of sins*,”<sup>98</sup> however, “in  
the ministry of Paul...water baptism is *never* required for the remission of sins.”<sup>99</sup>  
While some of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker’s writings appear ambiguous to their  
belief as to whether or not they supposed this act was a component of salvation,  
Stam made the most revealing statement in his book *Things That Differ* when he  
proclaimed, “*Water baptism was a requirement for salvation*.”<sup>100</sup> He even  
declared that individuals not baptized during this time period “were condemned  
for their unbelief.”<sup>101</sup> Now that the interpretation was analyzed the following  
sections endeavor to evaluate this interpretation in order to determine if it is in  
harmony with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

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<sup>96</sup> Variant with NA/UBS: ἁμαρτιῶν ♦ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν

<sup>97</sup> O’Hair, *Concerning Dispensational Bible Study*, 10.

<sup>98</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 121.

<sup>99</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 155.

<sup>100</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 178.

<sup>101</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 29.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the context of the passage?* Two central verses within the immediate context of this passage offer valuable guidance in understanding the meaning of Acts 2:38. The first is Acts 2:37. After Peter presented his stinging condemnation upon the Jewish people for their measures which caused the Savior's crucifixion (Acts 2:36), they were convicted of their actions and moved to ask Peter and the rest of the apostles, *Τί ποιήσομεν* (What shall we do?). The response which Peter gave was to *Μετανοήσατε* (repent) and *βαπτισθήτω* (be baptized). Taking the words of Peter in concert with his condemnation upon the Jewish people and their question to him, one could agree with Waterhouse's conclusion that Peter's response "includes more than meeting the minimal condition for salvation. God wanted the listeners to both change their minds about the person and work of Christ, and God wanted them to be baptized."<sup>102</sup> This was on account of the grievous acts which were committed against Christ. The question which Peter's addressees posited in order to amend this act was "What shall we do?" not "how shall we be saved?" This question "had reference to the escape of these guilty men from the consequences of their crime,"<sup>103</sup> and as a way to make amends for their wicked deeds against the Messiah. The answer was to make both an inner and outer commitment to the One who was crucified. As MacArthur observed, "Baptism

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<sup>102</sup> Waterhouse, *Not By Bread Alone*, 146.

<sup>103</sup> J. W. McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts of the Apostles* (Delight, AK: Gospel Light Publishing Company, 1970), 36.

would mark a public break with Judaism and identification with Jesus Christ.

Such a drastic public act would help weed out any conversions which were not genuine.”<sup>104</sup>

The second verse within the immediate context of the passage which bears upon the interpretation of Acts 2:38 is Acts 2:44. In this verse, Luke recorded, Πάντες δὲ οἱ πιστεύοντες ἦσαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό (And all that believed were together). This clause is attributed to those who were referenced in Acts 2:38. Luke did not state “all that believed and were baptized were together” merely “all that believed.” The use of this identifier regarding those gathered together opposes the interpretation that one must have both believed and been water baptized in order to receive salvation during the dispensation of Acts 2.

In addition to the immediate context, the broader context of Acts also aids in the determination of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker’s interpretation as harmonious or inharmonious with the context of the Acts 2. The best illustration of individuals recorded as receiving salvation prior to water baptism is Cornelius and his companions in Acts 10. After Peter received a vision from the Lord, interpreted to represent the approval of Gentiles receiving the gospel, he met an Italian centurion named Cornelius who received a vision himself that his prayer was heard (Acts 10:30-32). In Peter’s dialogue with Cornelius and his companions, he referenced the fact that even the prophets gave testimony to the idea that

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<sup>104</sup> John MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 73.

salvation was recommendable to anyone who believed in the Messiah (Acts 10:43). The Bible then records that τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας τὸν λόγον (the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word) of Peter (Acts 10:44). Everett Harrison observed, “The descent of the Spirit upon the audience was in itself proof that acceptance of the Lord had indeed taken place on the part of the people.”<sup>105</sup> This salvatory act astonished the Jews who observed the event (Acts 10:45), so much so, that Peter silenced their supposed objections by positing, Μήτι τὸ ὕδωρ κωλύσαι δύναταί τις, τοῦ μὴ βαπτισθῆναι τούτους, οἵτινες τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔλαβον καθὼς καὶ ἡμεῖς (Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?) (Acts 10:47). The record that they received the Holy Spirit prior to water baptism is conclusive of the fact that they were saved by no other means than faith. MacArthur commented that this specific passage provides conclusive evidence that “baptism follows salvation; it does not cause it.”<sup>106</sup>

The compilation of this contextual information reveals that the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning water baptism’s alleged requirement for salvation is not in harmony with the context of the passage (article XVIII of the CSBH).

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<sup>105</sup> Everett F. Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 175.

<sup>106</sup> MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*, 74.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the other Scripture?* In order to support the claims of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that salvation was accomplished through belief and water baptism in Acts 2, one would expect evidence to substantiate this claim in other portions of the Scripture; however, upon investigation, the opposite is discovered. In fact, there is one particular instance during the similarly alleged dispensation<sup>107</sup> as that of Acts 2 when an individual was clearly recorded as receiving salvation, yet was never water baptized: the thief on the cross. In Luke's description of Jesus' crucifixion, he took note of a thief who, while receiving the punishment of crucifixion alongside of Christ, defended Jesus' innocence and proclaimed his own guilt (Luke 23:39-41). Upon discourse with the Savior, the thief asked Him to remember him in His death (Luke 23:42). Jesus' reply was that on that day he would join Him in the afterlife (Luke 23:43). There was no interlude to their crucifixions in which Jesus baptized him, neither was there the condemning statement by the Lord that the thief was destined for hell on account of his inability to be baptized with water. Instead, Jesus simply promised the man eternal life with no stipulations attached.

Three central teachings of Jesus Himself are also in stark contrast with the idea that a person must believe and be baptized with water in order to receive salvation during the early Acts period in history. First, in John 3 there are several verses which exhibit salvation by faith alone. In John 3:16 Jesus declared that

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<sup>107</sup> The phrase "alleged dispensation" is used since O'Hair, Stam, and Baker believed that the events of Acts 2 occurred during the same dispensation

παῖς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται, ἀλλ ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον (whosever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life). Only belief is mentioned, not baptism! Second, Jesus stated in John 3:18, Ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται· ὁ δὲ μὴ πιστεύων ἤδη κέκριται, ὅτι μὴ πεπίστευκεν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ μονογενοῦς υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ (He that believes on him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God). Jesus' declaration was that condemnation would only come from disbelief, not belief and failure to be water baptized. Finally, John 3:36 proclaims, Ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον· ὁ δὲ ἀπειθῶν τῷ υἱῷ, οὐκ ὄψεται ζωὴν, ἀλλ ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μένει ἐπ' αὐτόν (He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him). Similar to John 3:18, the eternal dilemma which some will face hinges upon their disbelief in Jesus, not their failure to be baptized with water; and the eternal reward which some will inherit cultivates from their belief in the Savior and not their actions which resulted from that belief.

Waterhouse wisely remarked,

If some verses are studied in isolation from the rest of Scripture, they could be taken to prove that baptism is essential to salvation. However, it is just as true that these same texts can also be interpreted to be compatible with faith alone as a condition for salvation. Obviously, the correct interpretation is that which harmonizes all Scriptures rather than the one that causes contradictions between Scriptures. Since over 150

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as that of the gospels.

verses give faith alone as the condition for salvation, baptism cannot be viewed as a requirement for salvation (though baptism is a requirement for complete obedience to God).<sup>108</sup>

The teachings of Scripture are lucid: salvation has always arrived by faith alone.<sup>109</sup> Any other interpretation stands in violation of the analogy of Scripture and, according to Waterhouse, “would make the Scriptures a massive contradiction.”<sup>110</sup> It is therefore concluded that “neither Peter nor the rest of Scripture makes baptism a condition of salvation.”<sup>111</sup> This demonstrates that the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker from Acts 2:38 that salvation was through belief and water baptism during the early period of Acts is not in harmony with other Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the passage?* The primary word in Acts 2:38 which beckons definition is the Greek preposition εἰς (for). As A. T. Robertson explained, “This little preposition eis, used about 1,800 times in the New Testament in Greek, is variously translated, for, at, toward, unto, into, etc.”<sup>112</sup> It is also rendered “because of,”<sup>113</sup> “with a view

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<sup>108</sup> Waterhouse, *Not By Bread Alone*, 144.

<sup>109</sup> Even Abraham is recorded as being saved by faith during the Old Testament (Romans 4:3). Righteousness was accounted to him through his belief, not through his belief and his works.

<sup>110</sup> Waterhouse, *Not By Bread Alone*, 145

<sup>111</sup> Geisler, *When Critics Ask*, 429.

<sup>112</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament, Volume 3* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 36.

to,"<sup>114</sup> or even "on the basis of."<sup>115</sup> Since there is a plethora of definitions for this preposition, the question then becomes "Which definition should this instance employ?"

Considering that the context of the passage and other Scriptural references demonstrated that the belief in salvation plus anything is in opposition to the teachings of the Bible, one is then directed to focus upon a definition that does not appear in contrast with those finding. Ryrie admitted, "Though it is true that exegetically the text may be understood to say that baptism is unto (*eis*) the forgiveness of sins, it is equally true that it may say that baptism is not *for* the purpose of the forgiveness of sins but *because* of forgiveness (that had already taken place at repentance)."<sup>116</sup> The best biblical example that supports this definition of εἰς is observed in Matt. 12:41. Here, Matthew recorded that the people of Nineveh μετενόησαν εἰς τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰωνᾶ (repented at the preaching of Jonah). The word translated "at" in this passage is the identical preposition as "for" in Acts 2:38 (εἰς). As one author explained, "It certainly cannot mean in that verse that they repented with a view to the preaching of Jonah."<sup>117</sup> They repented

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<sup>113</sup> Harold L. Willmington, *The Doctrine of the Church* (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty Home Bible Institute, 1988), 57.

<sup>114</sup> Geisler, *When Critics Ask*, 428.

<sup>115</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament, Volume 3*, 36.

<sup>116</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 389.

<sup>117</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 389.



“because of” the preaching of Jonah just as the Jews on the Day of Pentecost were commanded to βαπτισθήτω...εἰς (because of) ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν (Acts 2:38).

This is considered the “causal” use of the Greek preposition.<sup>118</sup> Wayne Dehoney gave the example that “a man is executed ‘for murder’—that is, not ‘in order’ to commit murder, but ‘because’ he has.”<sup>119</sup> Waterhouse also presented a contemporary example of this form of usage by showing that people commonly refer to a thief as getting “arrested for shoplifting.”<sup>120</sup> In this usage, he declared that “it is evident that for means ‘because of.’ The police arrested him because of shoplifting.”<sup>121</sup> It is illogical to define this to mean that the police arrested him “in order to” shoplift or “in order to” murder. From this, Ryrie concluded, “Repentance brought the remission of sins for this Pentecostal crowd, and because of the remission of sins they were asked to be baptized.”<sup>122</sup> Therefore, a more suitable way to translate this verse is “Repent and be baptized because of/on account of the remission of your sins.”

In addition to the grammatical considerations of the definition of εἰς, Luther B. McIntyre Jr. proposed another interpretation of Acts 2:38 based on the syntax

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<sup>118</sup> Wayne Dehoney, *Acts*, The Teachers Bible Commentary, ed. Franklin Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), 689.

<sup>119</sup> Dehoney, *Acts*, 689.

<sup>120</sup> Waterhouse, *Not By Bread Alone*, 146.

<sup>121</sup> Waterhouse, *Not By Bread Alone*, 146.

<sup>122</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1961), 24.

of the verse. In his article, "Baptism and Forgiveness in Acts 2:38," he proposed that the grammatical construction of the passage could suggest a solution to harmonizing this verse with the totality of Scripture. Believing that the use of εἰς is purposive, McIntyre declared that "a more fundamental question must be addressed: To which verb—Μετανοήσατε ('repent') or βαπτισθήτω ('be baptized')—the only occurrence of this third person imperative in the New Testament—does the prepositional phrase 'for the remission of your sins' refer?"<sup>123</sup> He affirmed,

The natural inclination for the reader of an English version of the Bible is to impose English rules of syntax on the text. In Acts 2:38 this would mean associating the phrase "for the remission of your sins" with the command to "be baptized" because of word proximity. However, Greek is not constrained with rules of word order in the same ways as English.<sup>124</sup>

In Acts 2:38, Μετανοήσατε is in the second person plural form, βαπτισθήτω is in the third person singular, and ἁματιῶν is in the second person plural. The syntactical issue rests in the person and number agreement between Μετανοήσατε and ἁματιῶν.<sup>125</sup> McIntyre declared, "The concord between verb and pronoun requires that the remission of sins be connected with repentance, not with baptism."<sup>126</sup> He further stated that "if one associates forgiveness with

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<sup>123</sup> Luther B. McIntyre, "Baptism and Forgiveness in Acts 2:38," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (January 1996): 53-54.

<sup>124</sup> McIntyre, "Baptism and Forgiveness in Acts 2:38," 54.

<sup>125</sup> One could also restate this by focusing on the disagreement in person and number between βαπτισθήτω and ἁματιῶν.

<sup>126</sup> McIntyre, "Baptism and Forgiveness in Acts 2:38," 55.

baptism, the verse translated into English with due accord to person and number, would read, 'let him [third singular] be baptized for the remission of your [second plural] sins.' The folly of ignoring concord then is obvious."<sup>127</sup> He therefore concluded, "This structure illustrates that the command to be baptized is parenthetical and is not syntactically connected to remission of sins. When Peter commanded the people to repent, he was speaking to the crowd. Then the command to be baptized was directed to each individual. In the 'remission of your sins' phrase, Peter again directed his words to the crowd collectively."<sup>128</sup> Stanley Toussaint also advocated this interpretation in commentary on the book of Acts.<sup>129</sup>

From the grammatical considerations of both word definition and construction, it is therefore concluded that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning water baptism's requirement for salvation in the early Acts period is not in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the historical background of the passage?*

The background of this passage is established by Luke's record of the sermon Peter preached against the Jews. They were confronted with the fact that the

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<sup>127</sup> McIntyre, "Baptism and Forgiveness in Acts 2:38," 55.

<sup>128</sup> McIntyre, "Baptism and Forgiveness in Acts 2:38," 57.

<sup>129</sup> Stanley D. Toussaint, *Acts*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Publishing, 1983), 359.

very individual whom they were responsible for crucifying was actually the Lord and Savior of mankind (Acts 2:36). The Bible explains that once convicted of this atrocity, the Jews were moved to ask Peter and the apostles what they should do (Acts 2:37). The answer was both to Μετανοήσατε and βαπτισθήτω.

During this period in history, “Baptism was a clear proof...of conversion, whether it be conversion to Judaism, to John the Baptist's message, or to Christianity,”<sup>130</sup> and refusal to be baptized “raised a legitimate doubt as to the sincerity of the profession. Therefore, when the Jewish crowd asked Peter what they must do, he quite naturally said to repent (change their minds about Jesus of Nazareth) and be baptized (give clear proof of that change).”<sup>131</sup> MacArthur commented, “By publicly identifying themselves as followers of Jesus of Nazareth, they risked becoming outcasts in their society (cf. John 9:22). Peter calls upon them to prove the genuineness of their repentance by submitting to public baptism.”<sup>132</sup>

A biblical illustration of this manner of call to commitment is detected in Luke 18:18-27 by the dialogue between Jesus and the rich, young ruler. When confronted by the young man concerning what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus replied that he should πάντα ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον, καὶ διάδος πτωχοῖς (sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor). MacArthur explained, “In much

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<sup>130</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 389.

<sup>131</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 389.

<sup>132</sup> MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*, 73.

the same way, our Lord called upon the rich young ruler to prove the genuineness of his repentance by parting with his wealth (Luke 18:18-27). Surely, however, no one would argue from the latter passage that giving away one's possessions is necessary for salvation."<sup>133</sup> In light of the background of this passage, Acts 2:38 is better understood as Peter's insistence on both an inward repentance and an outward commitment of that repentance. Phillips added,

Their repentance had to be expressed just as publicly as the national sin had been expressed, and the way to make their decision public was by baptism...There could be no hedging on the issue for this people. It was absolutely essential that they be baptized to prove their repentance and to publicly proclaim their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There had to be a conscious repudiation of the guilt of the Hebrew nation by personal acknowledgement of Jesus.<sup>134</sup>

It is therefore concluded that since Peter was seeking for a true commitment from the Jewish people and not pronouncing a salvific formula, this demonstrates that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the addition of water baptism to faith during the early portion of Acts is not in harmony with the historical background of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the genre of the passage?* The literature of the book of Acts is generally regarded as a narrative, and as such, one should not consider the text as a principal location for developing key doctrine; however, one should consider the sermon which Peter preached as normative if it were

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<sup>133</sup> MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*, 73-74.

<sup>134</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring Acts*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1986), 57.

preached in today's dispensation. Depending upon the findings from the evaluation of the previous principles of the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH, if it were determined that Peter actually did ascribe water baptism as a means of salvation, then the genre would support this; but if it were determined that Peter did not, then the genre would not. Since this is so heavily influence by the other principles and not by the genre itself (article XIII of the CSBH), it is given the qualification of "N/A" in the method design.

*Overall Evaluation: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?* As illustrated in the chart below, the evaluation of the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the denial of water baptism as being applicable today because of their allegations that Peter ascribed it for salvation in Acts 2:38 reveals that it is not in concert with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?		X	
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

### Pauline Opposition to Water Baptism

Another central interpretation presented by O'Hair, Stam, and Baker for their denial of water baptism existing as an ordinance of the Church today derived from their allegation that the Apostle Paul opposed it. The support they offered for this is found within their interpretations of 1 Corinthians 1. From this passage, O'Hair, Stam, and Baker utilized two verses in an attempt to substantiate their claims that water baptism is not a requirement for today.<sup>135</sup> The first was their interpretation of Paul's proclamation in 1 Cor. 1:14 when he exclaimed, Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ ὅτι οὐδένα ὑμῶν ἐβάπτισα, εἰ μὴ Κρίσπον καὶ Γάϊον (I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius). Concerning this verse, Stam commented, "It is significant that while Paul did baptize some, and mentions this in his first letter to the Corinthians, he states that he is glad he has baptized so few of them."<sup>136</sup> O'Hair echoed this sentiment by referencing Paul's statement in verse 16 that λοιπὸν οὐκ οἶδα εἴ τινα ἄλλον ἐβάπτισα (I know not whether I baptized any other). He concluded that "if there had been any value to water baptism in Paul's grace message, which is our grace message for today, he would have remembered whether he baptized more than four or five people in

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<sup>135</sup> While these two verses and their interpretations from O'Hair, Stam, and Baker could very easily be separated into two different arguments, their occurrences within the same context of 1 Corinthians 1 motivated the researcher to combine them into one argument to be addressed together.

<sup>136</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 155.

that large city, where he led many to Christ (Acts 18:8).<sup>137</sup>

The second verse O'Hair, Stam, and Baker used to construe that water baptism is not an ordinance for today was 1 Cor. 1:17. In this verse, Paul proclaimed, Οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλέν με χριστὸς βαπτίζειν, ἀλλ εὐαγγελίζεσθαι· οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου, ἵνα μὴ κενωθῇ ὁ σταυρὸς τοῦ χριστοῦ (For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel). Baker affixed verses 14 and 17 by alleging, "The reason or cause for his thanksgiving in this case was not simply that he had baptized so few, but that Christ had not sent him to baptize in the first place; hence he was glad that he had baptized so few...Not one of the Twelve apostles could have honestly said, Christ sent me not to baptize, for that was their specific commission."<sup>138</sup> Now that the interpretations were analyzed the following sections will evaluate these interpretations in order to determine if they are harmonious with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the context of the passage?* Upon investigation of the context of 1 Corinthians 1, two areas of interest to the research manifest themselves. The first relates to the theme of the text. In 1 Cor. 1:11, Paul identified the primary issues he attempted to address as a σχίσματα (division) which developed in the church over who baptized them.<sup>139</sup> Phillips

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<sup>137</sup> O'Hair, *Is Water Baptism a Watery Grave?*, 8.

<sup>138</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 533.

<sup>139</sup> Interestingly, the first issue which he sought to address after writing the prologue to Paul's epistle was this problem (1 Cor. 1:10-11). This is notable



labeled this a “blatant sectarianism”<sup>140</sup> which developed within the church in Corinth. Some Corinthian believers identified themselves with Παύλου, some with Ἀπολλώ, some with Κηφᾶ, and others even with χριστοῦ Himself (1 Cor. 1:12). In response to these declarations of association by the Corinthian believers, Paul proclaimed that he was thankful that he had not baptized many there. The context demonstrates that this statement was not made by Paul to minimize baptism; but instead, it was to show his distaste for the attitude of the believers toward cliques. By making this declaration, Paul was depriving “the partisans in Corinth of every argument for calling themselves after him as the party of Paul.”<sup>141</sup>

Grosheide explained,

Since people often tend to look more at the administrator than at the king who authorizes him, Paul also might have been given a special place at Corinth if he had baptized many in that Church. The Corinthians might then have forgotten whose name it was that had been used at their baptism. This is now impossible....Consequently, nobody can say that he was baptized in the name of Paul.<sup>142</sup>

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considering all the other issues Paul addressed with these believers including fornication (1 Cor. 5:1) and unhealthy relationships with non-believers (1 Cor. 6:14-18).

<sup>140</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring 1 Corinthians*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2002), 26.

<sup>141</sup> John Richard De Witt, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 484-85.

<sup>142</sup> F. W. Grosheide, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 39.

As one author stated, “No one could claim that Paul was baptizing converts into his own ‘pet’ party.”<sup>143</sup> This is further supported by Paul’s attempt in 1 Cor. 1:13 to move the Corinthian believers’ focus off of the men who were influential in their Christian life and place it upon the One who made the Christian life even possible by positing, Μεμέρισται ὁ χριστός; Μὴ Παῦλος ἐσταυρώθη ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, ἢ εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου ἐβαπτίσθητε (Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?). Paige Patterson explained, “Had he baptized many, the party spirit within the Church might have indeed been heightened.”<sup>144</sup> Paul desperately wanted to avoid this type of problem and guide his addressees toward a more unified spirit.

The second area of interest to this research derived from the context pertains to the actions of Paul. Although he declared his thankfulness in not baptizing many (a statement previously addressed), he also admitted to baptizing some. In 1 Cor. 1:14 Paul exclaimed, Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ ὅτι οὐδένᾳ ὑμῶν ἐβάπτισα, εἰ μὴ Κρίσπον καὶ Γάϊον (I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius). While O’Hair, Stam, and Baker proposed that water baptism is not applicable today on account of Paul’s lack of baptizing many Corinthian believers, one could also counter that by virtue of the fact that he baptized even

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<sup>143</sup> Walter Allan Yoho, *A Church that had Problems* (Hollidaysburg, PA: Manahath Press, 1980), 22-23.

<sup>144</sup> Paige Patterson, *The Troubled, Triumphant Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1983), 29.

one single individual, their interpretations are without contextual support.

A final aspect of the context is depicted in 1 Cor. 1:17 by Paul's proclaiming, Οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλέν με χριστὸς βαπτίζειν, ἀλλ εὐαγγελίζεσθαι· οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου, ἵνα μὴ κενωθῇ ὁ σταυρὸς τοῦ χριστοῦ (For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel). While O'Hair, Stam, and Baker interpreted this as Paul disqualifying water baptism, Augustine understood this to mean that Paul was placing more of the importance on preaching the gospel and not because of a doctrinal conviction. He stated, "Yet even men of inferior learning can baptize perfectly, but to preach the Gospel perfectly is a task of much greater difficulty and rarity."<sup>145</sup> In this verse Paul was expressing that "the great *obligation* is not to baptize...the great *objective* is to 'preach the gospel.'"<sup>146</sup>

G. R. Beasley-Murray concluded that any other interpretation that does not take the context of 1 Corinthians 1 and its issue of erroneous association would "yield a contrary meaning without injustice."<sup>147</sup> From this information ascertained by exploring the context of 1 Corinthians 1, it is therefore determined that the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning water baptism's inapplicableness today on account of Paul's opposition is not in harmony with the context of the passage (article XVIII of the CSBH).

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<sup>145</sup> Augustine, *Answer to the Letters of Petilian, the Donatist*, trans. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 1122.

<sup>146</sup> Phillips, *Exploring 1 Corinthians*, 26.

<sup>147</sup> G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 178-79.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the other Scripture?* The search for a direct passage will not yield a contrary declaration from the apostle Paul that he thankfully baptized or that God sent him specifically to baptize. However, the Bible does provide examples within the actions of the apostle Paul, the apostle Peter, Jesus Himself, and the Matthew 28 commission that contradict the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning water baptism's inapplicableness on account of Paul's alleged opposition. The first of Paul's actions which opposes the interpretations of moderate ultradispensationalism are the constant recordings of his baptisms. Some of these baptisms include that of himself (Acts 9:15-18), the Philippian jailor and his family (Acts 16:31-33),<sup>148</sup> and the disciples of John (Acts 19:1-7). While moderate ultradispensationalism might argue that Paul's baptism was under a different dispensation, his baptizing of others could not offer the same retort. Paul's actions as recorded in the book of Acts demonstrate that he did baptize (Jews and Gentiles). Therefore, if O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's interpretations are correct, then Paul was disobedient by both being baptized and baptizing others.

Another action of Paul that advances itself to opposing this moderate ultradispensational view was his circumcising of Timothy. John Leadley Dagg argued that just as one should not conclude that Paul required the circumcision of believers because he circumcised Timothy, one could also not use Paul's

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<sup>148</sup> This passage is also noteworthy since after the Philippian jailor asked Paul how to receive salvation his reply was that he needed only to believe in

quantitative lacking of individuals baptized to conclude that baptism is not for today.<sup>149</sup> While Paul declared the current unimportance of circumcision (Gal. 5:6), the *reason* he circumcised Timothy warrants involvement in its interpretation, not the supposed advancement or degradation of doctrine. This finds applicableness within the interpretation of the 1 Corinthians passage.

Although this example is not definitive, the idea that Paul led individuals to Christ but left others to baptize them may not have been unique to him. After Peter confronted the Jews, appalled at the thought of certain Gentiles' receiving the gospel as seen in their his questioning as to why they could not be baptized since they received the Holy Spirit, the Bible records that Peter commanded the Gentiles to be baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:48). John Schmidt proposed that this suggests Peter did not do the baptizing. By this he concluded, "It is interesting to note that Peter evidently followed a similar practice (Acts 10:48) as Paul by leading individuals to Christ then having others baptize them."<sup>150</sup> Albert Barnes,<sup>151</sup> A. C. Gaebelein,<sup>152</sup> and John MacArthur<sup>153</sup> shared this

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Jesus Christ. Yet, after he expressed that belief, Paul still saw him baptized.

<sup>149</sup> John Leadley Dagg, *A Treatise on Church Order* (Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc, 2006), 18-19.

<sup>150</sup> Schmidt, *Letter to Corinth*, 9.

<sup>151</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1976), 448.

<sup>152</sup> Gaebelein, *Acts of the Apostles*, 209.

<sup>153</sup> MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*, 305.

same understanding of the text.

In addition to Peter's possible limitation in baptizing his converts, Jesus Himself never baptized anyone. The beloved disciple declared in John 4:2 that καίτοιγε Ἰησοῦς αὐτὸς οὐκ ἐβάπτιζεν, ἀλλ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ (Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples). Akin to the contention Paul was endeavoring to avoid with the Corinthians believers, "To have been baptized by the Lord Himself would have brought almost irresistible temptation to pride and would have tended to set such people apart, whether they wanted to be or not."<sup>154</sup> Jesus' delegation of baptism to his disciples is analogous to Paul's baptizing some believers in Corinth and leaving others to be baptized by others such as Apollos or Peter. Barnes declared that while "baptism was not his principal employment" he still "occasionally did it. The same thing was true of the Saviour."<sup>155</sup> This is significant since Paul admitted to baptizing some believers, but Jesus restrained Himself from doing so.<sup>156</sup> In response to Baker's claim that none of the twelve could make the same declaration as Paul when he asserted that he was not sent to

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<sup>154</sup> John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 32.

<sup>155</sup> Barnes, *1 Corinthians*, 11.

<sup>156</sup> Based upon the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker, one might also deduce that baptism was not required during Jesus' time either; since He declared His purpose on earth was that believers would ζῶν ἔχωσιν (have life) in abundance (John 10:10), not to baptize. Also, Paul taught in 1 Tim. 1:15 that Jesus ἦλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἁμαρτωλοὺς σῶσαι (came into the world to save sinners), not baptize believers. Baptism is never mentioned in statements concerning Jesus' mission while upon the earth, yet it was still performed during His ministry by those close to Him under His authority.

baptize,<sup>157</sup> Robert Gromacki observed that Paul adhered to the “same procedure” as the disciples, but in 1 Corinthians 1 “[Paul] did not want believers to align themselves behind him simply because he had baptized them.”<sup>158</sup> Therefore he made that declaration.

A final characteristic of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker’s interpretation befell from their view of the Matthew 28 commission. Although this matter is specifically addressed in the final sections of this chapter, it still warrants brief attention. The commission of Matthew 28 as ordered by the Lord Jesus was not to “baptize”; it was to make disciples. There is only one Greek imperative in the passage; that is the imperative μαθητεύσατε (make disciples; translated “teach” in the Authorized Version). The words Πορευθέντες (translated “go”), βαπτίζοντες (baptizing), and διδάσκοντες (teaching) are all participles which identify the means of attaining that commission. Myron Augsburger remarked, “The emphasis in verse 19 is on ‘making disciples,’ this being the main verb of the verse; the others are subordinate: going, baptizing, teaching.”<sup>159</sup> Those three elements are secondary to that of μαθητεύσατε. That is the reason and purpose of the last orders of the Messiah. Therefore, it is concluded that the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker that Paul opposed water baptism, thereby disallowing it for today, is not in

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<sup>157</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 533.

<sup>158</sup> Robert G. Gromacki, *Called to Be Saints: An Exposition of I Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 15.

<sup>159</sup> Myron S. Augsburger, *Matthew*, The Communicator's Commentary, ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 330.

harmony with other Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the*

*passage?* Two grammatically considerable aspects of 1 Corinthians are noteworthy for this research but do not provide definitive evidence in opposition or affirmation of the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker. The first pertains to the lexical definition of the verb ἀπέστειλέν (sent) as used in 1 Cor. 1:17.

ἀπέστειλέν is the aorist form of ἀποστέλλω which means “to send” (the root from which the word “apostle” is derived).<sup>160</sup> Patterson stated that by using this word “Paul was affirming that his role as an apostle was that of having been sent to preach the good news.”<sup>161</sup> This may allude back to the commission of Matthew 28 and the imperative to “make disciples” further supporting the evidence presented in the previous section concerning the harmony of other Scripture.

A second syntactical aspect of this passage pertains to the use of the preposition γὰρ (for) in the construction of verse 17. Charles Hodge discussed that the use of this word “indicates the connection between why he stated he was glad he did not baptize many and his original purpose for being in Corinth: to preach the gospel.”<sup>162</sup> He then declared,

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<sup>160</sup> Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 67.

<sup>161</sup> Patterson, *The Troubled, Triumphant Church*, 30.

<sup>162</sup> Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 17.



This does not mean that baptism was not included, it does mean that baptizing was very inferior to preaching. It is subordinated in the very form of the commission, 'Go ye therefore, *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them,' &c. The main thing was to make disciples; recognizing them as such by baptism was subordinate, though commanded.<sup>163</sup>

As previously stated, these two evidences are not definitive but are sufficiently noteworthy to mention. On account of this, the evaluation of this portion of the method design, grammatical considerations (article XV of the CSBH), is given a classification of "N/A" since explicit data was not levied in affirmation or opposition to the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning their belief that Paul's alleged opposition to water baptism disallows it for today.<sup>164</sup>

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the historical background of the passage?*

The background to this passage hinges upon the commission of Paul and the dispute of the Corinthians. Acts 9 records the miraculous event of Paul's conversion (also reiterated in Acts 22 and 26). Here, one discovers that after Paul's encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus, Jesus instructed him to continue his journey and then He would reveal His purpose to Paul. Sometime afterward, the Lord sent Ananias to confront Paul because of the great purpose that he prepared for him. When Ananias met Paul, his sight was restored, and Ananias immediately baptized him. An interesting factor of this conversion is that

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<sup>163</sup> Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 17.

<sup>164</sup> Beasley-Murray also illuminated that "v. 17 is to be interpreted in the light of the Semitic manner of laying stress on an issue: Christ sent Paul to preach the gospel rather than to baptize.' But this is no depreciation of the value of baptism." See Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 181.

the Lord orchestrated the rendezvous between Ananias and Paul, and in obedience to the Lord, Ananias baptized him. While the exact details of what Paul must do (Acts 9:6) are nebulous, the fact that he was baptized is inexplicable. Taking this background information into account, the very idea that the Lord orchestrated both Paul's conversion and baptism appears to contradict the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that Paul opposed water baptism.

In addition to the background of Paul's baptism, the background to the dispute between the Corinthians is also significant. From Beasley-Murray's research concerning this issue, he observed, "It is common to invoke here the phenomenon in the mystery cults, that a novice called the priest who initiated him into the mysteries his 'Father', so attesting in Corinth the likelihood of a close relationship between one baptized and his baptizer."<sup>165</sup> He further stated that Paul's objection to their schism "would express the horrifying idea that any might claim to have been baptized *so as to become the disciple of Paul*, thus setting the Apostle in the place of the Kurios."<sup>166</sup> Since this mentality might have exhibited itself with the Corinthian believers, it was logical for Paul to attempt to separate that from the meaning of baptism and the commission to preach the gospel. If they followed in the pagan footsteps of their time, then this would take away from the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 1:17-18). This reveals that the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that Paul opposed water baptism is

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<sup>165</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 179.

<sup>166</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 179.

not in harmony with the historical background of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the genre of the passage?* The genre (article XIII of the CSBH) of the epistle would make Paul's declaration normative if a direct statement from Paul that water baptism was or was not important was definite. However, since he does not do so either way, the qualification of "N/A" is assigned to the evaluation of this section of the method design.

*Overall Evaluation: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?* From the information gathered during the questions of inquiry in the method design and illustrated by the chart below, it is determined that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the denial of water baptism as applicable today on account of Paul's alleged opposition to water baptism as stated in 1 Corinthians 1 is not in concert with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?			X
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X

OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	
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### The ἓν βάπτισμα of Ephesians 4:5

The final reason O’Hair, Stam, and Baker rejected water baptism which this research seeks to analyze and evaluate concerns their interpretation of Eph. 4:5. This verse declares that there is εἷς κύριος, μία πίστις, ἓν βάπτισμα (one Lord, one faith, one baptism). O’Hair’s conclusion was that the ἓν βάπτισμα of Eph. 4:5 is “the death baptism of Christ on the cross,” and believers “would be brought into the Church, into the Kingdom of the Son of God’s love, into union and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, without man’s religious water ceremony.”<sup>167</sup> Stam actually dissented from O’Hair concerning the identity of this baptism by declaring that this was “the operation of the Holy Spirit whereby believers are made one with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4, Gal. 3:26,27, Col. 2:9-12), and so are also made members of ‘one body,’ the ‘body of Christ’ (I Cor. 12:13,27, Gal. 3:26-28).”<sup>168</sup> Baker concurred with Stam’s interpretation and added, “There are various ritual baptisms in the Scriptures, but only one baptism that makes us members of the Body. This baptism is Paul’s great theme, and surely if there is any place where Paul refers

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<sup>167</sup> O’Hair, *Is Water Baptism a Watery Grave?*, 15.

<sup>168</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 155.

to real baptism it is here.”<sup>169</sup> He then concluded, “This could not be both Water and Spirit baptism; for that would be *two baptisms*. It could not be water, because Paul makes it plain that it is by means of Spirit baptism that we are made members of His Body. To make it water would be to rule out the only means of becoming a member of that Body. Hence the one baptism for the Body of Christ is Spirit baptism.”<sup>170</sup>

While there is not a unified agreement between the historic proponents of moderate ultradispensationalism concerning the identity of the ἐν βάπτισμα in Eph. 4:5, one aspect they agreed upon was that it negates water baptism’s applicableness today. Now that the interpretation was analyzed the following sections will evaluate this interpretation in order to determine if it is in harmony with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the context of the passage?* Eph. 4:1-3 establishes the context of the verse. In Eph. 4:1, Paul admonished the believers in Ephesus to ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε (walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called). Eph. 4:3 explains one manner of accomplishing this goal: σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης (to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace). After Paul admonishes this, he presented seven examples that personify the unity

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<sup>169</sup> Baker, *Real Baptism*, 45.

<sup>170</sup> Baker, *Real Baptism*, 82.

wherewith believers are to model.<sup>171</sup> These served as the motivation behind why the believers need to exemplify this unity. The seven unified patterns in Eph. 4:4-6 are ἓν σῶμα (one body), ἓν πνεῦμα (one Spirit), μιᾷ ἐλπίδι (one hope), εἷς κύριος (one Lord), μία πίστις (one faith), ἓν βάπτισμα (one baptism), and εἷς θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ πάντων (one God and Father of all).

In this passage, Paul attempted to reveal many of the commonalities which the believers in Ephesus possessed as a way to support his declaration for them to manifest unity. Writing from this perspective, Albert Barnes declared,

They have taken the same vows upon them. They have consecrated themselves to the same God. They have made the same solemn profession of religion. Water has been applied to one and all as the emblem of the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit; and having been thus initiated in a solemn manner into the same profession of religion, they should be one.<sup>172</sup>

Paul was listing a few of the many elements which believers share in common so that the idea of unity would not seem peculiar to them. The sharing of ἓν βάπτισμα is one such unifying element.

Another unifying element within Ephesians 4 that sheds light upon the contextual interpretation of ἓν βάπτισμα is ἓν σῶμα. Interpreting this element in the same manner as O'Hair, Stam, and Baker have with ἓν βάπτισμα, one is then forced to conclude that there is only a universal body and not local bodies.

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<sup>171</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 514-21.

<sup>172</sup> Albert Barnes, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, Barnes on the New Testament, ed. Robert Frew (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 75.

Warren Wiersbe echoed this logical deduction when writing from the standpoint that the ἓν βάπτισμα was Spirit baptism. He concluded, “As far as the One Body is concerned, there is one baptism—the baptism of the Spirit. But as far as local bodies of believers are concerned, there are two baptisms: the baptism of the Spirit, and water baptism.”<sup>173</sup> He expressed this argument as a way to tie the physical manifestation of local “bodies” from the spiritual “body” and the physical manifestation of “water baptism” from the “Spirit baptism.” This declaration demonstrates that Paul’s use of ἓν in the context was not meant to disqualify other ecclesiological elements, but instead to emphasize why believers should manifest unity.

This further demonstrates that the context of the passage does not support the negating of one baptism in favor of another (whatever one’s interpretation of this text may be). Criswell shared this conclusion by pronouncing, “My persuasion is, however, that whether the baptism is in water or whether it is by the Spirit, there is one baptism. There are not two, there are not three, there are not half a dozen, but there is one baptism as there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of us all.”<sup>174</sup> There is either one Spirit baptism or one water baptism, or one other baptism, not multiple. Paul used this to expose a connection to the unity which he admonished them. From this contextual information, one can conclude that the interpretation

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<sup>173</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Rich* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1979), 98.

of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that Eph. 4:5 disallows water baptism is not in harmony with the context of the passage (article XVIII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the other Scripture?* An investigation of the totality of the Bible will yield the realization that there are a plethora of baptisms, not just one. A few of these baptisms are: the baptism of John (Matt 3:6-11); the baptism of Jesus (Luke 3:21); baptism of fire (Matt 3:11); baptism of Moses (1 Cor. 10:1-2); baptism of the cross/cup (Mark 10:38 cf. Rom 6:3); baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13); and the water baptism of believers (Matt 28:19-20).<sup>175</sup> O'Hair even claimed five baptisms within the gospels, five in the book of Acts, and multiple baptisms of Israel.<sup>176</sup> Baker's final analysis was that there were twelve baptisms found within the entire Bible.<sup>177</sup>

Since the Scriptures clearly expose more than one baptism, some have concluded that this means Paul used ἐν βάπτισμα to illustrate the same identification all believers share (whether that is by water or by the Spirit), and therefore they should all be of one accord. Francis Foulkes stated, "All had passed through the same initiation. All had been 'baptized into Christ' (Gal. iii.

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<sup>174</sup> Criswell, *Ephesians*, 186.

<sup>175</sup> The researcher is aware that moderate ultradispensationalism identifies the water baptism of believers as found in Matthew 28 with the baptism of John; but even if that interpretation was accurate, there are still a surplus of others remaining.

<sup>176</sup> O'Hair, *Is Water Baptism a Watery Grave?*, 15.

<sup>177</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 544-45.



27), not into a variety of leaders, as Paul, Peter and Apollos (i Cor. i, 13), nor into a plurality of Churches. 'By one Spirit', Paul says in i Corinthians xii. 13, 'are we all baptized into one body.' The sacrament is therefore a sacrament of unity."<sup>178</sup> Therefore, this investigation determined that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that ἐν βάπτισμα in Eph. 4:5 disallows water baptism for today is not in harmony with other Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the passage?* Since the "Clarification of Terms" section in Chapter One already defined βάπτισμα, this section will not redefine it because its definition does not reveal its identity.<sup>179</sup> Therefore not enough information is attainable to conclude whether or not the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that ἐν βάπτισμα in Eph. 4:5 nullifies water baptism as applicable today is harmonious or inharmonious with the grammatical considerations of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the historical background of the passage?*

The historical background (article XV of the CSBH) of Ephesians 4 does not reveal any information that supports or opposes the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that ἐν βάπτισμα nullifies water baptism as applicable today. On

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<sup>178</sup> Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 113.

<sup>179</sup> See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 514-21, for a more in-depth discussion

account of this, the qualification of “N/A” is given to the method design concerning this section of the evaluation.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the genre of the passage?* The genre of this passage would make any declaration established within it normative. Therefore, if one determined that Eph. 4:5 directly declared the inapplicableness of water baptism today, then he should consider this definitive proof that believers need not observe this act any longer. However, since this verse does not declare such, there is insufficient information to determine whether or not the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker is in harmony with the genre of the text (article XIII of the CSBH).

*Overall Evaluation: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?* From the information gathered during the questions of inquiry in the method design as illustrated by the chart below, it is determined that the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the denial of water baptism as applicable today because of the ἔν βάπτισμα in Eph. 4:5 is not in concert with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	

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pertaining to the identity of the ἔν βάπτισμα.

3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?			X
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?			X
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

### Water Baptism Related to Sign Gifts

One additional reason O'Hair, Stam, and Baker presented for their conclusion that water baptism is not applicable in today's dispensation was because they interpret water baptism as inseparably related to the sign gifts. O'Hair adamantly asserted that "any exegesis that will eliminate the miraculous signs will eliminate the water ceremony."<sup>180</sup> Stam echoed his conclusion by proclaiming, "If one of them is in order for the Church today, so is the other."<sup>181</sup> Baker explained this connection by avowing that when the speaking in tongues was utilized within the book of Acts it "is associated with water baptism in most of its occurrences;"<sup>182</sup> and since they deduced that the sign gifts ceased, they also concluded that water baptism ceased.<sup>183</sup>

Although this is a primary belief of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning

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<sup>180</sup> O'Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts*, 27.

<sup>181</sup> Stam, *Baptism and the Bible*, 49.

<sup>182</sup> Baker, *Real Baptism*, 77.

<sup>183</sup> Baker, *Understanding the Book of Acts*, 52.

why they surmise that water baptism is not applicable in today's dispensation, considering the issue of sign gifts was previously addressed in the beginning of this chapter in the "Concerning the Origin of the Church" section, it is not revisited here; yet, it is still notable enough to mention.

### **Concerning the Commission of the Church**

The final tenet of moderate ultradispensationalism discussed in this research pertains to the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church. They base their teachings regarding this issue on their interpretations of the Matthew 28 commission, Paul's specific references to the gospel, and the commission which they interpret as applicable for today's dispensation: 2 Corinthians 5.

#### **Interpretations of the Matthew 28 Commission**

From the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker, they offered three primary reasons why the Matthew 28 commission is not applicable for today's dispensation. These reasons are that the Matthew 28 commission includes water baptism, it is related to sign gifts, and it instructs its followers to teach converts τηρεῖν πάντα (to observe all things) that Jesus commanded the disciples. The following sections will analyze these interpretations and evaluate them according to the principles of the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH as presented in Chapter Three.

### **It Includes Water Baptism**

The first opposing point to the applicableness of the Matthew 28 commission today which O'Hair, Stam, and Baker presented was that it contains water baptism. Since water baptism is explicitly mentioned as a means to fulfill the Matthew 28 commission, and O'Hair, Stam, and Baker interpreted it as a requirement for salvation in the past, they immediately concluded that this commission could not apply to today's dispensation. O'Hair stated that in any commission "as long as there was any mention of water baptism there was the testimony to Israel that Jesus was their Messiah and it was unto repentance for the remission of sins."<sup>184</sup> Both Stam and Baker insisted that under the Matthew 28 commission, both faith and water baptism were required for salvation.<sup>185</sup>

While this belief of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church is crucial toward their interpretations, since it was already evaluated in the previous section specifically on "Water Baptism" and found inharmonious with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH, it only requires mentioning here.

### **It is Related to Sign Gifts**

O'Hair, Stam, and Baker also concluded that the commission of the Church is not found in Matthew 28 today because of its relation to sign gifts as evidenced in the

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<sup>184</sup> O'Hair, *Art Thou He That Troubleth Israel?*, 36.

<sup>185</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 122; Baker, *Understanding the Gospels: A Different Approach*, 240-241.

early portion of Acts. O'Hair proclaimed, "If we believe that the program for the Body of Christ is the Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28:19 and 20 and Mark 16:15 to 18, then the Kingdom gospel should be preached and the Kingdom signs should follow, and water baptism should be a factor in salvation."<sup>186</sup> Stam personally remarked, "If this commission is binding upon us today, then this author is not even saved, for he was not baptized when he believed, nor does he work miracles."<sup>187</sup> Baker added that the purpose of the signs was "to prove that the apostles had a message of authority" and that authority was to "usher in the Millennial kingdom."<sup>188</sup>

Similarly with water baptism, since the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning sign gifts was previously evaluated in a section under "Concerning the Origin of the Church" in this chapter, it needs only mentioning and not reevaluating.

### **Its Instruction τηρεῖν πάντα Commanded by Christ**

The third position presented by O'Hair, Stam, and Baker against the Matthew 28 commission as applicable today that this research will address is its admonishment toward believers in verse 20 to teach converts τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην (to observe all things whatsoever [Jesus] commanded). Stam

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<sup>186</sup> O'Hair, *Art Thou He That Troubleth Israel?*, 20.

<sup>187</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 27-28.

<sup>188</sup> Baker, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 68.

concluded that by abiding by the Matthew 28 commission today, this would bring “our hearers under Moses' law and contradicting all that Paul, by divine revelation, later taught about the law and about salvation by grace, through faith, entirely *apart from the law*?”<sup>189</sup> Baker echoed this sentiment by alleging that if the Matthew 28 commission were applicable today then this would necessitate believers' actions such as “bringing gifts and sacrifices to the altar (Matt. 5:24), and obedience to those who sat in Moses' seat (Matt. 23:2,3),”<sup>190</sup> and to also “close out our bank accounts, liquidate all our assets and distribute to the poor.”<sup>191</sup> Finally, O'Hair remarked that “nothing would more frustrate the grace of God” than abiding by this commission. He even appealed to other Scripture to support this by stating, “In the Epistle to the Galatians the Gentiles were forbidden to practice many things in Christ's program in Matthew.”<sup>192</sup> Now that this interpretation was analyzed the following sections will evaluate it in order to determine if it is in harmony with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

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<sup>189</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 20. This statement also demonstrates that Stam appears to believe salvation was through the keeping of the law in the Old Testament.

<sup>190</sup> Baker, *Understanding the Gospels: A Different Approach*, 241.

<sup>191</sup> Stam, *Our Great Commission: What Is It?*, 22.

<sup>192</sup> O'Hair, *The Great Divide*, 15. He did not provide any examples to support this claim.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the context of the passage?* Jesus spent forty days upon the earth with His disciples after His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection; but prior to His ascension, He left His followers with one last command: to μαθητεύσατε (make disciples) by Πορευθέντες (going), βαπτίζοντες (baptizing), and διδάσκοντες (teaching) them τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν (to observe all that [Jesus] commanded [the disciples]). Biblical scholars have promoted various interpretations concerning the identity of ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν. Walvoord interpreted this as Jesus' reference of the Ἐντολὴν καινὴν (new commandment) found in John 13.<sup>193</sup> He asserted, "Jesus was not referring to all His teachings in general, some of which were interpretative of the Law of Moses and were under the older dispensation, but to what He had commanded them as the believers who would be members of the Church which was His body."<sup>194</sup> This referred to Jesus' statement in John 13:34 when He proclaimed, Ἐντολὴν καινὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους· καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους (A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another). This Ἐντολὴν καινὴν contrasted that of the command in Lev. 19:18 to ואהבת לרעך כמוך (love thy neighbor as thyself). While loving someone with the same degree as one loves himself

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<sup>193</sup> John F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1974), 243.

<sup>194</sup> John F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1974), 243.



requires a high level of commitment, to love as Jesus loved elevates the standard to an entirely different level! If Walvoord's interpretation is accurate then this contrasts the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker;<sup>195</sup> however, the primary difficulty with this interpretation stems from Jesus' use of the word πάντα (all). Walvoord only referenced John 13:34 as that which Jesus ἐνετειλάμην, but this is only one command. Since Jesus used the adjective πάντα, then one should conclude that this entails more than just the observance of one principle.

The context of the gospels reveals a vast amount of "commands" given by Jesus. While it would prove too cumbersome to list every commandment given by the Lord, as Robert Thomas observed, the disciples "needed to recall the historical context and the theological circumstances of His teachings and to make appropriate judgments as to how some of His commandments fit new circumstances."<sup>196</sup> An illustration of this is seen by comparing the command of Matthew 10 to that of Matthew 28. In Matthew 10, Jesus commanded His disciples to go only to the house of Israel with His message but in Matthew 28 He tells the disciples to take the message to "all nations." One should not consider this a contradiction, but a Ἐντολὴν καινὴν that superseded the old, much like the one referenced by Walvoord (John 13:34). Each command needed to be

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<sup>195</sup> The researcher would admit that Baker could be correct in his assertion that this could frustrate a believer. Not because it is impossible; but because it is convicting.

<sup>196</sup> Robert L. Thomas, "The Great Commission: What To Teach," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 8.

understood “in light of the change that came in His teaching.”<sup>197</sup> By exercising this judgment, the “commands” of Jesus were not only “relevant to the first disciples” but “they remain relevant today, and they will be relevant until Christ returns.”<sup>198</sup>

This information demonstrates that it is possible for a believer τηρεῖν πάντα that Christ ἐνετειλάμην, whether John 13:34 or the new commands which supersede the old; therefore, the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the interpretation of the Matthew 28 commission as inapplicable today is not in harmony with the context (article XVIII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the other Scripture?* Three central passages aid in the evaluation of the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning this issue. Two of these passages were uttered directly by the apostle Paul (Acts 20:27 and 1 Cor. 11:1), and the other may have been as well (Heb. 5:9). Heb. 5:9 declares, καὶ τελειωθείς ἐγένετο τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ πᾶσιν αἴτιος σωτηρίας αἰωνίου (And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him). This passage unmistakably declares Jesus Christ as the originator and giver of salvation to those who ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ. Vines commented that ὑπακούουσιν means “to listen, and then to obey the word

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<sup>197</sup> Thomas, "The Great Commission: What To Teach," 8.

<sup>198</sup> A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 45-46.

spoken.”<sup>199</sup> In order to listen and obey the word spoken by Jesus, one is forced to find His message of salvation within the gospel accounts. Therefore, the standard to measure this obedience is logically developed within the very place moderate ultradispensationalism rejects as authoritative today.<sup>200</sup>

In addition to Heb. 5:9, Acts 20:27 provides helpful information for this evaluation. Here, Luke recorded the discourse Paul carried out with the elders of the Church of Ephesus. In it, Paul explained that he declared unto them πᾶσαν τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θεοῦ<sup>201</sup> (the whole counsel of God). By Paul’s use of the word πᾶσαν (the feminine form of πάντα), one can conclude that no portion of the Scripture was kept from these men. Paul did not just instruct them according to “his” message, but he saw fit to tell them the πᾶσαν message of God. If believers are not τηρεῖν πάντα that Christ ἐνετειλάμην as recorded in Matthew 28, then this begs the question, “Why did Paul include this in his teaching to the Church leaders in Ephesus?” He did so because they were τηρεῖν it.

Paul uttered the final, and possibly the most considerable, passage that aids in this evaluation in 1 Cor. 11:1. Here, the apostle commanded his readers to Μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε, καθὼς καὶ ἐγὼ χριστοῦ (Be ye followers of me, even as I

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<sup>199</sup> W. E. Vine, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1952), 51.

<sup>200</sup> In addition to these references, when Paul’s doctrine is compared to that of Jesus’, it is discovered that he nowhere contradicts the Lord’s commands. However, he does compliment them. See Appendix F.

<sup>201</sup> Variant with NA/UBS: θεοῦ ♦ θεοῦ ὑμῖν

also am of Christ). In order for Paul to follow Christ, the information on how He lived necessitates derivation from His life as recorded in the gospel accounts. These are the very records which O’Hair, Stam, and Baker claimed as inapplicable today. Paul’s testimony sharply contrasts this interpretation. This further demonstrates that the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker that the commission of the Church is not located in Matthew 28 is not in harmony with other Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the passage?* Of all the principles employed in this evaluation the grammatical considerations revealed the most beneficial evidence utilized to determine if the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker is in harmony with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH. This is developed by considering the lexical meaning of τηρεῖν.

The Greek infinitive τηρεῖν is translated “to observe” in Matthew 28. τηρέω (the root form of τηρεῖν) is translated seventy-four times in the New Testament. It is literally translated as “to attend to carefully,” “take care of,” “to guard.”<sup>202</sup> This word is also translated “to watch” or “to preserve.”<sup>203</sup> Warren C. Trenchard

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<sup>202</sup> Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 622.

<sup>203</sup> James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 633.

advocated the primarily translation of τηρεῖν as “to keep.”<sup>204</sup> John 2 provides an example of this type of translation. After Jesus performed His first miracle at the wedding in Cana, the governor of the feast commended the groom for the delicious wine given at the end of the feast (John 2:9). The comment that the governor made that is applicable here is when he uttered that the groom τετήρηκας τὸν καλὸν οἶνον ἕως (kept the good wine until) the end. τετήρηκας is the perfect, active, indicative form of τηρέω. This translation carries with it the idea of reserving out of respect and for a purpose. The governor was not commending him for “obeying” the good wine until the end of the feast; he commended him for preserving it.

Although O’Hair, Stam, and Baker interpreted τηρεῖν in terms of obedience, this is not the primary meaning of the word. Nowhere in the New Testament is it translated as such. The Greek verb that carries this emphasis is ὑπακούω (to obey). This word is used twenty-one times throughout the New Testament, and in each occurrence it is utilized in terms of a subordinate following an order of a superior. Since Jesus chose to use a form of τηρέω over ὑπακούω, then the interpretation of the lexical meaning of this word should resemble this.

τηρέω speaks to the essence of the application of all Scripture. While all Scripture has only one interpretation, it has various applications. Even Paul

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<sup>204</sup> Warren C. Trenchard. *Complete Vocabulary Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 109, 133.

himself declared in 2 Tim. 3:16 that Πᾶσα γραφή (all Scripture) is ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν (profitable for doctrine). By Jesus' use of τηρέω, it is determined that He was instructing the disciples to “respect” and “attend to” His teachings much like Paul said that it was ὠφέλιμος.<sup>205</sup> From the definition of τηρεῖν in Matt. 28:20, it is therefore determined that the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the Matthew 28 commission is not in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the historical background of the passage?*

After investigating the background to this passage (article XV of the CSBH), it was determined that there is insufficient information to ascertain whether or not the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker is harmonious or inharmonious with the historical background of the passage. Therefore, it is assigned a “N/A” in the method design chart.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the genre of the passage?* As with the historical background section, nothing in the genre of this passage (article XIII of the CSBH) lent itself to affirming or denying the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker. Therefore, it received a classification of “N/A” in the method design chart as well.

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<sup>205</sup> This reveals that, even if the context did not show that the new commandments of Jesus replaced the old, the interpretation is still valid since even the old commandments should be respected by all followers of Christ.

*Overall Evaluation: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?* From the information gathered during the questions of inquiry in the method design as illustrated by the chart below, it is determined that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the denial of the Matthew 28 commission based on the clause *τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν* is not in concert with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?		X	
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?			X
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

### Paul's Specific References to the Gospel

A second interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church pertained to their view of Paul's specific references to the gospel. From Paul's statements in Rom. 2:16, 16:25, and 2 Tim. 2:8, they concluded that

his gospel “was quite different” from that of the disciples.<sup>206</sup> The common expression Paul used in these verses was the phrase κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου (according to my gospel). By the usage of the personal pronoun μου, Baker commented that “the Twelve were preaching what is called ‘the gospel,’” while Paul called it “my gospel;” therefore, he concluded that this was a different gospel than that of Paul and the gospel not required for preaching today.<sup>207</sup> Now that the interpretation was analyzed the following sections will evaluate this interpretation to determine if it is in harmony with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the context of the passage?* In this section, the contexts of Rom. 2:16, 16:25 and 2 Tim. 2:8 are examined in order to determine if the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker are in harmony with it. Concerning Rom. 2:16, the very verse itself assists with this area of evaluation. Here, Paul proclaimed ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὅτε κρινεῖ ὁ θεὸς τὰ κρυπτὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel). By making the statement κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου, James Stifler observed that Paul was explaining that “judgment will not be according to law, which by the Jewish interpretation left relation to Christ out, but according to the Gospel, which makes

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<sup>206</sup> O’Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts*, 19-21.

<sup>207</sup> Baker, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 66-67.



relation to Him the chief factor in the judgment.”<sup>208</sup> Although O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concluded that this reckons a new gospel originating with Paul, this judgment was previously prophesied in the Old Testament. Solomon, in Eccles. 12:14, made a similar statement in declaring, *במשפט יבא האלהים מעשה כל את כי* (For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil). This demonstrates that Paul’s message was obviously not something unique to him since Solomon already made such a prediction concerning the “secret things” receiving judgment from God.

The next passage under consideration contextually is Rom. 16:25. Interestingly, the prologue to the epistle written to the believer in Rome proffers understanding of the context of the epilogue. Boice called this “a deliberate echo of the opening paragraph of Paul’s letter.”<sup>209</sup> In Rom. 1:1-2, Paul declared, that in his apostleship, he was *ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ, ὃ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις* (separated unto the gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures). While he calls it *τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου* at the end of this epistle, he began by labeling the message the *εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ*. Most notably, the fact that Paul declared that this

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<sup>208</sup> James M. Stifler, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary Logical and Historical* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 43.

<sup>209</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The New Humanity: Romans 12-16*, Romans, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 1961.

εὐαγγέλιον...ὃ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις demonstrates that this message was in no way unique to him, or it would not have been previously mentioned in the Old Testament (cf. Deut. 18:18; Isa. 9:6-7; Isa. 53:1; Isa. 61:1; Jer. 23:5).

The context concerning 2 Tim. 2:8 illustrates a twofold message that Paul portrayed to Timothy. First, he emphasized that Christ ἐγχερμένον ἐκ νεκρῶν (was raised from the dead) and secondly, that Jesus was ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ (of the seed of David).<sup>210</sup> Paul concluded by specifying that this was κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου. Neither of these two factors mentioned by Paul was unique to him. Consequently, κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου “does not refer to Paul’s personal opinion about the gospel but to the divinely revealed message of Jesus Christ entrusted to him, which he proclaimed as ‘an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God’ (2 Tim. 1:1).”<sup>211</sup> Therefore, the contexts of Rom. 2:16, 16:25 and 2 Tim. 2:8 demonstrate that the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church as unique to Paul on account of his use of the phrase κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου is not in harmony with the context of the passage.

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<sup>210</sup> Although this order is reversed in the translation, it is in this order in the Greek text. R. Kent Hughes commented, “Certainly there are other elements in the gospel (Christ’s atoning death, imputed righteousness that comes by faith alone through Christ alone, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and so on), but this is shorthand for the whole thing.” See R. Kent Hughes, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 202.

<sup>211</sup> John MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 58.

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the other Scripture?* Exploration of other Scripture pertaining to the passages of Rom. 2:16, 16:25, and 2 Tim. 2:8 revealed three central issues pertaining to the message of Paul and his labeling it τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου. The first concerns the identity of τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν. In Rom. 1:16, Paul declared that the εὐαγγέλιόν is δύναμις θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν (the power of God unto salvation). One may then posit, "What is the gospel?" While this is not expressly defined in the book of Romans, a look at another epistle written by Paul reveals the identity of the gospel: 1 Corinthians 15.

Paul defined the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15; and as Scot McKnight observed, "This is the only text in the New Testament that does so."<sup>212</sup> In 1 Cor. 15:1, Paul commenced by explaining that he declared unto the Corinthians τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ὃ εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν (the gospel which [he] preached unto [them]). He then explained in 1 Cor. 15:3-6 that the gospel consists of the message that Christ ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς γραφάς· καὶ ὅτι ἐτάφη· καὶ ὅτι ἐγήγερται τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ κατὰ τὰς γραφάς· καὶ ὅτι ὤφθη Κηφᾶ, εἶτα τοῖς δώδεκα· ἔπειτα ὤφθη ἐπάνω πεντακοσίοις ἀδελφοῖς ἐφάπαξ, ἐξ ὧν οἱ πλείους μένουσιν ἕως ἄρτι (died for our sins according to the scriptures; was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once).

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<sup>212</sup> Scot McKnight, "Jesus vs. Paul," *Christianity Today*, December, 2010, 28.

A comparison of the gospel as described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 reveals significant resemblances to that of the message of Peter in Acts 2 (which O'Hair, Stam, and Baker claim to be a different gospel). Concerning the gospel which the disciples preached, Baker claimed, "There must have been a vast difference, therefore, between their message and ours today, as surely no one could preach the gospel for today without preaching Christ's death, burial and resurrection."<sup>213</sup> However, when compared they actually display remarkable similarities for they both declare that Jesus Christ ἀπέθανεν (1 Cor. 15:3 cf. Acts 2:23); ἐτάφη (1 Cor. 15:4 cf. Acts 2:27, 31, as translated in 1 Cor. 15:55 and implied in Acts 2:29); ἐγήγερται (1 Cor. 15:4 cf. Acts 2:24, 32); and ὤφθη (1 Cor. 15:5-8 cf. Acts 2:32). Since Paul declared these elements as categorizing τὸ εὐαγγέλιον and Peter's message in Acts 2 directly mentioned them as well, then one can conclude that they preached the same gospel.<sup>214</sup>

Secondly, the many ways Paul described the gospel also aids in the evaluation of other Scripture relevant to O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's interpretation. τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου was not the only descriptive term used by Paul. Other ways he labeled the gospel are as follows: the εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ (gospel of God); τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ χριστοῦ (gospel of Christ); τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν (our gospel); τὸ

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<sup>213</sup> Baker, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, 66-67.

<sup>214</sup> See Appendix F for these lists of similarities and also that of Jesus and the Apostles' message.

εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν (gospel of your salvation); and many others.<sup>215</sup>

Paul's use of so many descriptive terms to mention the gospel confirms that it was in no way exclusive to him. It originated from God through Christ and all can proclaim it. Paul even proclaimed in 2 Cor. 4:5, Οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς κηρύσσομεν, ἀλλὰ χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν κύριον (For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord).

The final factor revealed through the employment of other Scripture relevant to this evaluation were two key features of τὸ εὐαγγέλιον mentioned in Galatians 1. In Gal. 1:6-9, Paul declared that there is only one gospel, and any attempt to alter it is a perversion. Joseph Fitzmyer noted, "This was said in a context of the Judaizing problem in the early Church in which certain Jewish practices were being imposed on Gentile Christians (circumcision, dietary regulations, and the celebration of certain feasts in a Jewish calendar)."<sup>216</sup> Paul exclaimed in Gal. 1:8, Ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐὰν ἡμεῖς ἢ ἄγγελος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ εὐαγγελίζεται ὑμῖν παρ' ὃ εὐηγγελισάμεθα ὑμῖν, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω (But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed). If O'Hair, Stam, and Baker are correct in their interpretation that Paul's gospel was different from that of Peter's, then he

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<sup>215</sup> See Appendix G for a detailed list of all the descriptive terms used by Paul concerning the gospel.

<sup>216</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Gospel in the Theology of Paul," *Interpretation* 33 (1979): 345-46.

is considered cursed according to this passage.

Paul also explained in Gal. 1:23 that people referred to him as Ὁ διώκων ἡμᾶς ποτέ (he which persecuted us in times past) but νῦν εὐαγγελίζεται τὴν πίστιν ἣν ποτε ἐπόρθει (now preaches the faith which once he destroyed). The only message which Paul previously attempted to destroy was that of the disciples (Acts 6-9) and since he proclaimed that he preached that same message, this requires it to be the same as that of the disciples. Peter even affirmed this in his own writings (2 Pet. 3:15-16). Therefore, Paul's various descriptive terms of the gospel, the comparison of Paul's gospel and Peter's gospel, and the other Pauline passages concerning the gospel demonstrate that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that Paul's gospel was different than that of Peter's and the other disciples' on account of his use of the phrase κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου is not in harmony with other Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the passage?* The Greek pronoun μου needs grammatical considerations in this section. Mou is a simple personal pronoun, but its lexical interpretation is vastly significant to moderate ultradispensationalism. Mou is a genitive, masculine, singular pronoun. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey explained that the genitive is "the case of definition or description,"<sup>217</sup> and Gessner Harrison noted that the

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<sup>217</sup> H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek*

genitive "is employed to qualify the meaning of a preceding noun, and to show in what more definite sense it is to be taken."<sup>218</sup> The genitive is translated a multitude of ways; however, the way in which it is translated here is of great importance to its outcome. The two most common ways to translate the genitive are by description or position. Friedrich Blass explained that the genitive of description is the most extensive use of the genitive,<sup>219</sup> and Dana and Mantey remarked that it "is clearly the use of the genitive which lies closest to its root meaning" and is used "to describe."<sup>220</sup>

The genitive of possession "quite easily blends with the idea of ownership."<sup>221</sup> Examples of genitives of possession are "my book," "my house," or "my car." This is the manner in which O'Hair, Stam, and Baker interpreted Paul's use of τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου in Rom. 2:16; 16:25, and 2 Tim. 2:8. This is an awkward interpretation of μου because no one "owns" the gospel like he can a book, house, or car. Therefore, the best way to interpret τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου in these passages is as a genitive of description. R. C. Lenski stated, "Since the

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*New Testament* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1955), 72.

<sup>218</sup> Gessner Harrison, *A Treatise on the Greek Prepositions* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1860), 16.

<sup>219</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Blass, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, trans. Henry St John Thackeray (London: Macmillan & Co, 1898), 95.

<sup>220</sup> Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 73.

<sup>221</sup> Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 76.

enclitic *μου* is without emphasis, this little ‘my’ does not indicate a difference between the form of gospel as preached by Paul and the form as preached by the other apostles.”<sup>222</sup> Interpreted this way, “the significance of *μου* is not that the reference is to a peculiarly Pauline gospel, but that the gospel referred to is that which Paul (together with other Christian preachers) has constantly preached.”<sup>223</sup> Matthew Henry concluded that “Paul calls it his gospel, because he was the preacher of it and because he did so much glory in it,” not because it was his alone.<sup>224</sup>

This usage of *μου* demonstrates that the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning Paul’s use of the phrase κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου as a determining factor to conclude that he obtained a different gospel than that of the early Acts period is not in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the historical background of the passage?*

τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν finds its background within the act of Jesus upon the cross of Calvary and Paul’s preaching of that gospel throughout the world. After Paul’s

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<sup>222</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1936), 175.

<sup>223</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary 2 (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark Limited, 1979), 809-10.

<sup>224</sup> Matthew Henry, *Acts to Revelation*, Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible 6 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 405.



conversion, he preached τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν of Jesus Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and witness with an unparalleled zeal; this fervent preaching eventually lead to Paul's imprisonment and martyrdom. Phillips elegantly observed, "When Paul preached his gospel in Jerusalem, he was mobbed. When he preached it in Athens, he was mocked. When he preached it in Rome, he was martyred."<sup>225</sup> However, prior to Paul's death, he wrote these two epistles (Romans and 2 Timothy) and referenced his message with the phrase κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου. Robert Haldane observed, "During this time, there were those going around preaching a different doctrine than that recorded in the gospels and preached by Paul."<sup>226</sup> In response to this erroneous preaching, "Paul calls the Gospel his Gospel, to intimate that different doctrines would be preached by false teachers as the Gospel. But all other gospels, except that of Paul and the other Apostles, are false."<sup>227</sup> In fact, the apostle John addressed this similar issue in 2 John.

Taking this historical background into account, it is determined that Paul was not making the statement τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν to ascribe any ownership, as O'Hair, Stam, and Baker interpret it. Instead, he pronounced this in order to identify what

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<sup>225</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring the Pastoral Epistles*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004), 372.

<sup>226</sup> Robert Haldane, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 648.

<sup>227</sup> Robert Haldane, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*, 648.

he preached as opposed to the message of the false teachers of his time. This demonstrates that O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's interpretation is not in harmony with the historical background of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the genre of the passage?* Nothing in the genre of these passages (article XIII of the CSBH) aided in the determination of whether or not the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church and Paul's use of the phrase κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου is harmonious or inharmonious with the texts. Therefore, it is ascribed a qualifying category identification of "N/A" in the method design.

*Overall Evaluation: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?* From the information gathered during the questions of inquiry in the method design as illustrated by the chart below, it was determined that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning Paul's specific references to the gospel is not in concert with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?		X	
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	

5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

### The Moderate Ultradispensational Commission for the Church

The final interpretation presented by O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church for today is observed by their declaration of its location in the New Testament: 2 Corinthians 5. Stam claimed that this new commission was received by Paul directly from the Lord Jesus Himself. He taught, “After His ascension the rejected Christ spoke again from His exile in heaven and gave another and greater commission to Paul and to us.”<sup>228</sup> This “greater commission” (allegedly different from that of Matthew 28) is located in 2 Cor. 5:14-21.<sup>229</sup> Baker called this the “true commission for members of the Body of Christ.”<sup>230</sup>

Four reasons are presented by moderate ultradispensationalism as to why the words of 2 Corinthians 5 override that of Matthew 28. First, it does not contain any mention of signs. Secondly, water baptism is not referenced. Thirdly, Paul’s statement that Jesus θέμενος (committed) the διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς (ministry of reconciliation) does not appear in Matthew 28. Lastly, the 2 Corinthians 5 passage states that a believer today is a καινὴ κρίσις (new

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<sup>228</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 123.

<sup>229</sup> O’Hair, *The Great Divide*, 13.

<sup>230</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Synopsis of the New Testament*, 43.

creature); therefore, he is something different from that of the early Acts believers.<sup>231</sup> Because of these four factors of the 2 Corinthians 5 passage Baker concluded that this makes it “God’s will and purpose for today.”<sup>232</sup> Since the two former proofs suggested by O’Hair, Stam, and Baker were previously evaluated (signs and water baptism), this research will only focus upon the latter.<sup>233</sup>

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the context of the passage?* Ralph Martin noted, “In the course of a discussion with the Corinthian Church Paul introduces a piece of accepted teaching on the theme of reconciliation.”<sup>234</sup> This major doctrinal principle is the thrust of the context of the passage. Martin continued, “These words pick up and state clearly what were central assertions in Paul’s public proclamation which in turn was based on teaching he had received (1 Cor 15:3ff.).”<sup>235</sup> Within this teaching, Paul made three primary assertions concerning the act of reconciliation. The first is that Christ’s death brought reconciliation of

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<sup>231</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Synopsis of the New Testament*, 43-44.

<sup>232</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 540.

<sup>233</sup> This researcher admits that Paul’s words are applicable today, but the extent to which O’Hair, Stam, and Baker interpreted them will receive evaluation in order to determine if they are in harmony with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH. Paul’s words are not evaluated, but rather their interpretations of those words.

<sup>234</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*. Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and Ralph P. Martin, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 140.

<sup>235</sup> Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary 2 Corinthians*, 141.

the world to God (verse 19, 21). In 2 Cor. 5:21, Paul revealed that Jesus was made sin, *μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν* (who knew no sin), so that those who followed Him would receive the righteousness of Christ. G. Coleman Luck explained that “the *reason* men can be reconciled to God is because the Father has made the Son to be ‘sin for us.’”<sup>236</sup> 1 Cor. 5:19 shows that this sacrificial act not only provided righteousness to those who believe in Him, but it also reconciled the world to God. One might then ask, “When did this reconciliation transpire?” The context of the cross provides the answer to this query. Immediately after that great event, reconciliation was appropriated. One can then conclude that since man was reconciled to God on the cross, anyone who trusted in that sacrifice received the righteousness of Christ immediately thereafter; therefore acquiring the *διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς*.

The second aspect of reconciliation revealed through this passage is the concept that anyone *ἐν χριστῷ* is a *καινὴ κτίσις* (2 Cor. 5:17). While O’Hair, Stam, and Baker interpreted this to mean that Paul was discussing the believers of the dispensation of the Church from Acts 9 or 13 until today, the context of the passage reveals otherwise. 2 Cor. 5:18 demonstrates that this reconciliation “is attached to Christ’s death, and to that as an expiation.”<sup>237</sup> On account of this act

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<sup>236</sup> G. Coleman Luck, *Second Corinthians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), 58.

<sup>237</sup> Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1962), 216.

of reconciliation through Jesus, Paul declared that those who are ἐν χριστῷ are now καὶνὴ κτίσις. Philip Hughes commented, “The expression ‘in Christ’ sums up as briefly and as profoundly as possible the inexhaustible significance of man's redemption. It speaks of security in Him who has Himself borne in His *own* body the judgment of God against our sin.”<sup>238</sup> The reason for this καὶνὴ κτίσις was due to man's reconciliation to God by Christ on the cross. The applicableness to this research is the reality that the act of reconciliation transpired on the cross; therefore, this καὶνὴ κτίσις could exist anytime thereafter.

The final aspect of reconciliation as revealed through this passage is that these new creatures were made ambassadors of Jesus Christ with the ministry of telling others about that reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19). As the process revealed, since Christ reconciled the world to God proffering righteousness to those who believed in Him after His crucifixion and since those who believe in Christ's sacrifice become καὶνὴ κτίσις, then these καὶνὴ κτίσις received this ministry of reconciliation immediately after the cross becoming ambassadors for Him as well. This further demonstrates that this was not a new commission given to the Church, but rather a clarification of that which already transpired upon the cross.

From the context of this passage, it is therefore determined that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church as solely found in 2 Corinthians 5 is not in harmony with the context of

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<sup>238</sup> Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 201-02.

the passage (article XVIII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the other Scripture?* Other passages of Scripture concerning the soteriological doctrine of reconciliation assist in understanding the principles of it and aid in the evaluation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker’s interpretation concerning the commission of the Church. Rom. 5:10 reveals that κατηλλάγημεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son), and Col. 1:21-22 explains, Καὶ ὑμᾶς ποτὲ ὄντας ἀπηλλοτριωμένους καὶ ἐχθροὺς τῇ διανοίᾳ ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς πονηροῖς, νυνὶ δὲ ἀποκατήλλαξεν ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου, παραστήσαι ὑμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους καὶ ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ (And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight). Hughes remarked, “The atoning, substitutionary death of Christ brings reconciliation and peace with God.”<sup>239</sup> This verse, much like the context of 2 Corinthians, reveals that the death of Jesus was the act which appropriated reconciliation. Therefore, anyone who trusted in Christ’s sacrificial work on the cross afterward would attain the ministry to tell others about this reconciling act.

Another key passage of Scripture relevant to this research concerns the

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<sup>239</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word: 2 Corinthians* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 125.

result of one who trusts in Christ's reconciling work on the cross and becomes a καινὴ κτίσις (new creature). Paul elaborated upon this principle when writing to the church in Galatia. Hughes commented that in Gal. 6:14-18, "Paul tells the Galatians that, through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, the world having been crucified to him and he to the world, former distinctions, such as that between circumcision and uncircumcision, are of no consequence, but only a new creation."<sup>240</sup> A notable aspect of this passage concerns Paul's revelation that after the cross the work of circumcision was nullified. This demonstrates that the barrier between Jew and Gentile was already severed prior to Paul even writing about it. While those during the early Acts period did not completely understand all that transpired, this does not negate its existence. Therefore, taking these passages into account, one can determine that the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church are not in harmony with other Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the passage?* Several grammatical considerations were observed from 2 Corinthians 5 which aid in the evaluation of the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church. Each of these grammatical considerations dealt with the lexicography of the text. The first word that beckons defining is καταλλαγῆς (reconciliation). The general definition of this term, as

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<sup>240</sup> Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 202.



given by Greek lexicographer Thayer, is "to change" or "exchange."<sup>241</sup> It is also defined as "to make hostility cease" or "to lead to peace."<sup>242</sup> In essence καταλλαγῆς indicates "the action by which peace is made between personal enemies."<sup>243</sup>

T. W. Manson observed that when studied theologically, καταλλαγῆς "denotes a change in the relations between God and man and more particularly a change in man himself."<sup>244</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer declared, "In the New Testament its meaning is that of a complete and thorough change accomplished by the actual removal of the cause of enmity, so making reconciliation."<sup>245</sup> When used in the Bible, this word exposes an individual to the fact that since man was an enemy of God on account of his sin, the sacrifice of Christ acted as the reconciliatory act by which this enmity was absolved. William Kelly stated that it is "God's settlement of account in favour of him who, if he has nothing to pay, submits to His righteousness."<sup>246</sup> Since Paul taught that this reconciling of man to

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<sup>241</sup> Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 333.

<sup>242</sup> Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, 146.

<sup>243</sup> Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, 146.

<sup>244</sup> T. W. Manson, "On Paul and John," *Studies in Biblical Theology* 38 (1963): 52.

<sup>245</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Salvation: A Clear Doctrinal Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1955), 25.

<sup>246</sup> William Kelly, *Notes on the Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians with a New Translation* (Oak Park, IL: Bible Truth Publishers, 1975), 114-15.

God took place on the cross by Jesus' sacrifice, the inability to obtain this reconciliation until the apostle Paul would not agree with the definition of καταλλαγή.

A final word in the 2 Corinthians 5 passage that necessitates defining is πρεσβεύομεν (ambassadors). Research reveals that this word discloses the most significant information which helps to evaluate the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church. πρεσβεύομεν is defined as "a high minister of state who represents one country, or sovereign, in another land."<sup>247</sup> The analogy Paul uses here is that of "an imperial legate in the Roman Empire, a man of immense authority. As such he did not speak in his own name or act on his own authority. Nor did his message originate in him, but from above. He stood in his Sovereign's stead and authority."<sup>248</sup> One author declared, "An ambassador acts and speaks not only on behalf of but also in the place of the sovereign from whom he has received his commission. It is his duty to proclaim faithfully and precisely the message entrusted to him by his sovereign."<sup>249</sup>

When Christ was on the earth, He had no need for ambassadors since He was accessible; but now that He abides in heaven, this position of honor is bestowed upon all believers. Therefore, the ambassadorship of Christ was made possible after the ascension of Jesus in Acts 1. Hughes stated that "the

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<sup>247</sup> Luck, *Second Corinthians*, 57.

<sup>248</sup> Hughes, *Preaching the Word: 2 Corinthians*, 124-25.

<sup>249</sup> Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 209.

evangelistic duty of Christ's ambassadors [is] to go into all the world and announce the good news of reconciliation to every creature, pleading with men to receive as their own what God has freely provided in His Son.”<sup>250</sup> Therefore, the very definition of πρεσβεύομεν demonstrates that as soon as Christ departed this earth, the ministry of reconciliation was then committed to the disciples whether they completely understood it or not.

From the definition of these two terms, καταλλαγῆς and πρεσβεύομεν, it is determined that the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church is not in harmony with the grammatical considerations of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the historical background of the passage?*

The ultimate background to this passage finds its foundation in man’s spiritual demise. The very idea that man needed reconciliation to God reveals that at some time in history a rift developed between God and man. Hughes remarked, “The need for this message is seen against the background of man's alienation from God; and the cause of this alienation is, in a word, sin.”<sup>251</sup> This alienation found its commencing with Adam in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Earl Radmacher noted that “Adam and Eve's sin plunged the entire human race into

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<sup>250</sup> Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 211.

<sup>251</sup> Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 204-05.

separation from God and enmity against Him.”<sup>252</sup> This is why the Bible declares that men were considered ἐχθροὶ (enemies) of God (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21). Yet, “through the work of the Cross, Jesus Christ has brought man and God together again,”<sup>253</sup> as Paul revealed in 2 Corinthians 5. Robert Lightner observed, “Because of sin in Adam the entire human race is out of balance, and God's work of reconciliation through the death of Christ extends to the entire world (2 Cor. 5:19)—in a provisional way and in an experiential and personal way to those who believe (2 Cor. 5:18).”<sup>254</sup>

However, Paul explained that the death of Christ on the cross not only brought reconciliation to man, but it also made believers in that sacrifice καινῇ κτίσις (new creatures). The word καινῇ, as observed by Alan Redpath, “is not used to convey the sense of something recent, as you would buy a new coat to replace an old one; it is used in the sense of becoming a totally different kind of person.”<sup>255</sup> One of the greatest acts at Christ’s crucifixion was the Lord’s deafening statement of tearing the veil to the “holy of holies” in the temple from the top to the bottom (Matt. 27:51), thereby signifying a great change in the way

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<sup>252</sup> Earl D. Radmacher, *Salvation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 60.

<sup>253</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Encouraged* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 66.

<sup>254</sup> Robert P. Lightner, *Sin, the Savior, and Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1991), 122.

<sup>255</sup> Alan Redpath, *Blessings Out of Buffetings: Studies in II Corinthians* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1965), 93.

man approached God. Under the law in the Old Testament, the priestly order administered the sacrificial standard for approaching God. Christ's death on the cross for mankind's sins drastically changed this system by reconciling them to God. Martin explained, "Paul is not describing in *this context* the personal dimension of a new birth; rather he is announcing as a kerygmatic statement *the advent of the new creation 'in Christ,'* the dramatic recovery of the world, formerly alienated and dislocated."<sup>256</sup> This allowed for every individual who trusted in that sacrifice to become his own priest (1 Pet. 2:5-9). Kelly noted that this καινή κτίσις represented "not Levites, nor priests [of the sons of Aaron], nor yet the high priest, but Christ dead and risen, and this in the aspect of divine grace."<sup>257</sup>

This historical background reveals that the καινή κτίσις was not linked to any act of Paul or the gospel's advancement to the Gentiles; it is inseparably connected to the reconciliation of mankind to God by Jesus Christ on the cross. Once the Lord appropriated this act, all believers in Jesus' sacrifice were made καινή κτίσις. This must include those believers in the early portion of Acts. It is therefore determined that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that the commission of the Church is solely located in 2 Corinthians 5 is not in harmony with the historical background of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

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<sup>256</sup> Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, 146.

<sup>257</sup> Kelly, *Notes on the Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the*

*Is this interpretation in harmony with the genre of the passage?* After investigation of the genre (article XIII of the CSBH) in which 2 Corinthians 5 rests, it was determined that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church is neither supported nor denied.

*Overall Evaluation: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?* From the information gathered during the questions of inquiry in the method design as illustrated by the chart below, it is determined that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning 2 Corinthians 5 is not in concert with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?		X	
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The question this research purposed to answer was: “Are the ecclesiological interpretations of the historic proponents of moderate ultradispensationalism, Stam, O’Hair, and Baker, concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church in harmony with the grammatical-historical method, the hermeneutic which leads to a truly dispensational theology?” From this research question, the purpose of this study was to analyze and evaluate the interpretations of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the origin of the Church, baptism, and the commission of the Church in order to determine their adherence to the grammatical-historical method of interpretation and the CSBH.

After the review of pertinent literature revealed the uniqueness of this research, Chapter Three outlined the method design for evaluating moderate ultradispensational interpretations. This design derived from the employment of certain principles of the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH such as context, other Scripture, grammatical considerations, historical background, and literary genre. The design was organized in such a way that each principle of the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH was presented as a question (i.e. “Is this interpretation in harmony with the *context* of the passage?”). The answers to these questions derived from research into the passages

themselves.

Since the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church were already analyzed and evaluated according to this method design in Chapter Four, this final chapter will therefore accomplish three things. First, it will briefly summarize the findings of the analysis and evaluation of Chapter Four. Then it will address the subsidiary questions of the research. Finally, this research will present conclusions of the research and make recommendations for further study.

### **Summary of the Research**

Since each of the primary tenets of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church was analyzed and evaluated in great detail in the previous chapter, this portion of this chapter will not recreate what was already presented, but instead it will summarize the principal aspects of that research in a succinct form. This is accomplished by briefly analyzing the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker and then presenting a concise overview of the evaluation.

#### **Interpretations of the Origin of the Church**

The first of the three primary tenets of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that was analyzed and evaluated pertained to their belief that the Church finds its origin in Acts 9 or 13. While the research contained a limited scope which prevented every interpretation concerning this topic from receiving discussion, three central issues which had bearing upon the conclusions of moderate



ultradispensationalism were analyzed and evaluated in order to determine if they were in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH.

These three issues were their interpretations of the μυστήριον of the Church as revealed by Paul, the use of sign gifts on the day of Pentecost, and the alleged communistic works of the Acts 2 believers.

### **Evaluation of the Interpretations Concerning the Μυστήριον**

O'Hair, Stam, and Baker claimed that the μυστήριον of the Church (Eph. 3:3) was solely revealed to Paul; and, as such, demanded its inception find relation with this event. Baker concluded that "since it was a mystery and not the subject of prophecy, and since its truth was committed to Paul, it is reasonable and logical to believe this new Body and new dispensation began with Paul at Antioch and not with Peter at Pentecost."<sup>1</sup> The evaluation of this interpretation revealed that this was not in harmony with the grammatical-historical method of interpretation and the CSBH because it violated the context of the passage, other Scripture, grammatical considerations of the passage, and the historical background of the passage.

The context of Ephesians 3 exposed two aspects of the μυστήριον which moderate ultradispensationalism failed to observe in their hermeneutic. The first was that the identity of the μυστήριον, as revealed by Eph. 3:7, was not the Church itself but one aspect of the Church: that τὰ ἔθνη (the Gentiles) are

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<sup>1</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Synopsis of the New Testament*, 27 and Baker,

συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμετόχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ χριστῷ  
(fellowheirs of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ). While this

was one aspect of the Church, it did not constitute the entire Church itself.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, the context of the μυστήριον exposed that it was revealed to the τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις (holy apostles and prophets) ἐν πνεύματι (by the Spirit). This established that Paul was not the sole recipient of this revelation, since other apostles and prophets received it by the Holy Spirit Himself. These demonstrated that the conclusion that the Church's inception was connected to the revelation of the mystery to Paul violated the context of the passage (article XVIII of the CSBH).

The examination of other Scripture exhibited two passages in the New Testament that demonstrated this μυστήριον was not solely revealed to Paul. One was in the gospels (Matthew 13; Mark 4; and Luke 8) when Jesus turned His method of speaking from the simple sermons to the prolific parables in order to hide the μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας (mysteries of the kingdom) from everyone but the disciples. The other was in Acts 10 and 15 by the Lord Jesus' appearing to Peter and his interpretation of this occurrence to the counsel in Jerusalem. While the exact term μυστήριον was not used, the content of it was evidenced.

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*A Dispensational Theology, 477.*

<sup>2</sup> Another interesting observation of this verse presented was that since Gentiles were converted after many Jews, in order for them to become a part of the σύσσωμα (same body) it must have already been in existence. This is in opposition to the claims of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker.

Therefore, it was concluded that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that only Paul received the revelation of the μυστήριον and that that revelation marked the inception of the Church violated other passages of Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

From the investigation of the grammatical considerations of the passage, the definition of the term μυστήριον revealed that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker was erroneous. Μυστήριον means "hidden purpose or counsel, secret will."<sup>3</sup> This denoted something unknown and unrevealed, but not something nonexistent (as O'Hair, Stam, and Baker interpreted it). This discovered that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the inception of the Church as dependent upon the revelation of the μυστήριον violated the grammatical considerations of the text (article XV of the CSBH).

Finally, the investigation of the historical background of the passage revealed that within the framework of how Paul's readers understood this μυστήριον, on account of the mystery religions in their society and the Jewish literature they read, it indicated that the absence of that revelation did not negate the reality of its information. Just because a "mystery" religion had secrets that only the initiated knew did not mean that the specifics concerning these secrets were nonexistent. According to this information, the interpretation of the revelation of the μυστήριον as synonymous with the institution of the Church violated the historical background of the passage (article XV of the CSBH). Therefore, from

the evaluation it was determined that this interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker was not in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH.<sup>4</sup>

### **Evaluation of the Interpretations of Sign Gifts at Pentecost**

The next tenet evaluated pertained to the use of sign gifts on the day of Pentecost. Baker directly stated that "if the Body of Christ came into being on the day of Pentecost, it would appear logical to go back to Pentecost to discover the program and message which the Church should be practicing."<sup>5</sup> By this he proclaimed that if the Church had begun prior to Acts 9 or 13, then the Church today would be exemplified by the operation of sign gifts. An evaluation of this interpretation exposed its discord with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH because it violated the principles of context, other Scripture, historical background, and genre.<sup>6</sup>

From the context of the book of Acts, specifically Acts 8, the discovery that an instance prior to the alleged institution of the Church by moderate

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<sup>3</sup> Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 420.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix H for the "Evaluation of Data Chart" concerning this interpretation.

<sup>5</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 476.

<sup>6</sup> It deserves restating that the research purposed not to address the issue of whether or not the sign gifts are operable today. Rather, it focused upon the statements of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that these gifts could not have been evidenced in the early Church.

ultradispensationalism did not manifest sign gifts during the conversion of individuals demonstrated the inability to conclude that this interpretation was in harmony with the context of the passage (article XVIII of the CSBH). In addition to the contextual evidence, three passages of Scripture showed that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker was incongruent with the principle of other Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH). 1 Cor. 14:22 proclaimed the gift of tongues a σημεῖόν (sign) of the judgment upon the Jewish people and the gospel's evolution to other languages; 1 Cor. 14:18 expressed Paul's Εὐχαριστῶ (thankfulness) that spoke πάντων ὑμῶν μᾶλλον γλώσσαις (with tongues more than [his addresses]), an anomalous comment from the individual connected to the institution of the Church by moderate ultradispensationalism; and Jas. 5:14 instructed who O'Hair, Stam, and Baker considered the Jewish body church<sup>7</sup> to look to the ἡ εὐχή τῆς πίστεως (the prayer of faith) for healing, not an individual endowed with the sign gift of healing.

Also, the historical background of the passage explained that the operation of sign gifts was not a new occurrence in the history of the Bible; but the means by which to introduce a new era of revelation and to authenticate the messengers of that revelation (Mark 16:20; cf. 2 Cor. 12:2 and Heb. 2:3-4). Finally, the genre of the book of Acts necessitated interpretation as a narrative, not as a doctrinal work that gave the norm for the outworkings after conversion of

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<sup>7</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Synopsis of the New Testament*, 107-11.

the Church today. Therefore, to claim that the outworkings of these events must be exemplified today in order for the Church to have begun during the early portion of Acts violated the genre of the book (article XIII of the CSBH).

From the information gathered during the evaluation, the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the denial of the Church's inception prior to Acts 9 or 13 on account of the use of sign gifts during this time period was found in variance to the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.<sup>8</sup>

### **Evaluation of the Interpretations of the Works of Acts 2 Believers**

The final interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the origin of the Church evaluated in this research pertained to their view of the works of early Acts believers. On account of the monumental financial sacrifices of the believers as recorded in Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-35, O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concluded that these undertakings were considered "communistic" and if the Church truly began in Acts 2, then this would demand believers to exemplify the same acts of these early Christians. O'Hair charged that those who claim the Church's inception in Acts 2 "neither practice this communism nor preach it for this dispensation."<sup>9</sup> Stam further asserted that once the Church began in Acts 9, this "order has been rescinded."<sup>10</sup> Baker even labeled these acts of the early Acts

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix H for the "Evaluation of Data Chart" concerning this interpretation.

<sup>9</sup> O'Hair, *A Study of the Book of Acts*, 9-10.

<sup>10</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 125.

Christians “a true communism...which will prevail in the Millennial Kingdom.”<sup>11</sup>

The evaluation of this interpretation revealed that it violated the principles of context, other Scripture, grammatical considerations, and genre. The grammatical considerations showed that the deeds of the early Acts’ believers did not abide by the definition of “communism,” the Greek word used in the passage, κοινά, or the verb tenses of the passage. The context demonstrated that the actions of the early Acts’ believers were not forcible and they actually did not sell everything they possessed like what is required in a communistic society. Other passages of Scripture, like 1 Corinthians 16, 1 Tim. 6:18, and 2 Corinthians 8, exposed the interpretations to violating other Scripture. Lastly, parallel to that of the evaluation of the genre of the use of sign gifts in the early portions of Acts, the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker was found invalid. Therefore this interpretation was not in harmony with the grammatical-historical method of hermeneutics and the CSBH.<sup>12</sup>

#### Interpretations of Water Baptism

The second tenet of moderate ultradispensationalism as presented by O’Hair, Stam, and Baker which this research analyzed and evaluated pertained to their interpretations concerning water baptism. From their writings, they present four primary reasons as to why the Church should not practice water baptism today.

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<sup>11</sup> Baker, *Understanding the Book of Acts*, 31.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix H for the "Evaluation of Data Chart" concerning this interpretation.

Their arguments are as follows: (1) water baptism was required for salvation in the past; (2) Paul opposed water baptism in his epistles; (3) the ἓν βάπτισμα (one baptism) of Eph. 4:5 nullifies water baptism; and (4) water baptism was performed only in relation to the sign gifts.

### **Evaluation of the Interpretations of Its Requirement for Salvation**

The primary explanation presented by O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning their denial of water baptism as applicable today was that they interpreted it as a requirement for salvation in previous dispensations. They derived this conclusion from their interpretation of Acts 2:38 in which Peter declared, Μετανοήσατε, καὶ<sup>13</sup> βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν,<sup>14</sup> καὶ λήψεσθε τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος (Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost). From this, they concluded that “*water baptism was a requirement for salvation*,”<sup>15</sup> therefore, it is not applicable today. The evaluation of this interpretation revealed that this was not in harmony with the grammatical-historical method of interpretation and the CSBH because it violated the context of the passage, other Scripture, grammatical considerations of the passage, and the historical background of the passage.

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<sup>13</sup> Variant with NA/UBS: Μετανοήσατε ♦ Μετανοήσατε [φησίν]

<sup>14</sup> Variant with NA/UBS: ἁμαρτιῶν ♦ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν

<sup>15</sup> Stam, *Things That Differ*, 178.



Both the immediate and broader context (article XVIII of the CSBH) of Acts 2 exposed the erroneous interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker. The immediate context showed that Acts 2:37 and Acts 2:44 rebutted the allegation that water baptism was performed for salvation in the early portion of Acts. Acts 2:37 explained that the question posited by the Jewish hearers pertained to how to amend their deeds against the Savior and Acts 2:44 illustrated that these converts were qualified by their belief, not their belief and baptism. The broader context of Acts gave detail concerning individuals who were clearly saved, but had yet received water baptism (Acts 10).

The investigation of other Scripture also revealed the inaccuracies in the moderate ultradispensational interpretation. Since the thief who died on the cross with Christ never received water baptism, yet Jesus exclaimed that he would enter into paradise, and the teachings of Jesus in John 3 never qualify justification or condemnation with water baptism, this demonstrated that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker from Acts 2:38 that individuals received salvation through belief and water baptism during the early period of Acts was not in harmony with other Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

Grammatically, the definition εἰς (for) and the syntax of Acts 2:38 contradicted the interpretation of moderate ultradispensationalism. These grammatical considerations evidenced the misinterpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker, concerning water baptism as required for salvation in the early Acts period, as violating the grammatical considerations of the passage (article XV of

the CSBH). Finally, the historical significance of baptism illustrated that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the addition of water baptism to faith during the early portion of Acts violated the historical background of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

The violation of context, other Scripture, grammatical considerations, and historical background, concluded that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the denial of water baptism as applicable today because of their allegations that Peter ascribed it for salvation in Acts 2:38, was not in harmony with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.<sup>16</sup>

### **Evaluation of the Interpretations of Its Pauline Opposition**

Another central interpretation O'Hair, Stam, and Baker presented for their denial of water baptism as being an ordinance of the Church today was their allegation that the Apostle Paul opposed it. The analysis revealed that they derived this belief from their interpretation of Paul's penning in 1 Cor. 1:14, Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ ὅτι οὐδένα ὑμῶν ἐβάπτισα (I thank God that I baptized none of you) and declared in 1 Cor. 1:17, Οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλén με χριστὸς βαπτίζειν, ἀλλ' εὐαγγελίζεσθαι· οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου, ἵνα μὴ κενωθῇ ὁ σταυρὸς τοῦ χριστοῦ (For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel). The evaluation of these interpretations exposed them as in conflict with the context of the passage, other

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix H for the "Evaluation of Data Chart" concerning this interpretation.

Scripture, and the historical background of the passage.

The context of 1 Corinthians 1 uncovered two areas of interest for this research. The first pertained to the theme of the text, the σχίσματα that developed in Corinth over who baptized each other; and the second to the actions of Paul within the text by being baptized and baptizing others. These demonstrate that the context (article XVIII of the CSBH) was violated by O'Hair, Stam, and Baker.

The implementation of other passages of Scripture also exposed O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's interpretation as unsupported by the testimonies of Jesus, Peter, and the Matthew 28 commission. Since Jesus never baptized anyone (John 4:2), Peter may not have always baptized each of his converts (Acts 10:48), and the purpose of the Matthew 28 commission was μαθητεύσατε not βαπτίζοντες, the moderate ultradispensational interpretation concerning Paul's opposition to water baptism violated other Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

The final principle this interpretation contravened by O'Hair, Stam, and Baker pertained to the historical background of the text (article XV of the CSBH). The background to Paul's baptism and the cultish tendencies of his hearers' time to idolize religious leaders contradicted their interpretations that Paul opposed water baptism. Taking these factors into account, the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that Paul opposed water baptism were in discord with the

grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.<sup>17</sup>

### **Evaluation of the Interpretations of the ἓν βάπτισμα of Eph. 4:5**

The final reason O’Hair, Stam, and Baker rejected water baptism which this research analyzed and evaluated concerned their interpretation of Eph. 4:5 which declares that there is ἓν βάπτισμα (one baptism). While there was not a unified agreement between the historic proponents of moderate ultradispensationalism concerning the identity of the ἓν βάπτισμα in Eph. 4:5, one aspect they did agree upon was that it negated water baptism’s applicableness today.<sup>18</sup> The evaluation of this interpretation revealed that it violated the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.

The context of Eph. 4:5 revealed two aspects relevant to the research. The first pertained to the emphasis of the passage. Eph. 4:3 explained that Paul was attempting to divulge many of the commonalities which the believers in Ephesus possessed as a way to support his declaration for them to manifest unity. He purposed to motivate them toward oneness, not toward doctrinal neglect. The second contextual aspect of the passage concerned Paul’s reference to the ἓν σῶμα (one body). Interpreting this element in the same

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix H for the "Evaluation of Data Chart" concerning this interpretation.

<sup>18</sup> O’Hair believed the ἓν βάπτισμα was “the death baptism of Christ on the cross,” while Stam and Baker claimed it referred to spirit baptism. See O’Hair, *Is Water Baptism a Watery Grave?*, 15; Stam, *Things That Differ*, 155; and Baker, *Real Baptism*, 45.

manner as O'Hair, Stam, and Baker have with ἐν βάπτισμα, one is then forced to conclude that there is only a universal body and not local bodies. These contextual evidences demonstrated that Paul's use of ἐν in the context was not meant to disqualify other doctrines, but instead to emphasize why believers should experience unity. This exposed the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker as in dissonance with the context of the passage (article XVIII of the CSBH).

The investigation of the totality of the Bible yielded the understanding that since there were a number of baptisms in the Bible, not just one, Paul was not attempting to establish a doctrine. From this investigation, it was determined that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that the ἐν βάπτισμα in Eph. 4:5 refutes water baptism as being applicable today was not in harmony with other Scripture. Therefore, this interpretation is detached from the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.<sup>19</sup>

#### Interpretations of the Commission of the Church

The final tenet of moderate ultradispensationalism analyzed and evaluated in this research pertained to the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church. They based their teachings regarding this issue on their interpretations of the Matthew 28 commission, Paul's specific references to the gospel, and the commission which they interpreted as applicable for

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix H for the "Evaluation of Data Chart" concerning this

today's dispensation: 2 Corinthians 5.

### **Evaluation of the Interpretations of the Matthew 28 Commission**

The primary interpretation that O'Hair, Stam, and Baker held concerning the Matthew 28 commission which this research analyzed and evaluated pertained to the admonition from the Lord for believers to teach converts τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν (to observe all things whatsoever [Jesus] commanded). They concluded that this is an impossible task for today because it would place believers under the Old Testament law. The evaluation of this interpretation revealed that it was not in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH because it violated the principles of context, other Scripture, and grammatical considerations of the passage.

The context exposed the ἐνετειλάμην to refer to the commands of Jesus which supersede the previous commandments in the Old Testament. This would in no way place believers under the law. Therefore, the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that the commission of Matthew 28 is not applicable today violated the context of the passage (article XVIII of the CSBH).

Other passages of Scripture uncovered three central verses which helped evaluate the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning this issue: Acts 20:27, 1 Cor. 11:1, and Heb. 5:9. Each of these passages illustrated the use of the πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν as applicable for today since believers were

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interpretation.

motivated to obey it (Heb. 5:9), teach it (Acts 20:27), and exemplify it (1 Cor. 11:1). This demonstrated that the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker that the commission of the Church can not be found in Matthew 28 violated other Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

The grammatical evaluation of the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the Matthew 28 commission revealed the most beneficial information in determining its agreement or disagreement with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH. It was ascertained that the Greek infinitive τηρεῖν was not to be understood as “to obey” (as O’Hair, Stam, and Baker recognized it), but instead as to “guard,” to “respect,” or to “attend to.” From this lexical definition it was concluded that the interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the Matthew 28 commission violated the grammatical considerations of the passage (article XV of the CSBH). This further demonstrated that their interpretation concerning this passage was not in concert with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.<sup>20</sup>

### **Evaluation of the Interpretations of Paul’s References to the Gospel**

A second interpretation of O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church that this research analyzed and evaluated pertained to their view of Paul’s specific references to the gospel. From Paul’s use of the phrase κατὰ τὸ

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<sup>20</sup> See Appendix H for the "Evaluation of Data Chart" concerning this interpretation.

εὐαγγέλιόν μου (according to my gospel) in Rom. 2:16, 16:25, O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concluded that his gospel was different from that of the disciples. The evaluation of this interpretation revealed that this was not in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH because it debased the context of the passage, other Scripture, grammatical considerations, and the historical background of the passage.

The contexts of Rom. 2:16, 16:25 and 2 Tim. 2:8 exposed Paul's gospel as not unique to him since each section of it was mentioned in previous portions of Scripture. This showed that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that Paul's gospel was different than that of Peter's and the other disciples' on account of his use of the phrase κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου violated the context of the passages (article XVIII of the CSBH).

The investigation of other Scripture revealed the actual identity of Paul's gospel. In 1 Corinthians 15 he declared this εὐαγγέλιόν as Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and confirmation from witnesses (1 Cor. 15:4-6). The fact that these same elements manifested themselves within the messages of Jesus, Peter, and the apostles, the various other references to the gospel Paul used, and the declaration that any other gospel preached other than his own was accursed gave further opposition to the interpretations of moderate ultradispensationalism. These demonstrated that O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's interpretation concerning Paul's use of the phrase κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου failed to find support in other portions of Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).



The evaluation of the grammatical considerations of the text generated the realization that one should interpret Paul's use of *μου* in the passages as a genitive of description not possession. Grammatically, one cannot claim that Paul "possessed" the gospel, as alleged by O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's interpretation. This demonstrated that their interpretation violated the grammatical considerations of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

Finally, the act of Jesus upon the cross of Calvary and Paul's preaching of that event throughout the world exposed their interpretation as inharmonious with the historical background of the passage (article XV of the CSBH). The culmination of this information demonstrated that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning Paul's specific references to the gospel was not in accord with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.<sup>21</sup>

### **Evaluation of the Interpretations of the 2 Corinthians 5 Commission**

The final interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker analyzed and evaluated in this research concerned their view of the commission of the Church as allegedly located in 2 Cor. 5:14-21. The two primary interpretations of this text evaluated in order to determine their adherence to the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH involved Paul's statement that Jesus *θέμενος* (committed) the *διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς* (ministry of reconciliation) to his readers and his mentioning of believers becoming *καινὴ κτίσις* (new creatures). While the

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<sup>21</sup> See Appendix H for the "Evaluation of Data Chart" concerning this

research did not refute the applicableness of Paul's message today, what was found in violation of the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH pertained to O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's interpretation of that message.

The context showed the soteriological principle of reconciliation was the thrust of the passage. Since man received reconciliation to God through Jesus' act upon the cross, anytime after this act believers were *καινὴ κτίσις* and thereby *θέμενος* the *διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς*. This showed that O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's interpretation violated the context of the passage (article XVIII of the CSBH).

Other passages of Scripture concerning this doctrine also aided in the understanding of these principles and the evaluation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker's interpretation concerning the commission of the Church. Rom. 5:10, Col. 1:21-22, and Gal. 6:14-18 revealed that the death of Jesus was the act which made reconciliation possible. Therefore, anyone who trusted in Christ's sacrificial work on the cross afterward was conferred the ministry of telling others about this reconciliatory act. While those during the early Acts period may not have completely understood all that transpired, this did not negate its existence. Therefore, these passages gave evidence to the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church as violating other Scripture (article XVII of the CSBH).

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interpretation.

Several grammatical considerations were observed from 2 Corinthians 5 which aided in the evaluation of the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the commission of the Church. Each of these grammatical considerations dealt with the lexicography of key words in the text and their bearing on its interpretation: καταλλαγῆς (reconciliation) and πρεσβεύομεν (ambassadors). Since, by definition, καταλλαγῆς ("to make hostility cease" or "to lead to peace,")<sup>22</sup> was linked to the crucifixion of Jesus and πρεσβεύομεν (one who "acts and speaks not only on behalf of but also in the place of the sovereign from whom he has received his commission")<sup>23</sup> was connected to His ascension, it was determined that they contrasted the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker; revealing it as in violation of the grammatical considerations of the passage (article XV of the CSBH).

The research further discovered that the final principle of the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH with which the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker failed to harmonize pertained to the historical background of the passage. The background to this passage was set in the beginning of man's demise. The very idea that man needed reconciliation to God revealed that at some time in history a rift developed between God and man. This alienation commenced with Adam in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Yet, as Paul revealed in 2 Corinthians 5, the work of Christ on the cross brought this aspect back in

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<sup>22</sup> Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, 146.

harmony. This made the καινὴ κτίσις possible revealing that it was not connected to any act of Paul or the gospel's advancement to the Gentiles. It was inseparably linked to the reconciliation of mankind to God by Jesus Christ on the cross. Once this act was appropriated, all believers in that sacrifice were bestowed a place within the order of new creatures; this included those believers in the early portion of Acts. It was therefore determined that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker that the commission of the Church as solely found in 2 Corinthians 5 was in violation of the historical background of the passage (article XV of the CSBH). Therefore, from the information ascertained it was determined that the interpretation of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning 2 Corinthians 5 was not in agreement with the grammatical-historical method and the CSBH.<sup>24</sup>

### **Conclusions of the Research**

In a December 2010 article of *Christianity Today*, an author asserted, "Evangelicalism is facing a crisis about the relationship of Jesus to Paul, and many today are choosing sides."<sup>25</sup> The crisis with which he referred pertains to the harmonization of the message of Jesus and the message of Paul. As the research demonstrated, moderate ultradispensationalism proposes that the answer to this crisis is to understand that they in fact did have two drastically

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<sup>23</sup> Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 209.

<sup>24</sup> See Appendix H for the "Evaluation of Data Chart" concerning this interpretation.

<sup>25</sup> McKnight, "Jesus vs. Paul," 26.

different messages; Jesus' message was one of salvation by faith and water baptism while Paul's was by grace alone. This research evaluated these interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker and determined that they were not in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH. From this deduction, the research will conclude by determining if the subsidiary questions of Chapter One were answered and then suggest the results of the research which beckon further investigation.

### Answer to the Subsidiary Questions

In the beginning of this research, various subsidiary questions were offered in concert with the research question. In this section, the researcher will examine the sufficiency of information gathered for his investigation of the ecclesiology of moderate ultradispensationalism.

Concerning the origin of the Church, the subsidiary questions were as follows: "How did O'Hair, Stam, and Baker interpret the first mention of the Church in the New Testament, Matt. 16:18?"; "How did they interpret the event in Acts 2 since they deny that this is when the Church began?"; and "How did they interpret the *μυστήριον* (mystery) of the Church since they tie this revelation to Paul with the beginning of the Church?" Each of these questions was revealed throughout the research. It was observed that they interpreted Matt. 16:18 as a prophecy of the inception of the Jewish body in Acts 2; they interpreted events of Acts 2 as the actual beginning of the Jewish body; and they interpreted *μυστήριον* as the determining factor of when the Church began (revealed to only

Paul, but unsure of the exact time). Each of these was evaluated in Chapter Four except their interpretation of Matt. 16:18.

Concerning water baptism, the subsidiary questions were as follows: “How did O’Hair, Stam, and Baker interpret baptism in the Gospels?”; “How did they interpret baptism in the book of Acts?”; “How did they interpret Paul’s baptism?”; and “How did they interpret Paul’s baptizing of individuals considering he did so after they believed the Church began?” It was established from the research that O’Hair, Stam, and Baker viewed water baptism, both in the gospels and the early portion of Acts, as a kingdom ordinance required for salvation. While these beliefs were evaluated in Chapter Four, their interpretation of Paul’s baptism was only exposed in the Literature Review. In that chapter, the answer given to this subsidiary question was that O’Hair, Stam, and Baker believed that since Paul also spoke in tongues and performed other miracles which are no longer operable, then water baptism is also inoperable.

Finally, concerning the commission of the Church, the subsidiary questions were as follows: “How did they interpret Matthew 28?”; “Where did they believe the commission of the Church is found?”; and “Why did they believe it was found there?” O’Hair, Stam, and Baker concluded that the commission of the Church today is located in 2 Corinthians 5 because it does not relate to signs, water baptism is not mentioned, the *καινή κτίσις* (new creature) is first mentioned, and the *διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς* (ministry of reconciliation) is first discussed. These interpretations were also evaluated along with their conclusion that the

commission of Matthew 28 was restricted to the Jewish body, because it was related to signs, required water baptism, and commanded the observation of all that Christ commanded.

### Areas for Further Study

The research in the previous chapter demonstrated that none of the interpretations of O'Hair, Stam, and Baker concerning the origin of the Church, water baptism, and the commission of the Church, analyzed and evaluated, were in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH. As such, the conclusion of the research is that moderate ultradispensationalism does not employ the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and, therefore, does not constitute as a form of dispensationalism. While they do believe in various dispensations, it was already demonstrated in Chapter One that this does not qualify a system as being dispensational.

While Ryrie concluded that moderate ultradispensationalism fails within the area of its understanding of a "dispensation,"<sup>26</sup> since Baker actually utilized his definition of the term in formulated his theology,<sup>27</sup> this is most likely not the case. Therefore, the determination of the exact hermeneutical method employed

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<sup>26</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 201. Ryrie's definition of a "dispensation," "a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose," remains unaltered in all three editions of his book. However, to show fairness to Ryrie, he first published this assertion in 1965 while Baker utilized his definition six years later.

<sup>27</sup> Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 12. While Baker utilized Ryrie's definition of a "dispensation" in the formation of his own understanding of the term, he obviously differs in his employment of that definition.

by moderate ultradispensationalism is the primary sphere for further research.

What this research observed was that each major interpretation concerning their ecclesiology was inseparably linked to the other. An example of this is seen by the fact that they believed water baptism was required for salvation; therefore, the Church could not have originated in the early portion of Acts because they practiced water baptism; therefore, the commission of the Church was not given in Matthew 28 because it mentions water baptism. This researcher proposes that an investigation into the hermeneutic used by O'Hair, Stam, and Baker would reveal their inclusion of a "theological" aspect into their methodology. This means that their already established "theology" was brought to each text (eisogesis) in order to interpret it instead of allowing the interpretation of the text to determine their theology (exegesis).

Also, the revisiting of the *sine qua non* of dispensationalism as presented by Charles Ryrie<sup>28</sup> could warrant further research. While this researcher would not dispute that dispensationalism entails the separation of Israel and the Church, the employment of the grammatical-historical hermeneutic, and the doxological theme of the Bible, the addition of one more element may find warrant for further investigation. This additional principle could be the belief that salvation is by grace through faith alone in all time periods throughout history.

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<sup>28</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 41. Ryrie's third *sine qua non*, the doxological theme of the Bible, is not the consensus of all dispensationalists.



Since other non-dispensational systems of theology such as covenant theology<sup>29</sup> promote times in the Bible when another means in addition to faith were required for salvation (as moderate ultradispensationalism does as well), this may be an area of interest to help further define dispensationalism.

### Final Thoughts

While this research demonstrated that the historic proponents of moderate ultradispensationalism did not utilize the grammatical-historical method of hermeneutics, it necessitates stressing that their soteriology for today<sup>30</sup> is based upon salvation by grace through faith. This means that the researcher still considers them brothers in Christ and looks forward to one day meeting them in heaven. The readers of this research should in no way understand this as a condemnation of any adherer to moderate ultradispensationalism, past or present; and if any surviving relatives of O'Hair, Stam, or Baker ever survey this research, forgiveness is asked if anything was given throughout this research which would appear as a scathing condemnation of them or their adherents.

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<sup>29</sup> A prolific writer in favor of covenant theology, Louis Berkof, wrote, "In the covenant of works the keeping of the law is the way of life; in the covenant of grace, it is faith in Jesus Christ. Whatever faith was required in the covenant of works was a part of the righteousness of the law; in the covenant of grace, however, it is merely the organ by which we take possession of the grace of God in Jesus Christ." See Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 272; and A. W. Pink, *Studies in the Scriptures* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 6:112.

<sup>30</sup> The researcher used the phrase "for today" because O'Hair, Stam, and Baker did assert that salvation was by faith and water baptism in previous dispensations.

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## APPENDIX A

### E. W. BULLINGER

Ethelbert William Bullinger was born in Canterbury, England, on December 15, 1837. He was a descendant of Johann Heinrich Bullinger, the great Swiss reformer of the sixteenth century.

Bullinger attended Kings College in London, England, where he was educated in Greek and Hebrew. Bullinger was also a talented musician and wrote many songs. In 1881, the Archbishop of Canterbury gave Bullinger an honorary Doctorate of Divinity degree to recognize his biblical scholarship.

Bullinger was an ordained clergyman and ministered in many parishes. Bullinger was actually converted to Christ after one of his own sermons on a Sunday night while having a conversation with one of his parishioners. Bullinger believed in the pretribulational, premillennial rapture but became known as the Father of ultradispensational theology by teaching that the Church began at Paul's ministry in Acts 28:28.

Bullinger spent much of his life writing books to help people understand the Bible. Some of his works included *The Companion Bible*, *Numbers in Scripture*, *Word Studies on the Holy Spirit*, *The Witness of the Stars*, *The Book of Job*, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, *Great Cloud of Witnesses*, *The Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testaments*, *How To*

*Enjoy the Bible, and Commentary On Revelation.*

Bullinger died on June 6, 1913, in London, England. He left behind a legacy of helping people to study and understand the word of God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *E. W. Bullinger Books*, "Ethelbert William Bullinger Biography," <http://www.ewbullingerbooks.com/webpages/ewbullinger-biography.htm>. (accessed January 24, 2011); and *Revelations Message*, "Ethelbert W. Bullinger (1837-1913)," <http://www.revelationsmessage.co.uk/Ethelbert%20W.%20Bullinger.htm>. (accessed January 24, 2011).

## APPENDIX B

### J. C. O'HAIR

John Cowan O'Hair was born on December 31, 1876, in Little Rock, Arkansas. J.C. was the third of twelve children in his family. O'Hair grew up in a Roman Catholic home. He went to high school and then to business college in Little Rock. O'Hair originally trained to become an accountant and later became a prominent business man. He even served as a United States ambassador to Mexico for some time.

J. C. O'Hair received Christ as his Savior in 1899. He was ordained to the ministry in 1916. In 1917, O'Hair began full time evangelism with his wife Ethel and their six children. O'Hair became the pastor of the North Shore Church in Chicago, Illinois, in 1923.

The North Shore Church began a radio broadcast nine months after O'Hair took the pastorate. Its daily neighborhood broadcast began broadcasting nationally in 1932. At the time of O'Hair's death in 1958, he shared the record for one of the two longest continuous radio broadcasts on the air.

O'Hair helped to start the Worldwide Grace Testimony in 1939 and the Grace Gospel Fellowship in 1944. He also served on the board of directors at the Milwaukee Bible Institute. O'Hair wrote several books that have shaped the dispensational understanding of many. *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, one

of his most influential books, was first published as a collection of Bible studies in 1941.

O'Hair died in 1958 at the age of eighty-one. He is considered one of the most influential leaders of the ultradispensational movement.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Mindspring*, "Grace Gospel History," [http://www.mindspring.com/~mamcgee/grace\\_gospel\\_history.html](http://www.mindspring.com/~mamcgee/grace_gospel_history.html). (accessed January 24, 2011); and *Lisa Leland*, "O'Hair Legacy," [http://www.lisaleland.com/lcopy/ohair\\_legacy\\_062208.htm](http://www.lisaleland.com/lcopy/ohair_legacy_062208.htm). (accessed January 24, 2011).

## APPENDIX C

### CORNELIUS STAM

Cornelius Richard Stam was born on May 27, 1908, in Paterson, New Jersey. His parents, Peter, Sr. and Amelia Williams Stam, had nine children including Cornelius. Stam received Christ on May 28, 1922, at an evangelistic meeting at his parents' mission, "Star of Hope," which was led by Thomas Houston.<sup>1</sup> He later married Henrietta Winter in 1930. Henrietta passed away in 1971, and in 1976, Stam married Ruth Wahlstrom, who died in September 1998.

The ministerial career of Cornelius Stam began in the 1930's when he was the pastor of Preakness Community Church in Preakness, New Jersey. In 1939, he helped Charles Baker start the Milwaukee Bible Institute, which is now the Grace Bible College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.<sup>2</sup> Stam served as the Dean of Men at the institute, and his wife served as the Counselor of Women. Stam was also an instructor of Bible Exposition and Dispensational Studies at the Milwaukee Bible Institute.

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<sup>1</sup> *Billy Graham Center*, "Ephemera Of The Stam Family - Collection 449," <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/449.htm>. (accessed January, 15, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, March 14, 2003, "Pastor Cornelius Stam, 94," [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-03-14/news/0303140148\\_1\\_paterson-popular-radio-evangelist-hope-mission/](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-03-14/news/0303140148_1_paterson-popular-radio-evangelist-hope-mission/) (accessed January 15, 2011).

Stam founded the Berean Bible Society in 1940, which began as a series of Bible studies. The Berean Bible Society later distributed material on the Bible and the Christian life with their publication the *Berean Searchlight* and with their radio broadcasts.<sup>3</sup> His radio program "Bible Time" in the 1970's was very popular and was heard on more than one hundred radio stations.<sup>4</sup> Stam was also one of the founders of the Grace Gospel Fellowship in 1944. In 1967, he started the Berean Bible Fellowship.<sup>5</sup>

Stam authored more than thirty books in his lifetime. The majority of his books dealt with the theology of Paul, especially emphasizing dispensational theology.<sup>6</sup> Stam published one his most influential books, *Things That Differ: The Fundamentals of Dispensationalism* in 1951. Some of his other works included, *Our Great Commission*, *Paul: His Apostleship and Mission*, *Moses and Paul*, and a series of studies titled *Acts: Dispensationally Considered*.

Stam passed away from cancer on March 9, 2003, at his home in Carol Stream, Illinois. He was ninety-four years old at the time of his death. Stam was survived only by his step daughter, Grace Frizane.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Billy Graham Center*, "Ephemera Of The Stam Family - Collection 449."

<sup>4</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, March 14, 2003, "Pastor Cornelius Stam, 94."

<sup>5</sup> *Mindspring*, "Grace Gospel History."

<sup>6</sup> *Billy Graham Center*, "Ephemera Of The Stam Family - Collection 449."

<sup>7</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, March 14, 2003, "Pastor Cornelius Stam, 94."

## APPENDIX D

### CHARLES BAKER

Charles F. Baker was born in Dallas, Texas in 1905. Baker attended the Scofield Memorial Church founded by C. I. Scofield. His pastor, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, was very instrumental in his spiritual development. Baker was a graduate of Wheaton College and Dallas Theological Seminary.

In 1932, Baker founded the Fundamental Bible Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he pastored for twenty-three years. Baker was also an associate of J. C. O'Hair, the pastor of North Shore Church in Chicago, Illinois.

In 1934, Baker began publishing the *Biblegram*. Baker also started the periodical *Truth Magazine* in 1950. He served as the editor for both of these publications.

Baker was one of the founders of Milwaukee Bible Institute in 1939. Milwaukee Bible Institute would later move to Grand Rapids, Michigan, changing its name to Grace Bible College. Baker would serve as the president of Grace Bible College for twenty-nine years, and was the President Emeritus until his death.

Baker wrote several books including *Understanding the Book of Acts*, *Dispensational Relationships*, and *Understanding the Gospels*. His most important work, *A Dispensational Theology*, was published in 1971. This 688-

page textbook took Baker over four years to write.

Baker's long time wife Teresa died in 1982. Baker moved to Escondido, California, and married his longtime friend Ruth Lohman Smith in 1985. Charles Baker passed away in 1994.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Wheaton History: A-Z*, "Charles F. Baker," <http://a2z.my.wheaton.edu/alumni/charles-f-baker/> (accessed January 24, 2011); and *Mindspring*, "Grace Gospel History."



## APPENDIX E

### ARTICLES OF AFFIRMATION AND DENIALS OF “THE CHICAGO STATEMENT OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS”<sup>1</sup>

#### ARTICLE I

**We affirm** that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself, and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.

**We deny** the legitimacy of separating the authority of Christ from the authority of Scripture, or of opposing the one to the other.

#### ARTICLE II

**We affirm** that as Christ is God and Man in one Person, so Scripture is, indivisible, God's Word in human language.

**We deny** that the humble, human form of Scripture entails errancy any more than the humanity of Christ, even in His humiliation, entails sin.

#### ARTICLE III

**We affirm** that the Person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the

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<sup>1</sup> Material taken from Norman L. Geisler, “Explaining Hermeneutics: A Commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics Articles of Affirmation and Denial,” in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, eds. E. Radmacher and R. Preuse (Oakland, CA: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1983), 889-904.

entire Bible.

**We deny** that any method of interpretation which rejects or obscures the Christ-centeredness of Scripture is correct.

#### **ARTICLE IV**

**We affirm** that the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture acts through it today to work faith in its message.

**We deny** that the Holy Spirit ever teaches to anyone anything which is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

#### **ARTICLE V**

**We affirm** that the Holy Spirit enables believers to appropriate and apply Scripture to their lives.

**We deny** that the natural man is able to discern spiritually the Biblical message apart from the Holy Spirit.

#### **ARTICLE VI**

**We affirm** that the Bible expresses God's truth in propositional statements, and we declare that Biblical truth is both objective and absolute. We further affirm that a statement is true if it represents matters as they actually are, but is an error if it misrepresents the facts.

**We deny** that, while Scripture is able to make us wise unto salvation, Biblical truth should be defined in terms of this function. We further deny that error should be defined as that which willfully deceives.

**ARTICLE VII**

**We affirm** that the meaning expressed in each Biblical text is single, definite and fixed.

**We deny** that the recognition of this single meaning eliminates the variety of its application.

**ARTICLE VIII**

**We affirm** that the Bible contains teachings and mandates which apply to all cultural and situational contexts and other mandates which the Bible itself shows apply only to particular situations.

**We deny** that the distinction between the universal and particular mandates of Scripture can be determined by cultural and situational factors. We further deny that universal mandates may ever be treated as culturally or situationally relative.

**ARTICLE IX**

**We affirm** that the term hermeneutics, which historically signified the rules of exegesis, may properly be extended to cover all that is involved in the process of perceiving what the Biblical revelation means and how it bears on our lives.

**We deny** that the message of Scripture derives from, or is dictated by, the interpreter's understanding. Thus we deny that the "horizons" of the Biblical writer and the interpreter may rightly "fuse" in such a way that what the text communicates to the interpreter is not ultimately controlled by the expressed meaning of the Scripture.

**ARTICLE X**

**We affirm** that Scripture communicates God's truth to us verbally through a wide variety of literary forms.

**We deny** that any of the limits of human language render Scripture inadequate to convey God's message.

**ARTICLE XI**

**We affirm** that translations of the text of Scripture can communicate knowledge of God across all temporal and cultural boundaries.

**We deny** that the meaning of Biblical texts is so tied to the culture out of which they came that understanding of the same meaning in other cultures is impossible.

**ARTICLE XII**

**We affirm** that in the task of translating the Bible and teaching it in the context of each culture, only those functional equivalents which are faithful to the content of Biblical teaching should be employed.

**We deny** the legitimacy of methods which either are insensitive to the demands of cross-cultural communication or distort Biblical meaning in the process.

**ARTICLE XIII**

**We affirm** that awareness of the literary categories, formal and stylistic, of the various parts of Scripture is essential for proper exegesis, and hence we value genre criticism as one of the many disciplines of Biblical study.

**We deny** that generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be [*sic*]

imposed on Biblical narratives which present themselves as factual.

#### **ARTICLE XIV**

**We affirm** that the Biblical record of events, discourses and sayings, though presented in a variety of appropriate literary forms, corresponds to historical fact.

**We deny** that any event, discourse or saying reported in Scripture was invented by the Biblical writers or by the traditions they incorporated.

#### **ARTICLE XV**

**We affirm** the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text.

**We deny** the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support.

#### **ARTICLE XVI**

**We affirm** that legitimate critical techniques should be used in determining the canonical text and its meaning.

**We deny** the legitimacy of allowing any method of Biblical criticism to question the truth or integrity of the writer's expressed meaning, or of any other Scriptural teaching.

#### **ARTICLE XVII**

**We affirm** the unity, harmony and consistency of Scripture and declare that it is its own best interpreter.

**We deny** that Scripture may be interpreted in such a way as to suggest that one passage corrects or militates against another. We deny that later writers of Scripture misinterpreted earlier passages of Scripture when quoting from or referring to them.

#### **ARTICLE XVIII**

**We affirm** that the Bible's own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating from, but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text. The single meaning of a prophet's words includes, but is not restricted to, the understanding of those words by the prophet and necessarily involves the intention of God evidenced in the fulfillment of those words.

**We deny** that the writers of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words.

#### **ARTICLE XIX**

**We affirm** that any pre-understandings which the interpreter brings to Scripture should be in harmony with Scriptural teaching and subject to correction by it.

**We deny** that Scripture should be required to fit alien pre-understandings, inconsistent with itself, such as naturalism, evolutionism, scientism, secular humanism, and relativism.

#### **ARTICLE XX**

**We affirm** that since God is the author of all truth, all truths, Biblical and extrabiblical, are consistent and cohere, and that the Bible speaks truth when it touches on matters pertaining to nature, history, or anything else. We further

affirm that in some cases extrabiblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches, and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations.

**We deny** that extrabiblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it.

#### **ARTICLE XXI**

**We affirm** the harmony of special with general revelation and therefore of Biblical teaching with the facts of nature.

**We deny** that any genuine scientific facts are inconsistent with the true meaning of any passage of Scripture.

#### **ARTICLE XXII**

**We affirm** that Genesis 1-11 is factual, as is the rest of the book.

**We deny** that the teachings of Genesis 1-11 are mythical and that scientific hypotheses about earth history or the origin of humanity may be invoked to overthrow what Scripture teaches about creation.

#### **ARTICLE XXIII**

**We affirm** the clarity of Scripture and specifically of its message about salvation from sin.

**We deny** that all passages of Scripture are equally clear or have equal bearing on the message of redemption.

#### **ARTICLE XXIV**

**We affirm** that a person is not dependent for understanding of Scripture on the expertise of Biblical scholars.

**We deny** that a person should ignore the fruits of the technical study of Scripture by Biblical scholars.

#### **ARTICLE XXV**

**We affirm** that the only type of preaching which sufficiently conveys the divine revelation and its proper application to life is that which faithfully expounds the text of Scripture as the Word of God.

**We deny** that the preacher has any message from God apart from the text of Scripture.



APPENDIX F

MESSAGES COMPARED

	<b>Jesus</b>	<b>Peter</b>	<b>Paul</b>
<b>Death</b>	...Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men And they shall kill him, (Matt. 17:22)	Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: (Acts 2:23)	For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; (1 Cor. 15:3)
<b>Burial</b>	For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matt. 12:40)	Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. (Acts 2:27 - as translated in 1 Cor. 15:55)	And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: (1 Cor. 15:4)
<b>Resurrection</b>	Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. (John 2:19)	Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. (Acts 2:24)	And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: (1 Cor. 15:4)
<b>Witness</b>	And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. (John 15:27)	This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. (Acts 2:32)	And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren

			<p>at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. (1 Cor. 15:5-8)</p>
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## APPENDIX G

### PAUL'S TITLES OF THE GOSPEL

Title	Reference
τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ χριστοῦ (Gospel of Christ)	Rom. 1:16; 15:19, 29; 1 Cor. 9:12, 18; 2 Cor. 2:12 (translated Christ's gospel); 4:4; 9:13; 10:14; Gal. 1:7; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess 3:2
εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ (Gospel of God)	Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:2, 8-9 (also used by Peter in 1 Pet. 4:17)
τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου (My Gospel)	Rom. 2:16; 16:25; 2 Tim. 2:8
τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν (Our Gospel)	2 Cor. 4:3; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2 Thess. 2:14
τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης (Gospel of Peace)	Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15
τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (Gospel of his Son)	Rom. 1:9
τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας (Gospel of the uncircumcision)	Gal. 2:7
τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν (Gospel of your salvation)	Eph. 1:13
τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ (Gospel of our Lord Jesus)	2 Thess. 1:8
τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς δόξης τοῦ μακαρίου θεοῦ (Gospel of the blessed God)	1 Tim. 1:11

## APPENDIX H

### EVALUATION OF DATA CHARTS

#### Chart #1

Interpretation Concerning the Origin of the Church  
Pertaining to the Μυστήριον of the Church Revealed to Paul

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?		X	
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

#### Chart #2

Interpretation Concerning the Origin of the Church  
Pertaining to the Operation of Sign Gifts on the Day of Pentecost

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?			X

4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?		X	
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

Chart #3  
Interpretation Concerning the Origin of the Church  
Pertaining to the Works of Acts 2 Believers

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?			X
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?		X	
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

Chart #4  
Interpretation Concerning Water Baptism  
Pertaining to Its Requirement for Salvation

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?		X	

4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

Chart #5  
Interpretation Concerning Water Baptism  
Pertaining to Its Pauline Opposition

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?			X
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

Chart #6  
Interpretation Concerning Water Baptism  
Pertaining to the ἔν βάπτισμα of Ephesians 4:5

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?		X	

4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

Chart #7  
Interpretation Concerning the Commission of the Church  
Pertaining to Matthew 28

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?		X	
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?			X
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

Chart #8  
Interpretation Concerning the Commission of the Church  
Pertaining to Paul's References to the Gospel

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?		X	

4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	

## Chart #9

Interpretation Concerning the Commission of the Church  
Pertaining to Moderate Ultradispensational Commission

Evaluation of Data Chart			
Questions of Inquiry	Yes	No	N/A
1. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>context</i> of the text?		X	
2. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>other Scripture</i> ?		X	
3. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>grammatical considerations</i> of the text?		X	
4. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>historical background</i> of the text?		X	
5. Is this interpretation in harmony with the <i>genre</i> of the text?			X
OVERALL EVALUATION: Is this interpretation in harmony with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and the CSBH?		X	