

# The Erroneous Acts 28 Argument... No Pauline Resurgence, Just "Old Chestnuts"

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A Rebuttal to the Acts 28 straw man of Bryan Ross

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In March of 2014, Bryan Ross of Grace Life Bible Church in Grand Rapids Michigan released a paper titled: *Ifs, Ands, and Buts: The Two Inheritance Controversy of Romans 8:17*. The production of this paper was initiated as a result of conversations between Bryan and I during the summer of 2013 where we discussed the scriptural differences between heirs of God as opposed to joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17) as affirmed in the 2012 Northern California Grace Fellowship document: *"Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?"*. Bryan initially seemed open to objective discussion on the topic yet sadly his attitude toward the issue quickly spiraled downward, ultimately culminating into an aggressive campaign attacking this most pinnacle of Pauline doctrines. At the time of this article Bryan has purposely cut off all lines of communication from those principally involved in the discussion. Since Bryan's decision to oppose this issue, the most concentrated of his efforts would manifest themselves as a conference dedicated to attack the doctrine (spearheaded by Bryan), as well as his aforementioned March 2014 paper. Bryan's conference message and paper were riddled with illogical arguments. A very alarming one in particular took the form of a blatant straw man argument, a spurious attempted fusion of an (altogether different) Acts 28 view with the joint-heir doctrine promoted by NCGF. With that in mind, this document is presented to the reader as a rebuttal to that erroneous assertion.

### **A bit of contextual church history:**

Until even today, since the time of apostasy experienced in even the last days of the Apostle Paul's ministry, due to the satanic policy of evil lie program, many truths (particularly those that are Pauline) in the scriptures have found themselves obfuscated, clouded by apostate teaching, especially concerning mainstream awareness and acceptance. There has always been a remnant of faithful believers throughout history, but come the transition from the dark ages into the Renaissance, and further on into the dawn of the printing press of the industrial revolution we can historically see much more access (and thus acceptance) to these previously satanically obfuscated (and thus forgotten truth) issues, being injected back into the conscientiousness of mainstream awareness. While there is sadly still a widespread rejection of God's truth through Paul, at least there is now access to valid Pauline teaching and preaching when compared to the iron grip on such actions inflicted upon society at large during our dark ages of history.

At the turn of the 19th century as the satanically obfuscated (and thus forgotten truth) issue of when the church, the Body of Christ was initially formed, was being resurged back into mainstream awareness, there was a bit of disputation as to where exactly in the book of Acts this event could be observed. From early on, the prevailing and traditional apostate view has been that the church, the Body of Christ began in Acts 2 with the fully come feast of Pentecost. Much could be said about the inaccuracy, and untenable nature of this view (in fact volumes could be written about it). Though it is not the point of this document to examine the fatal faults of the Acts 2 position, I will offer a few examples of dispensational truth that the Acts 2 position fails to grasp.

- The church (the little flock [Luke 12:32]) present in Acts 2 was fully Jewish (not Jew and Gentile) and was already a formed Church prior to the event (Gal 6:16, 1 Cor 1:2, Eph 3:15).
- The 2 churches have different marching orders. The church present in Acts 2 was under the prophetic Law program of Israel (Acts 3:16), whereas the church, the Body of Christ is under the once hidden yet now revealed mystery program of grace (Romans 16:25). This new way of God dealing with man via this new agency was experienced by Paul first (1 Tim 1:16).
- Much like the first chronological church in the Bible: the church in the wilderness (Acts 17:37-38), the house of Moses (Heb 3:5); the little flock messianic church present in Acts 2 had a different builder (i.e. Jesus [Matt 19:18]) than the later built church, the Body of Christ (i.e. Paul [1 Cor 3:10]).

Moving along, concerning this area of progressive resurgence, one instrumental dispensational pioneer in particular was a man named E.W. Bullinger. Bullinger started off in his early ministry professing and proclaiming a position that was very much inline with the view that the church, the Body of Christ started with Paul. Much later in his ministry (toward the end of his life), Bullinger began to be heavily influenced by the theology of a young man named Charles H. Welch. Via this influence Bullinger shifted his view to the Body of Christ starting in Acts 28, his scriptural impetus being Paul's quoted statement in Acts 28:28. Another principle dispensational pioneer at this time concerning this issue was J.C. O'Hair. O'Hair was initially Acts 2 in persuasion, then (evidently compelled by the later teaching of Bullinger) leaned toward the Acts 28 view, until finally resting upon the Mid-Acts view concerning the church, the Body of Christ starting with the Apostle Paul.

All this can be studied and substantiated by Bryan's own work in the Grace History Project. In said project, Bryan Ross has done a marvelous job chronicling the events of the church, the Body of Christ amidst the attacks and attempted subversion leveled by the satanic policy of evil lie program against God's truth (and His people) throughout history. In light of this, it is so sad that Bryan now uses the historical data he has gathered to implement a blatant straw man argument, ultimately resulting in a misrepresentation of history!

### **The Acts 28 argument...**

When I was initially explaining the doctrine of heirs vs. joint-heirs to Bryan (as he was first becoming familiar with it) I attempted to convey to him, that I strongly believe that this is the **latest** Pauline doctrine to **resurge** from abandonment and therefore, for this purpose, God will use the Darbys, Andersons, O'Hairs, Stams, etc. of today to lift this forgotten truth up to the light of mainstream visibility.

I told Bryan I really hoped this issue would resonate with him to the point where he would get involved in helping to promulgate this crucial, yet sadly neglected forgotten truth. If this truly is the current stage of Pauline **resurgence** (which I sincerely believe it is), I thought it would be so

poetically fitting to see Bryan (the teacher of the grace history project) rightfully insert himself into the next chapter of what God's doing in grace history (concerning Pauline resurgence in particular), as his progressive study of grace history reaches present day time! Furthermore, I expressed that God's intervening via the members of the Body of Christ is no doubt responsible for him having been presented with this glorious opportunity.

Indeed, the resurgence of this doctrine stands as a great opportunity to make a huge impact on the Body (sending positive ripples of awareness through the grace community) for those willing to stand up for the importance of this forgotten Pauline truth. This vital **resurgent** truth is designed to magnify the importance of holding fast (2 Tim 1:13), being found faithful (1 Cor 4:2) to the Pauline mystery doctrine of Grace. Imagine the impact this **resurgence** will have on the individual members of the Body at the judgment seat of Christ, and thereby the impact it will have on the future reigning of the heavenlies!

Starting from the time of the Apostle Paul on throughout the last 2000 years of our history, due to the satanic policy of evil there has been an incremental order of mainstream abandonment of all facets of the Pauline mystery. Contrastingly, a corresponding incremental order in the recovering of all facets of the Pauline mystery back into mainstream awareness has also taken place...

#### **Order abandoned:**

Joint-heir doctrine ⇒ The refinement of when (Mid-Acts [ultimately Acts 9]) the Body of Christ began ⇒ Apostolic authority of Paul ⇒ Pre-trib rapture ⇒ Salvation by Grace

#### **Order recovered:**

Salvation by Grace ⇒ Pre-trib rapture ⇒ Apostolic authority of Paul ⇒ The refinement of when (Mid-Acts [ultimately Acts 9]) the Body of Christ began ⇒ Joint-heir doctrine!

Sadly, as per the theme of appendix A of Bryan's Ifs, Ands, and Buts paper it is clear that he has not only decided not to take part in the furtherance of this Pauline doctrine, but he's gone so far in the opposite direction as to deny and oppose it. In contrast to Bryan and certain others' claims, it's never been asserted that this is a new idea or a recent development, quite to the contrary it is as old as the mystery itself! New **resurgence** implies that the issue of heirs vs. joint-heirs is not new but rather that it's **resurgence to the forefront is new**. Not only that, but also its **resurgence to the forefront of the adherence to those that have already reckoned the previous forgotten truths into their understanding** (i.e. rightly dividing mid-Acts dispensational Pauline grace believers that uphold the authority of the KJB).

Bryan and those aligning themselves with his position have made the argument that this is nothing more than a heresy that has in the past been posited and already rightfully rejected. In response, the following retort is offered:

Prior to its resurgence to the forefront you will no doubt see historical evidence of understanding with any forgotten truth among people with most or even some of the pieces of the Pauline

puzzle of truth. How making reference to people who were previously exposed to the issue of heirs vs. joint-heirs via their study prior to this current stage of resurgence, would somehow nullify or disqualify this issue from being a resurged forgotten truth makes no logical sense. If this preposterous attempt at reasoning were applied to any given previously forgotten/abandoned but now resurged truth, they would all be disqualified via this asinine argumentation. The following will explain this issue in detail...

If this line of reasoning was applied consistently, Bryan and company would be in big trouble concerning their proposed belief system in general. For example: as some may know, Richard Jordan was instrumental in standing up for the doctrine of the preservation of God's word principally found for English speakers today in the King James Bible. Richard labored to resurge this doctrine of preservation amidst heavy resistance from the group he was affiliated with at the time. This group (still existent today) was the Berean Bible Society formed by another dispensational pioneer, a man named C. R. Stam (a contemporary of J.C. O'Hair) who helped refine the Mid-Acts position to Acts 9.

Now, if someone today were part of the Berean Bible Society formed by C. R. Stam, and they brought up the issue of the authority of the KJB, the administrators of the B.B.S. could easily say something to the effect of, Pastor Stam already refuted that claim of Richard Jordan's back in the 1980's, etc. However, such an argument against the authority of the KJB would certainly be invalid. The point is that just because someone who was instrumental in the chain of Pauline resurgence rejects something, doesn't make it untrue. Another example would be that of an old 1800's Bible Bryan presented in his grace history project that (even though it predated dispensational pioneers J. N. Darby and the Plymouth Brethren) contained in its introduction to the book of Ephesians references to the mystery being a distinct message given specifically to the Apostle Paul. Now, an opponent of Darby and the Plymouth brethren could have hypothetically used that Bible to say, look this dispensational rigmarole isn't "new", clearly it was proposed before, and "protestantism" in general didn't run with it, so why are you trying to take a step backward? However, that argument would certainly have been invalid.

So you see, even right out of the gate, it is faulty logic to make the claim that: if a contributor to Pauline resurgence (or anyone at all for that matter) has rejected a particular doctrine, then it is somehow automatically wrong. The standard for determining the validity of a proposed Pauline doctrine is not the opinion of men, **it's the preponderance of the contextual evidence of all the words of the Pauline epistles harmonizing.** This logical standard backs the claims of the NCGF heirs vs. joint-heirs paper and sinks the contrary claims of its opponents.

Really, this issue of historical significance is more of an aside. I'd prefer that Bryan would offer scriptural arguments as opposed to historical ones. In my own personal opinion, I believe this joint-heir issue is indeed the next phase of Pauline resurgence. However, if someone disagrees with the historical significance, that has no bearing on the truth of the doctrine itself. This is because the doctrine is ultimately supported via contextual harmonization throughout the totality of Paul's epistles. That being said, I do believe that when noticing the gravity of what's behind such a crucial doctrine (one with such grave spiritual repercussions revolving around one's acceptance or denial thereof), its historical significance does serve to put a spotlight on the magnitude of what's at stake concerning a member of the Body's acknowledgement of it.

Therefore, it's worthwhile to show how Bryan's attempt to attack the issue from a historical standpoint is as equally blundersome as his attempt to attack it from that of a scriptural basis (tragically, all this from a **history teacher** no less)...

Bryan is attempting to make a historical argument via noting J.C. O'Hair's rejection of Acts 28 dispensationalism, coupled with an example of a prominent Acts 28 dispensationalist (Charles H. Welch) who saw a difference between heirs and joint-heirs. Two things to notice about Bryan's attempt here:

- He only infers that O'Hair rejected a difference of heirs. vs. joint-heirs based on the fact that the year O'Hair rejected Acts 28 dispensationalism coincided with the year Charles H. Welch put out an article (no evidence if O'Hair ever even read this article) which contained a reference to a difference between heirs and joint-heirs (more on that particular difference soon). Also, there is no written evidence that O'Hair claimed that there was no difference between heirs and joint-heirs, just that he used the word joint-heirs in a general manner sometimes when he referred to Jew and Gentile in one Body (so it's all empty and flimsy inference). Remember, it doesn't matter anyway because whether O'Hair (or anyone) agrees or disagrees with the truth, it does not affect its integrity!
- It's an apples to oranges (i.e. false) comparison, because even if J.C. O'Hair did indeed reject what some writer of an Acts 28 themed article asserted about what he believed to be the difference between heirs and joint-heirs, what the NCGF heirs vs. joint-heirs paper claims about that difference is **completely different!**

Ultimately, Bryan's attempt to attack the validity of the joint-heir doctrine via the argument that O'Hair rejecting Acts 28ism somehow equates to a rejection of the difference between heirs vs. joint-heirs put forth in the NCGF paper (and that somehow that would even matter) is so thin it's non-existent.

Despite all this, sadly even though Bryan is attempting (in appendix A of his paper) to employ the mortally flawed and erroneous argument that if a position can be found being discussed prior to it being resurged to the forefront it is thereby disqualified... Bryan is not even actually doing that:

Instead he's pulling a bait-and-switch where he tells you that is what he's doing, but then lists something altogether different as a supposed example. He cites Charles Welch (a pioneer of Acts 28ism) and his (Welch's) personal understanding of the difference between heirs and joint-heirs as though it were an example of the view put forth in the NCGF paper. Bryan then attempts to show how O'Hair "supposedly" rejected it. Again, obviously O'Hair approving or rejecting a doctrine is not the standard to determine whether it's true or not (the KJB is the standard). Beyond that, what O'Hair rejected (i.e. Welch's understanding of the difference between heirs vs. joint-heirs) is completely different than the difference asserted by the NCGF paper! Bryan is either covertly or ineptly comparing apples to oranges here. We at NCGF reject the specific way Welch viewed the difference between heirs and joint-heirs, that's because (due to his paradigm) he saw the difference incorrectly, but that doesn't mean there isn't a difference!

This is one of the latest in a long line of equally non-scripturally based attempts to discredit the heirs vs. joint-heirs doctrine. The attempted claim is that the view presented in the NCGF *Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ* paper is an "incursion" from the Acts 28 position (Acts 28 position = the view that the Body of Christ began in Acts 28 as opposed to Acts 9 with the salvation of Paul). Trying to unjustly label and lump someone into the taboo Acts 28 camp is a red herring that is sadly routinely used by certain mid-Acts dispensationalists.

On page 18 of his paper Bryan states concerning the heir vs. joint-heir issue that "*the notion that there are two different inheritances in Romans 8:17 has been the historic position of the Acts 28 view for almost one hundred years*". He bases this claim on a single article by a single adherent to Acts 28 dispensationalism and the subsequent acknowledgment of a protégé of said adherent. Incidentally, this is hardly definitive proof that by this one 1935 article authored by one man (and a later similar view of his protégé) one could make the claim that "*the notion that there are two different inheritances in Romans 8:17 has been the historic position of the Acts 28 view for almost one hundred years*". What's more, even if Acts 28 dispensationalism as a theology is in fact in line with this one particular Acts 28 adherent's opinion concerning the difference between heirs and joint-heirs, it still has absolutely no place in the argument seeing that what this Acts 28 article claims about the difference between heirs and joint-heirs is completely foreign to what is presented in the NCGF "*Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?*" paper that Bryan is attacking.

Bryan tries to make the argument that since Welch saw a difference between heirs and joint-heirs, then anyone ever seeing any difference between the two is by default an adherent of an Acts 28 position (so much as it pertains to that verse). The problem with that broken reasoning is that what Welch believed the difference was, pertained to believing Israel overcoming in the 70th week to become joint-heirs. This is because as an Acts 28 dispensationalist, Welch believed the book of Romans is written to Israel and not to the Body of Christ. The Acts 28 paradigm that Welch promoted, saw the prison epistles (Eph - Col) as the preeminent writings to the Body of Christ. Because of this perspective he saw a Jewish connection of Romans 8:17 with Revelation 3:21, and then in conjunction threw in connections to Hebrews, 1 Peter, and all sorts of program mixing leaven connected with the Acts 28 position. Even Bryan's paper itself (on page 20) notes that "*the real reason why Welch teaches a distinction between 'heirs' and 'joint-heirs' in Romans 8:17, is because his dispensational system demands it*". This is a dispensational system and paradigm completely foreign to the paradigm of those who produced the Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ paper that Bryan's rebuttal paper is addressing. Again, this is an apples to oranges, false comparison.

So to recap, Welch wrote an Acts 28 article (that O'Hair may or may not have read) in 1935 that contained a description of the difference between heirs and joint-heirs that was based on an Acts 28 paradigm that made the group being discussed in Romans the overcomers of Revelation, Hebrews, etc (i.e. a view of heirs vs. joint-heirs completely alien compared to the view presented in the "*Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?*" paper).

### **Bryan's fatally flawed argument in summary...**

- In 1935 a proponent of the Acts 28 paradigm released an article containing a citation of a specific difference between heirs vs. joint-heirs that was inextricably affiliated with the Acts 28 view.
- In 1935 O'Hair released an article renouncing a previously held Acts 28 paradigm.
- Thereby O'Hair supposedly also rejected the completely contrastingly different view concerning the difference between heirs vs. joint-heirs put forth in the 2012 NCGF paper: "*Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ*" (that O'Hair most certainly never read), and so therefore you should reject it too.

This argument Bryan is trying to build is just plain terrible.

A similarly absurd argument was leveled against the heir vs. joint-heir issue a while back by some opponents of sanctified works in the dispensation of grace. They said that because a Mormon document exists that makes a distinction between heirs and joint-heirs, then therefore the doctrine must be a Mormon heresy. Just like Welch and his Acts 28 view however, what the mormons believe about heirs vs. joint-heirs is completely alien to what the "*Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?*" paper asserts. To claim what the NCGF paper teaches about Romans 8:17 comes from Acts 28ism is just as asinine and ridiculous as claiming that what the paper teaches about Romans 8:17 comes from Mormonism! There are also Mormon documents and Acts 28 documents detailing the pre-trib rapture, so to be consistent should not that doctrine therefore also be discarded as per that corrupted line of reasoning!?

In reality, it was the Acts 28 paradigm's program mixing that O'Hair and any mature mid-Acts dispensationalist ultimately rejected/should reject. The point is that even if O'Hair hypothetically (according to Bryan's inference) rejected a difference between heirs and joint-hers according to and amidst a program mixing Acts 28 paradigm, such an action does not equate to O'Hair rejecting the completely different position put forth in the heirs vs. joint-heirs paper (and again, O'Hair's opinion isn't the authority anyway). If I myself reject a difference between heirs and joint-heirs made in the context of how it pertains to Acts 28 theology or Mormon theology (which I do) does that mean I'm rejecting the difference made in the very paper I worked on? Of course not. Again this faulty line of "guilty by association" argumentation of Bryan's is utterly preposterous, but it gets even worse...

Notice the statement made in the conclusion of Bryan's historical argument of appendix A:

*"Let the record show that we (Bryan) have included this information as an Appendix separate from the Main Argument section of this paper. We (Bryan) have done this so that there is no confusion as to our (Bryan's) position. Our (Bryan's) reasons for rejecting the "two inheritance" viewpoint are not based upon church history and historical*

*theology but the exposition of the text of Romans 8 presented in the Main Argument section"*<sup>1</sup> (clarification added in the parentheses)

Bryan states that he purposely put his historical argument in a separate appendix because he rejects the joint-heir doctrinal view based on an "exposition of Romans 8" and not on a historical basis. He then goes on to state that the historical argument was made only in an attempt to dispel claims that the doctrine was a resurgence in Pauline truth. Since thereby Bryan admits whether or not this is indeed the latest phase in Pauline resurgence is unrelated and irrelevant to the scriptural validity of the claim, then why exactly does he even make his historical argument in the first place? Is he just really that peeved that some proponents of the the joint-heir doctrine identify it as resurgence? It seems odd to devote pages to an aspect that according to Bryan has no influence on the scriptural legitimacy of the issue. Anyway, if even Bryan (a staunch opponent of the view) is not rejecting the joint-heir doctrine on the basis of its historicity and historical relevance, is it not then fair to say that it's invalid for those reading his paper to reject the view as per say, a supposed incursion from an Acts 28 view as Bryan's paper has led others to proffer (despite Bryan's own unwillingness to go down that road himself)?? Even though Bryan himself believes the historical argument is not a basis on which to reject the heirs vs. joint-heirs view, his citation of various (self-admittedly irrelevant) historical events has led to the rejection of the view by others despite Bryan's supposed intentions and warnings to the contrary. Either way, this misunderstanding of the merits of this mysteriously extraneous appendix A of Bryan's Ifs, Ands, and Buts paper, and the (according to Bryan) bearing it should **not** have on one's ye/nay verdict concerning the heir vs. joint-heir issue, has "inadvertently" served Bryan's agenda despite his own discouragement of such an action. Subsequently, Bryan's paper has served to foment this misappropriation amongst his colleagues, an error which thus far Bryan has felt unobliged to correct.

A prime example of this can be found in a recent bulk Email sent out by Richard Jordan to pastors invited to speak at an upcoming Shorewood conference. In the Email he attaches Bryan's paper and in so many words makes it clear that support of the joint-heir doctrine will not be welcomed:

*"One other thing: there has been a bit of a stir on a couple of on-line sites concerning a rather unfortunate rendition of Romans 8:17. It is, in reality, an incursion (perhaps unwittingly) of Acts2/28 teaching into our grace perspective and has begun to challenge the completeness of believers in Christ. Since this is a fundamental tenet of Pauline-grace-doctrine we want you to be alert to this issue. I am attaching an article examining this and ask you to consider it prayerfully. If you have questions, I would be happy to hear from you. These are days of tremendous opportunity for ministry—which means they are also days of great challenge. This makes it more important than ever for us to encourage one another in every way possible" -Richard Jordan*

As you can see, in addition to the attempt at having dominion over the faith of others (2 Cor 1:24), an accusation of the joint-heir view being an incursion from Acts2/Acts 28 (i.e. the historical argument) is offered as the reason to reject it. This is in stark contradiction to the declaration made concerning the (admittedly irrelevant) historical argument in the very article

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<sup>1</sup> pg 28 of "Ifs Ands and Buts: The Two Inheritance Controversy of Romans 8:17"

(Bryan's Ifs, Ands, and Buts paper) mentioned in Richard's message. This leads one to wonder, did Richard even read the article before getting behind it? Incidentally, the word incursion by definition denotes the hostile, immoral actions of evil pillaging marauders or raiders, enemy combatants; it's to those inflammatory depths that the proponents of this truth are being unjustly relegated to.

Richard Jordan and John Verstegen have enlisted the historical argument on the back end as well (Acts 2), citing old Baptist books in their personal libraries containing references to the differences of heirs vs. joint-heirs as a basis for their rejection of this truth. The problem still is (like the erroneous Acts 28 and Mormonism comparison): it's a completely different difference (affected by the different dispensational paradigm), and additionally plenty of those same Baptist commentaries no doubt contain references to (for example) the pre-tribulation rapture, so consistency would demand that they discard that forgotten truth too.

To recap, three specific logically fallacious points concerning Bryan's Acts 28 argument can be observed:

- Bryan makes an appeal to the authority of a man (O'Hair) as opposed to the authority of the King James Bible.
- Bryan makes an apples to oranges, false comparison (i.e. a straw man argument).
- Bryan then admits it's not a valid position from which to reject the joint-heir doctrine, thus effectively undermining his entire argument and thereby making it utterly irrelevant.

In closing, I'd like to emphatically state: the difference between heirs of God as opposed to joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17) as affirmed in the Northern California Grace Fellowship document: "*Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?*" is presented in harmony with, and adhered to, via the lens of rightly dividing mid-Acts Pauline dispensationalism. It is in no way affiliated with an Acts 2 or Acts 28 paradigm at all, and such a flagrant apples to oranges, straw man claim is absolutely and absurdly preposterous.