

Sunday, February 10, 2013–Grace Life School of Theology–*Grace History Project*–Lesson 92
O’Hairism! Under the Searchlight of the Word!, Part 2

The Pillars of O’Hairism (Cont.)

The Fourth Pillar–Argument is the Postponement of the Great Commission

- Haggai begins his critique of O’Hair’s teaching on the Great Commission by referring to the standard reasons for why there are four gospels. “Matthew wrote to the Jews, presenting Christ as the Promised Messiah of Israel; Mark wrote to the Romans presenting Christ as the Servant of Jehovah; Luke wrote to the Greeks, presenting Christ as the Ideal Man or the son of man; and John wrote to the Church, presenting Christ as the Son of God.” (Haggai, 16)
- Haggai then takes issue with O’Hair for pointing out some of the differences between Matthew and John. One of the differences that O’Hair points out is that John’s gospel does not record the so-called Great Commission. In addition, O’Hair states that John was written twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem and therefore more than twenty years after Paul received his gospel from the glorified and ascended Christ. Therefore, the implication being made by O’Hair is that the reason why John’s gospel does not include the Great Commission is because of when it was written i.e., after the revelation of the mystery had been made. Haggai takes issue with this type of reasoning:

“Does the date of the writing of any of the Gospels affect in the least degree the teaching and work of Christ during the days of His flesh? Did Christ live four lives? The answer in each case is emphatically “NO.” What Christ said and did while on earth He said and did regardless as to which of the Evangelists reported it. The comments of the Evangelist may be influenced by the date of the writing, but not what Christ said or did. To illustrate: Matthew does not report the words of John the Baptist given to us in John 1:29: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” But the fact remains that John the Baptist did say them at the time he said them. John the Evangelist did not manufacture them. Matthew does not record the story of Nicodemus. But the fact remains that Nicodemus met with Jesus at the time he did . . . That meeting took place early in His ministry while, according to Matthew, He was preaching the “kingdom of heaven” . . . Let this fact grip us lest we be perverters of the Word of Truth. In other words, whether the Gospels were written immediately after Pentecost or at the end of the first century, it would not make any difference as to the words and work of the Lord. The difference in the presentation is due to the people to whom they were written.” (Haggai, 17-18)

- Haggai makes the following three points in an effort to prove that Paul labored under the Great Commission:

“ First, the word “unto” indicated continuation of the fact He was stating, namely, “Lo, I am with you,” until a certain point of time, namely, “the consummation of the age.” The Greek word for “unto” is “heos,” and is quite frequently translated “till” (Luke 19:13, Rev. 20:5).

Secondly, for the duration of that same age, they were to make Disciples and baptize them.

Thirdly, that the Great Commission was not restricted to the Eleven is evident from the fact that the promise is given “unto the consummation of the age.” The Eleven could not live that long.” (Haggai, 19)

- Using the logic presented above, Haggai argues that if the Great Commission went out of commission so then did the promise of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16. Haggai writes, “If the Great Commission is to be postponed until some later time, so must the promise of the Holy Spirit be postponed. Mr. O’Hair would not postpone the latter, and he must not postpone the former.” (Haggai, 19)
- Pastor Haggai concluded his comments on the fourth pillar of O’Hairism by trying to prove that Paul worked under the Great Commission. He offers the following points to support his position.

“1) Every Bible reader knows that Paul visited as many nations as he possibly could. So he did his part of going to all nations.

2) Then we read in the Word where he made Disciples according to the Great Commission. In Acts 14:21 we are told that he “taught many” according to the Great Commission which said: “Go ye therefore and teach all nations.” The word “teach” here and the word “taught” in Acts 14:21 are one and the same and they mean “make Disciples” or “Disciple.”

3) We have already seen that many were baptized under his ministry and that he baptized some himself.

These facts prove that the Great Apostle Paul did work under the Great Commission.” (Haggai, 20-21)

The Fifth Pillar—Argument is the Confusion of the Spirit Baptism with the Water Baptism

- Rather than deal with the verses, Haggai begins by establishing an interpretative rule that the simplest meaning of a word is the correct meaning. He then proceeds to argue that the simplest meaning of the word “baptism” in the Bible is water.

“There is a principle of interpretation recognized by students of law which is fully applicable to the Scriptures. It may be stated thus: ‘The simple meaning of any word, sentence, or pronouncement is invariably the true meaning thereof. There is no argument about the fact that the simple meaning of “baptism” in the Bible is water baptism. It seems hardly possible that any sane person would attempt to contradict this fact.’ ” (Haggai, 21-22)

- The problem here is that many “sane people” have contradicted the fact that water is the simplest definition for baptism since there are at least twelve different baptisms mentioned in Scripture,

some of which have nothing to do with water. What Haggai has done is establish a false premise using gospel passages on baptism. He then uses the meaning gleaned from those passages to interpret every verse in which the word baptism appears. Assuming that water is the meaning of the word baptism in some of the examples he cites works because the passage is talking about water, however, there are other passages where the context would not lead one to conclude that the passage is talking about water at all. Secondly, he states, “all throughout the four Gospels and the Acts whenever the Spirit baptism is meant it is so stated in the text.” These two principles create problems for Haggai as he seeks to apply them. A case in point is his comments on Romans 6:3-4. Haggai argues that the word baptism in these verses is not referring to Spirit baptism but water baptism. By doing this Haggai places himself in direct contradiction with Baptist theology that the waters of baptism save the soul. Let the readers judge for themselves, but the implication of Haggai’s comments is clear.

“Note please that the Spirit is not mentioned at all in the connection therewith and not even in the whole of the chapter (neither is water). How could it then be Spirit baptism? Note further, the use of the word “buried” is used to describe the mode, which figure is never used of Spirit baptism. . . May we here state the position of Orthodox Baptists? We do not consider merely being immersed with water as Christian baptism. The individual must give evidence that he or she has saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and thus already baptized into the Body of Christ.” (Haggai, 22, 25)

- In seeking to disprove O’Hair’s position on baptism, Haggai has established principles that undermine his own even though he does not seem to realize it. Haggai applies his principles to other Pauline texts such as I Corinthians 1:13-17, 12:13, 15:29; Galatians 3:27; and Ephesians 4:5. Regarding why O’Hair is wrong about Ephesians 4:5 being Spirit baptism, Haggai wrote:

“When we humbly approach this reference and prayerfully consider its structure, we should notice two points. First, the word is used simply, and therefore it means water baptism. Secondly, its position makes it very clear that it means water baptism. In verse 4 we read, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.” If the Spirit of God meant Spirit baptism he would have put the word next to the word Spirit in verse 4. But it is not placed here and so we go to the following verse and there read, “One Lord,” then “one faith,” in that Lord, and then “one baptism” into the Name of that Lord.” (Haggai, 23-24)

- Note the presumption in Haggai’s explanation as well as how much “stuff” he read into the meaning of the word baptism in verse 5. Likewise, his critique of O’Hair’s comments on Colossians 2:11 just does not make any sense at all:

“Brother O’Hair, can you not see in the very verse you have quoted that the circumcision is NOT MADE WITH HANDS?” Does it say that the baptism is WITHOUT water? Do you see that you are arguing against your own argument? Since God is speaking of spiritual circumcision He makes it clear that it is NOT MADE WITHOUT HANDS.” If He were

speaking of Spirit baptism, would He not have said “WITHOUT WATER” or Spirit Baptism” or something to that effect?” (Haggai, 24)

The Sixth Pillar—Argument of O’Hairism is the IPSE DIXIT on the Transition Period

- For the sixth pillar, Haggai takes issue with O’Hair teaching that a period of transition closed in Acts 28:28. Haggai quotes the following from pages 43 and 45 of *The Great Blunder of the Church*.
 - “I believe the TRANSITION period ended with Paul’s statement, ‘the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it.’ ” Acts 28:28.” (Page 43)
 - “After that time (Acts 28:28) he never again became a Jew to the Jews or sanctioned any of the practices of Judaism.” (Page 45)
- Haggai seeks to prove that Paul preached the same message after the end of Mr. O’Hair’s purposed transition period that he did before hand. To make his case, Haggai directed his readers attention to Paul’s farewell address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, specifically he quotes the following statements: 1) “Testifying both to the Jews and also the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (verse 21);” 2) he calls this “the gospel of the grace of God (verse 24);” and 3) in verse 25 he calls it the “the kingdom of God.” (Haggai, 26) For Haggai, all these statements run together and are all referring to the same thing.

“Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,” equals “The gospel of the grace of God,” and equals “the kingdom of God.” This was the message of Paul during Mr. O’Hair’s Transition period. This period ended in Acts 28:28. Was there any change in Paul’s message after that?” (Haggai, 26)

- No, Paul’s message did not change after Acts 28:28, according to Haggai. To support this notion he directs his reader’s attention to Acts 28:30-31, II Timothy 2:25, 3:15, and 1:9. The exposition of the sixth pillar concludes with this statement:

“This proves conclusively that Paul preaches the same message after Mr. O’Hair’s Transition period which he had preached before, and any change is found only in the imagination of Mr. O’Hair.” (Haggai, 27)

The Seventh Pillar—Argument is the Assertion Concerning Ceremonial “Washings” in the Old Testament

- For this pillar, Haggai takes issue with O’Hair’s teaching on the Greek word “baptize” in *The Great Blunder of the Church* and *Seven Questions Concerning Water Baptism*. Essentially, the objection here is over the mode of baptism. O’Hair states on pages 35 and 36 of *The Great Blunder of the Church* that the Greek word ‘baptizo’ is translated ‘washings’ (Heb. 9:10) and that all of Israel’s baptisms had been pourings, sprinklings, or anointings thereby taking issue with the Baptist doctrine of immersion.

The Eighth and Last Pillar—Argument is Concerning the Frequency of Quotations From the Old Testament

- The final pillar centers on statements that O’Hair made in *The Great Blunder of the Church* regarding Paul’s use of the Old Testament. On page 46 O’Hair states, “Paul appealed to the Old Testament nearly 250 times (in his Epistles written during the Acts period). In the last seven Epistles, fewer than seven times.” (Haggai, 29-30) The following is a summary of the reasons why Haggai views this reasoning as “absolutely worthless”:

“1) It is perfectly natural to expect more quotations in the Acts and the first six Epistles than in the last seven because the former group is larger than the latter: 2,381 verses as compared with 650 verses.

2) The number of times a truth or teaching is mentioned in the Scriptures does not add to or deduct from its inherent value. . .

3) O’Hair . . . has taken only one statement of the Apostle Paul, perverted its meaning and tried to divide Christians with the resultant heresy (I Cor. 1:17).

4) The fact still remains that Paul does appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures in his last seven Epistles, and he does so seven times and not as Mr. O’Hair says “fewer than seven times” (Eph. 4:8, 25; 5:2, 31; I Tim. 5:18 II Tim. 2:19 twice).

5) In the great revelation of the mythical union of Christ and His Church—which is most emphatically the “BODY TRUTH” (Eph. 5:25-33) Paul appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures.

6) Last but not least, is the fact that the greatest eulogy of the strongest appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures is found in the last Epistle of Paul, namely II Timothy 3:15-17. There is not a shadow of a doubt on the part of any student of the Word that the “Holy Scriptures” referred to are the Old Testament Scriptures.” (Haggai, 30-31)

Concluding Thoughts on O’Hairism

- Haggai concludes his booklet against O’Hair by stating the following:

“We have turned the Searchlight of the Word upon these Eight Pillar—Arguments with which the whole heresy stands or falls, and have discovered that they have a form of Scripturalness but are void of the power thereof. Every pillar is demolished and the superstructure is in ruin. O’Hairism is unscriptural. O’Hairism is antisciptural. O’Hairism is heretical in the strictest meaning of the word.

We grieve over the fact that a brother who once taught the Truth should have been led astray by the Evil One to believe and propagate with all his powers an error which has wrought

havoc in the name of the Fundamentalists. Everywhere it has gone it has left division, confusion, and bitterness in its wake. Indeed, we grieve over this calamitous invasion of our rank. For years after our brother stepped aside from the truth, his friends prayed that God would open his eyes and restore him to the “faith once for all delivered.” Alas, their prayers have not been answered as yet.” (Haggai, 31-32)

- *O’Hairism!* represents an early critique of O’Hair’s teaching on water baptism and the notion that Peter and Paul were preaching different gospels. When it first appeared in 1930, Pastor O’Hair was still making statements in *Unscriptural Cathedrals* that he had always believed and taught that the church began at Pentecost. Please note that nowhere in *O’Hairism!* does Haggai mention O’Hair’s belief about when the church began as one of the key “pillars” of O’Hairism. Why would that be? O’Hair had not yet changed his mind. If O’Hair was teaching that the church did not begin at Pentecost, it no doubt would have appeared as one of Haggai’s pillars, however, it does not.
- In short, Haggai is not critiquing fully developed O’Hairism. In addition to quoting from *The Great Blunder of the Church*, Haggai also quotes from O’Hair’s *Seven Questions Concerning Water Baptism* on page 28 of his booklet. *Seven Questions Concerning Water Baptism* was one of the few early baptism booklets that O’Hair wrote during the 1920s on the subject of baptism. O’Hair’s, *Have Ye Received The Holy Spirit Since Ye Believed?* contains a letter dated January 1, 1929 thereby making January of 1929 the earliest it could have appeared in print. *Seven Questions Concerning Water Baptism* is one of the booklets advertised for sale in the back. This is further evidence that Haggai’s *O’Hairism!* is a critique of O’Hair’s early teaching before he changed his dispensational stance.
- The failure to accurately place *O’Hairism* into its proper historical context has led to the complete misreading of the booklet. The main focus of Haggai is on O’Hair’s no water position with respect to baptism, a position that O’Hair had held since 1920, according to his testimony in *The Accuser of the Brethren*. It appears that water baptism had not become a controversy within Fundamentalism until the late 1920s or early 1930s. A second early pamphlet by O’Hair on the subject of baptism titled, *Buried With Him by Baptism* is also advertised in *Unscriptural Cathedrals* which was written in late 1930 or early 1931 but it was not advertised in *Have Ye Received The Holy Spirit Since Ye Believed?* which dates from January 1929.
- These factors have led the *Grace History Project* to conclude that Haggai’s *O’Hairism!* was the first of many attacks aimed at J.C. O’Hair throughout the 1930s. It is also important to recall that nowhere in the main text of *O’Hairism* does Haggai accuse O’Hair of Bullingerism. These charges were added to later editions of Haggai’s pamphlet after O’Hair had abandoned his Acts 2 stance.
- There can be no doubt that water baptism was the impetus for the growing controversy that was emerging within Fundamentalism. We will learn more about this in the next lesson.

Works Cited

Haggai, W. A. *O'Hairism! Under the Searchlight of the Word!*, original publication in 1930.

O'Hair, J. C. *Have Ye Received the Holy Spirit Since Ye Believed?*

O'Hair, J. C. *Unscriptural Cathedrals*.