

Sunday, September 29, 2013—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 109
Correcting the *O’Hairism!* Chronology

Introduction/Review

- Back in Lessons 91 and 92 we discussed W.A. Haggai’s attack on Pastor O’Hair titled *O’Hairism! Under the Searchlight of the Word!* At that time we taught that the publication first appeared in 1930.
- Our original sources for a publication date of 1930 were the entry for *O’Hairism!* on Google Books as well as the PHD dissertation of Adam O. Christmas. I reasoned that if Christmas said in his PHD that the booklet dated from 1930, then he must have possessed a clearly dated copy or else he would have not risked making such an error in his dissertation.
- Working from the premise that Google Books/Christmas was correct with respect to the publication date, we also observed curious discrepancies between the quotations of O’Hair’s *The Great Blunder of the Church* found in Haggai’s *O’Hairism!* Namely, none of the page numbers matched our copies (mine and Mike’s) and Haggai’s quotations of O’Hair could not be found. This led me to believe that O’Hair must have later, for some unexplained or unknown reason, rewritten *The Great Blunder of the Church*.
- In February (2013) when Lesson 91 and 92 were taught, we surmised that the copies of *O’Hairism* in our possession were later editions (2nd or later) because they made reference to the passing of “the late President of Moody Bible Institute and Editor-in-Chief of the *Moody Monthly*, Dr. James M. Gray.” Gray, however, did not die until September 21, 1935. This of course meant that if Adam Christmas was correct in his dissertation, we possessed a later edition.
- It was Dr. Dale Dewitt who first questioned whether or not Adam Christmas was correct. At first, I supported the chronology that I had presented in class when speaking with Dr. Dewitt. As studies progressed, however, things were not lining up and Dr. Dewitt asked me again if I had any other proof of a 1930 publication date beyond Google Books and the Christmas PHD. I did not.
- This prompted Dr. Dewitt and me to embark on a full scale reevaluation of the *O’Hairism!* Chronology. What follows is the result of this joint effort to set the record straight. The original chronology presented in Lessons 91 and 92 was not correct. Here is our best reconstruction to date of what actually happened.

Revised O'Hairism Chronology

The Historical-Chronological Context of the Pamphlet *O'Hairism!*

By Dale S. Dewitt and Bryan C. Ross

This chronology questions the 1930 date for the original edition of *O'Hairism*. The most puzzling element in assigning a 1930 date to the original edition is O'Hair's apparent long silence about it. Usually he replied to attacks rather promptly as with James M. Gray and Harry Ironside, and later David Otis Fuller. A 1930 date for the original edition requires a fourteen year gap before the second edition appeared; this seems impossible in light of Fullers zeal in promoting and distributing the pamphlet. This chronology is a proposed new reconstruction based on references in O'Hair's *Accuser of the Brethren and the Brethren (ABB)*, *Judge David Otis Fuller (JDOF)*, and on U. S. Census sheets and City Directories (to the extent available) from the era as a guide to Haggai's movements and locations. It is tentative and subject to further improvements if we find new data.

- 1922-1924—Haggai marries Mildred Steere in Grand Rapids MI.
- 1930—U. S. Census: Haggai living in Kalamazoo MI and pastoring a Baptist church.
- 1932-1934—Haggai moves to Gossid's Ford PA (U. S. Census sheet). Gossid's Ford, mentioned in the 1940 U. S. Census sheet as Haggai's residence in 1935, is not on recent road maps. If on the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania across the state line from Binghamton NY, Haggai might have lived there for a short time while pastoring Calvary Baptist Church in Binghamton a first time (he later pastored this church in the late 1940s and early 1950s) (see below at 1950).
- 1934—David Otis Fuller takes the pastorate of Wealthy Street Baptist Church, Grand Rapids. Did Fuller and Haggai know each other before this?
- 1936 (c) — Haggai moves from Gossid's Ford PA to Holbrooke MA to pastor Brookville Baptist Church. He was pastoring here when the unnumbered, red-type cover edition of *O'Hairism* was published as stated on the cover of that edition. See below on 1940. About this time Fuller began or increased his public discussion of J. C. O'Hair's non-water baptism views.
- 1937-1938—O'Hair writes Fuller (and his board) a letter, then prints it without a cover on White paper and distributes it under the title *A Letter to Rev. David Otis Fuller*. The date of 1937 is close to exact since in the letter O'Hair refers to his conversion to Christ 37 years earlier (1899, at the very end of December). The occasion of this letter was a sermon or series on "O'Hairism," made shortly into one or more articles in the Grand Rapids Press. Fuller soon began or continued a discussion about making a pamphlet of his "O'Hairism" material with his friend W. A. Haggai under the same title. Apparently Fuller proposed that Haggai write or edit the pamphlet, while Fuller would see to its printing and promotion. **This discussion was the origin of the pamphlet *O'Hairism*.** Perhaps Fuller and Haggai continued to exchange ideas, think and rethink, and write and rewrite. Further Letters may have come from O'Hair. There is some

reason to think Haggai had some misgivings about the scheme (see *ABB*, p. 20). Some time may have been needed for Fuller to persuade him and for the idea to mature and finalize.

- 1939-1940—the likely period of publication and distribution of the first (undesigned) edition of *O’Hairism* by Fuller. Its cover was printed with red ink on buff cover stock; later editions are numbered as Second Edition, Fourth Edition, etc. and the covers of at least some later editions were printed with black ink. On the first edition cover, Haggai is said to be pastor of Brookville Baptist Church, MA. The cover also had a note in red ink suggesting O’Hair was refusing to accept an invitation to debate Haggai on baptism.
- 1940—Haggai appears in the 1940 U. S. Census as residing in Holbrooke MA and pastoring Brookville Baptist Church. Haggai lived about a mile from the church.
- 1942—March 1. O’Hair writes a letter to Fuller about *O’Hairism*, a copy of which he says he has “just received.” This can only refer to the first edition (undesigned) of the pamphlet. This letter was later published as the pamphlet, *Judge David Otis Fuller Concerning O’Hairism*, but how much later is not clear. It partly concerned the pamphlet’s cover note that O’Hair was unwilling to debate Haggai. This letter also alludes to the pervious letter of 1937 and states,
 - “Your Massachusetts religious pal might be excused on the grounds of ignorance for his ungracious, dishonorable, malicious accusations, but both you and your official board know full well that I do not teach or believe any of the extreme dispensationalism with which I am charged in your book “O’Hairism.” I wrote you at length concerning my teaching some months ago when you were misrepresenting me in your public utterances, and if you had done what any spiritual, honest Christian should have done, you would have publicly apologized for your false and ungracious charges. But you are still maliciously, intentionally falsifying. Unless you have deceived the members of your official board, I cannot understand why they would permit you to continue your untruthful accusations especially at this time when this world is torn asunder by strife and bloodshed and when men of God should be united in giving forth a clear gospel testimony to millions of hell-bound sinners.”
- O’Hair expresses belief that Fuller “thought it would help if he printed on the cover the suggestion that he [O’Hair] feared to publically debate ‘water baptism’ with Pastor Haggai (*Accuser*, p. 20),” possibly implying there was actually no invitation from Haggai. But—in *Accuser*, p. 20, O’Hair also says he preferred to debate a “representative outstanding Bible teacher,” “a recognized leader among Fundamentalists.” This remark may suggest he received such an invitation, but decided to ignore it for the reason suggested. In *Accuser*, p. 20, O’Hair says the “second edition” (p. 19; “new edition,” p. 20) of *O’Hairism* was published “more than two years after” he sent this letter of March 1, 1942. At the end of the letter O’Hair offers to debate Haggai at any location of Haggai and Fuller’s choosing in Grand Rapids. “If after reading this you two decide on a public debate on the whole subject in any building in Grand Rapids, this is my acceptance. Name the time and place. This will perhaps bring

your friend out of his obscurity and help him to get the recognition which he craves and is determined to have even if he must defame his fellow-Christian to gain it.”

- 1944—the Second Edition of *O’Hairism* was published and so labeled. Later in 1944, O’Hair received a copy of this Edition, which in turn said nothing about O’Hair’s 1942 debate offer, but instead repeated the earlier statement that O’Hair had not accepted the challenge. It seems very unlikely that it took fourteen years—if the first edition appeared in 1930—for the Second Edition to appear, considering Fuller’s likely aggressive promotion.
- 1945—February 24. Haggai writes a letter to O’Hair, later quoted in *ABB*, p. 20, to the effect that Fuller induced him to write *O’Hairism* and that Fuller himself published and promoted it. Haggai also said in the letter that he was urged by Fuller to “challenge” O’Hair to a debate on baptism (apparently by Fuller). As noted above, what happened over this challenge is unclear.
- 1945—O’Hair writes *Accuser of the Brethren and the Brethren* against Fuller and Haggai’s *O’Hairism*—probably shortly after mid-June, 1945 (earliest date, *ABB*, p. 7). Elsewhere, he says he tried to resolve this dispute privately but without success.
- 1950—Haggai is listed in the Binghamton, New York Directory as pastoring Calvary Baptist Church in Binghamton (record produced at Ancestry.com). This is proof that he pastored Brookville Baptist Church, Holbrooke MA, *before* he pastored in Binghamton, unless, as mentioned above, there was an earlier short pastorate there. The Fourth Edition of *O’Hairism* was published at Binghamton as the Edition says, and as it appears at the WorldCat.org website.

Compelling Evidence for the Date of *O’Hairism*

- Three comments by O’Hair in *Accuser of the Brethren and the Brethren* (c 1945) seem to offer compelling evidence of a date for *O’Hairism* by W. A. Haggai of about 1939 or 1940 within the context of the preceding chronology, rather than the 1930 date shown on some database websites (Ross favors 1940 to 1941 given O’Hair’s statements on the inside cover of his dated letter to David Otis Fuller on March 1, 1941. On the inside O’Hair states, “**I have just received a copy of a message which is being distributed by the pastor of the Wealthy Street Baptist Temple, Grand Rapids, Michigan.**”) In *ABB*, p. 19,
 - (1) “. . . Pastor Haggai’s work was malicious and vicious. And at that, he is less guilty than Pastor Fuller, for I had written him in detail before this pamphlet was printed that I did not teach, endorse or condone doctrines that he had publicly falsely accused me of teaching before he encouraged Pastor Haggai to put them in print.”
- The comment refers to a prior letter or letters to Fuller before the first edition of *O’Hairism*. One letter we know of was *A Letter to Rev. David Otis Fuller*, which was printed and circulated publically at the same time, or shortly after it was sent privately. It is dated to 1937 by O’Hair’s reference in it to his conversion as having occurred 37 years earlier (at the end of December, 1899, by his own testimony). On p. 20 of *ABB* O’Hair says further of Fuller,

- (2) “. . . he knew that I had written him and several members of his official board that I did not teach or believe most of the doctrines that he included in his public address which he gave on ‘O’Hairism.”
- This comment is more specific that the earlier letter was written to Fuller and members of his *board* after Fuller’s *speech(s?)* on “O’Hairism.” The first page of *A Letter to Rev. David Otis Fuller* contains the following statement, “Hence this open letter, copies of which will be sent to members of your official board, as well as to many preachers and Christian workers.” On p. 27 of *ABB*, O’Hair says,
 - (3) “. . . let me repeat that I explained fully to Dr. Fuller, long before he hired Haggai to falsify for him”
- This is another reference to the letter. The “long before” suggests some time lapse; how long cannot be determined exactly. More importantly, quotes one (1) and three (3) above show that Haggai’s pamphlet was the end point and some form of development of Fuller’s public speech(es?) against “O’Hairism.” Hence, it appears that the “O’Hairism” talk or series was a new stage in the controversies of the 1930s and early 1940s, initiated not by Haggai’s pamphlet in 1930, but by Fuller’s public speech or sermons, which in turn were given later extension and wider publication by Fuller through inducing Haggai to write them in a pamphlet under his own name. So—as O’Hair recognizes on p. 20 of *Accuser of the Brethren*—Haggai was really a secondary player in the process, with Fuller as the primary mover and initiator, and Haggai as Fuller’s pamphlet spokesman.
- This set of comments, along with the one below, points conclusively to the origin of *O’Hairism* within the framework of 1937-1941. Finally, also in *ABB*, p. 20, O’Hair quotes from a letter of Haggai to himself about the pamphlet (“booklet”) as follows:
 - (4) “As to my booklet, that also was urged upon me, Dr. Fuller besought me to prepare it. He published it. I didn’t.”

Concluding Thoughts

- Even though the Grace History Project was wrong about the initial publication date for *O’Hairism*, our initial mistake was fortunate in the sense that it led to learning that there were two editions of *The Great Blunder of the Church*.
- Dr. Dewitt has reached out to Adam Christmas regarding the dating errors exhibited in his thesis and, to date, has received no evidence that Mr. Christmas is willing to amend his dates as per our findings. In the meantime, Christmas has furnished no evidence to corroborate his date of 1930 for the publication of *O’Hairism!*
- Before concluding this lesson it is important to point out that by 1945 with the publication of *The Accuser of the Brethren* O’Hair had altered his position somewhat on when the church began. Please recall that his first position in *God’s Reign of Grace For the Human Race* (between July, 1937 and April, 1938) was that the church began before Paul wrote Romans. This was also the position of the Worldwide Grace Testimony when it was founded in January, 1939. In 1945, as part of his defense against Fuller and Haggai, O’Hair states the following on the origin of the church:

- “When Fuller and Haggai printed that I teach that the prison Epistles alone are for this dispensation, they printed that which is not true, and Dr. Fuller knew it was untrue when the pamphlet was printed, and I am quite sure that Mr. Haggai knew it. **I believe that this age of grace and the Body of this dispensation began before Paul wrote his first Epistle;** and that it is absurd to call the Church at Corinth, or at Phillipi, or at Ephesus, or at Thessalonica, a “kingdom” church. I have stood against such fantastic teaching as uncompromisingly and aggressively as I have preached against Dr. Fuller’s and Pastor Haggai’s unscriptural “watery-grave” witness.”

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