

Sunday, November 24, 2013—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 116 The New Evangelicalism Ronald Nash Verses C.R. Stam, Part 2

Introduction/Review

- In the previous lesson (115) we surveyed Ronald Nash’s book *The New Evangelicalism* in an attempt to ascertain new developments in that movement between 1947 and the early 1960s.
- In this lesson we want to consider C.R. Stam’s response to Nash and the new (neo) evangelicals (NE) in *The Present Peril*. Published in March, 1968 *The Present Peril* sets the stage for Stam’s departure from the GGF later that same year. Thus it is important to understand what aspects of the NE platform Stam had issues with.

The Present Peril (March, 1968)

Preface

- In the preface to *The Present Peril*, Stam discusses what one should call a book on the subject of the new evangelicalism. Believing new evangelicalism (NE) to be a subtle attack of Satan upon the true Church, Stam had considered naming the book *The Devil in Disguise*. In the end, he thought better of it because he did not wish to paint all Christians who had fallen into NE as the agents of Satan. Stam did, however, view NE to be an effort on the part of the adversary to “neutralize the faith of Bible-believing Christians and to rob them of the power of the Spirit in their lives.” (Stam, 1)
- NE was seeking to take advantage of the desire on the part of sincere believers for Christianity unity, according to Stam. As a self professed Fundamentalist, who wished to be known as one, Stam concedes that disunity among Fundamentalists had done the cause of Christ much harm and gave rise to NE. Rather than recognize the sevenfold “unity of the Spirit” outlined in Ephesians 4, Stam viewed the NE as compromisers seeking to rally around those points upon which there was agreement however minimal they might be. (Stam, 1-2)
- Written March, 15, 1968, the preface summarizes the peril posed by NE as follows:
 - “This is the twofold peril of the new evangelicalism. It actually teaches the believer to let down his guard and encourages him to compromise, not only with other believers, but even with the world and with apostate religion—and all this is sternly condemned by the Word of God.” (Stam, 3)

Chapter 1 The New Evangelicalism: What Is The New Evangelicalism?

- The first paragraph of Chapter 1 makes it abundantly clear that Stam intended for *The Present Peril* to be a response to Ronald Nash’s *The New Evangelicalism*. That Stam viewed Nash’s work as representative of the NE movement is beyond doubt. Noting that Harold John Ockenga fully endorsed Nash’s book, Stam views it as “an accepted defense of neo-evangelicalism.” (Stam, 5)

- Noting Nash’s comments that NE was a reaction against the failures of Fundamentalism, just as Fundamentalism had been a reaction against the errors of modernism, Stam summarizes the NE agenda as follows:
 - “Neo-evangelicalism opposes fundamentalism, not in its stand for the essentials of the Christian faith, but in what is felt to be fundamentalism’s want of intellectual scholarship, its extreme separatism, its lack of a sense of social responsibility and especially its dispensationalism.” (Stam, 5)

Chapter 2 A Basic Disagreement: The New Evangelicalism and Dispensationalism

- As the title suggests, Chapter 2 is taken up with a discussion of the NE’s attitude regarding dispensational theology.
 - “As a class, the neo-evangelicals oppose dispensationalism. In the preface to *The New Evangelicalism* Nash states that ‘one of the basic disagreements between evangelicalism and fundamentalism is over the matter of dispensationalism.’ He recognized that there are some among the fundamentalists who oppose dispensationalism, but declares that ‘whenever and to whatever extent that fundamentalism is characterized by dispensationalism, then it and evangelicalism do differ doctrinally.’” (Stam, 8)
- After boldly declaring, “I am a fundamentalist,” Stam outlines what he perceives to be the problems within the movement.
 - “Like the neo-evangelicals, we deplore the decline of fundamentalism; its much complacency, its multiple division, its lack of concern for the multitudes about them who have not been confronted with the gospel, the waning of its passion to simply know God’s truth and make it known, its growing failure to teach the Bible, its steady loss of the power of the Spirit. However, whereas some neo-evangelicals hold that this decline among fundamentalists is due largely to their having embraced dispensationalism, we hold that their decline is the direct result of their failure to go on in dispensational truth as God has given them light.” (Stam, 9)
- Stam goes on to argue that the *Scofield Reference Bible* (SRB), along with its dispensational understanding of the Scriptures, were part and parcel of fundamentalism’s resistance to modernism. Stam views the dispensational segment of fundamentalism as a lively and active portion of the movement.
 - “It was among the dispensationalists that pastors taught the Scriptures from the pulpit. It was among the dispensationalists that people carried their Bible to church and followed the preacher as he expounded the Word. It was the dispensationalists who were using their Bible to win others to Christ. There was no doubt about it; God had used the *Scofield Reference Bible* and those who stood for dispensational truth to bring about a spiritual revival in the Church, the results of which are still felt among us.” (Stam, 11)
- Without question, Stam viewed fundamentalism as having suffered from unwillingness to move on with the recovery of dispensational truth beyond the SRB.

- “It is not passing strange that the further development of dispensational truth since the Scofield era has been opposed, misrepresented and ridiculed; that its enemies have warned the Christian public of its growing influence, yet withal not even a 100-page book has been published to answer it scripturally. Seeing that, in the words of Nash, ‘the evangelical does not shirk his responsibility to square his faith with the facts,’ we urge our neo-evangelical friends to consider these further developments of dispensational truth without delay, to determine whether the decline in fundamentalism is indeed largely due to its espousals of dispensationalism or whether it is not rather due to its failure to go on in dispensational truth.”
- In Stam’s thinking, neo-evangelicalism was caused by the refusal on the part of fundamentalists to move forward in the recovery of Pauline truth.
 - “There can be no question that there has been a retreat from Dr. Scofield’s dispensational position among recognized fundamentalist leaders, and apparently they do not wish to consider the possibility that they may be going in the wrong direction. They are more zealous to be orthodox than to be Scriptural. They have determined not to go beyond the teachings of the “fathers”: Darby, Scofield, Gaebelein, Ironside—and thus have actually departed from the best that these men taught. This, essentially, is what has produced neo-evangelicalism.” (Stam, 16)

Chapter 3 The New Evangelicalism and Intellectualism: The Lack of Fundamentalist Scholarship

- In this chapter Stam’s response to the claims of Henry, Nash and Ockenga is that fundamentalists wore “ignorance” (i.e., “anti-intellectualism”) as a badge of honor. Taking exception to the claims of leading NEs, Stam downplayed the role of “higher education” citing its “limited value” and noting that it was often “a handicap.” To buttress his point, Stam points out that “by and large educators of this world’s universities are unregenerate men . . . how many promising young men have made shipwreck of the faith in the world’s colleges and seminaries.” (Stam, 26)
- Stam maintained that NE, as a class, had placed too much emphasis on intellectualism as a remedy for fundamentalism’s shortcomings. (Stam, 27) Stam goes on to admit that training in the arts and sciences can be used to “great advantage, but only in the measure that they are also grounded in the Scripture.” (Stam, 29) For Stam it was a matter of emphasis:
 - “. . . from what this writer has read of neo-evangelical writings they have placed the emphasis in the wrong place. It is largely upon the need for “dedicated Christians” to become trained in the arts and sciences, whereas it should be upon dedicated Christians, whatever their calling, becoming well grounded in the Scriptures so that they might be productive in Christ’s service . . . (quotes 2 Tim. 2:156).” (Stam, 29)
- Functionally, Stam thought there was a large difference between how NEs and Fundamentalists conducted their ministries.

- “One basic difference, then, between the neo-evangelical and the true fundamentalist is this: The neo-evangelical attempt to convince unregenerate intellectuals on intellectual grounds that the Bible is the Word of God . . . living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,” while the fundamentalist believing on intellectual and other grounds that the Bible is the Word of God, “the sword of the Spirit,” uses it to convict men of sin and bring them to Christ for salvation.” (Stam, 32)
- Moreover, Stam points out that “where intellectualism is concerned, there is a great tendency to become lifted up with pride.” Therefore, he calls upon his NE brethren “to cast down the idol Intellectualism and get back to expository teaching of the word of God.” (Stam, 33)
- Stam concludes this chapter by giving an illustration of what NE’s shift away from dispensationalism and increased emphasis on scholarship has led to; the false premise that there is only one gospel in the New Testament. According to Ockenga, “only one gospel is taught by all the writers of the New Testament, including Paul.” (quoted in Stam, 39)

Chapter 4 The New Evangelicalism and The Fundamentals of the Faith

- In this chapter Stam deals with NE’s attempt to reassure fundamentalists that they still stand with them in terms of the so-called fundamentals of the faith. Regarding this, Stam wrote, “Neo-evangelicals in general do not wish to be called fundamentalists, but they do want fundamentalists to be assured that they stand for all the fundamentals of the Christian faith.” (Stam, 43) In the end, Stam is critical of an approach that has more in common with denominationalism and intellectualism than dispensational theology.

Chapter 5 The New Evangelicalism and Science

- In chapter 5 Stam deals with the impression that some NE writers were advocating that science was ahead of the Bible and more worthy of one’s confidence. Bernard Ramm’s *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* garners most of Stam’s attention in this chapter. Stam is critical of many of Ramm’s statements as well as their implications. Specifically, Stam seems to have concluded from reading Ramm’s book that the reason people are lost, in Ramm’s mind, is because they believe the Bible is scientifically untrustworthy. In the end, Stam views Ramm and his NE brethren to as having discarded much vital Christian doctrine in the name of scientific advancement and intellectualism. (Stam, 56-74)

Chapter 6 The New Evangelicalism and Social Responsibility

- The claims of Henry, Nash, and other NE supporters that Fundamentalism has no social conscience are addressed by Stam in chapter six. Fundamentally, Stam argues that “the Church is not here to promote world betterment, but to testify that God will judge it as it grows more and more materialistic, more given over to self-gratification and self-exaltation.” (Stam, 87) Stam is very critical of Carl Henry’s assertion that “evangelicals need to extend themselves in energetic devotion to social justice to match their zeal for the proclamation of the gospel.” (Stam, 87)

- “The Apostle Paul lived in days of great injustice, including slavery, yet he did not go about proclaiming human rights or championing social reform. Rather he exhorted Christian slaves to be faithful and devoted slaves for Christ’s sake.” (Stam, 877)
- In summation, of his arguments in chapter six Stam states, “the Church is not here to save the wreck which man has made of society, but to save perishing souls from the wreck, which is already doomed to destruction. The neo-evangelicals, however, have fallen for the liberals’ line that we are supposed somehow to save, or help save, the wreck.”(Stam, 89)

Chapters 7-9 are on The New Evangelicalism and The Separate Life, Apostate Religion and Evangelism, thereby completing Stam’s critique of NE. There is nothing in these chapters that fundamentally advances the narrative we are following. Consequently, we will refrain from commenting on them at this time.

A Resolution

- At the end of the book, Stam reprints the content of a resolution regarding NE that had been adopted by the Berean Bible Society on September 6, 1966 almost two years before *The Present Peril* was published in March, 1968. The following are the contents of that resolution.

A RESOLUTION

Regarding The New Evangelicalism

WHEREAS a “new evangelicalism” has risen in America, the proponents of which do not wish to be known as fundamentalists, but rather as evangelicals, and

WHEREAS leading proponents of the said neo-evangelicalism, while claiming to believe firmly in the fundamentals of the Christian faith, nevertheless assume compromising positions and make compromising statements regarding the fundamentals, and

WHEREAS the said neo-evangelicals, hoping to win greater numbers to Christ and to win liberals to conservative theology, disobey the clear commandments of God as to separation from the world (John 15:19; Rom. 12:2; II Cor. 6:14-17; Jas. 4:4; I John 2:15; 5:19), and especially from apostates from the faith (Tit. 3:10; II John 10, 11), and

WHEREAS the said neo-evangelicals in their “concern for society,” use passages of Scripture which refer to other dispensations (e.g., II Chron. 7:14) and apply them to society today, thus perverting God’s revealed program for the present dispensation, and

WHEREAS neo-evangelicals, with few exceptions, reject and oppose dispensational truth in general and the truth of “the mystery” revealed to Paul in particular, and

WHEREAS neo-evangelicalism is being promoted by some of the largest religious periodicals and institutions of learning, and has made serious inroads among fundamentalists and has even gained a foothold in the so-called “grace movement,” now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the *Berean Bible Society* go on record as standing without compromise or reservation for,

- 1) All the fundamentals of the Christian faith, including in particular the inerrancy and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures, in their original writings, as opposed to the view of some neo-evangelicals that they are merely “adequate” revelation.
- 2) Obedience to the clear commands of Scripture as to the believer’s separation from the world and from apostate unbelievers, as opposed to neo-evangelicalism’s unequal yoke with both. We particularly oppose the unscriptural, unethical and dishonest doctrine of “infiltration” into liberal churches by evangelicals with a view to regaining control of the apostate denominations.
- 3) Obedience to God’s command to inform men that “the world,” i.e., this world system, is doomed to destruction and that “the gospel of the grace of God” is a message of personal, individual salvation from “this present evil age” (Gal. 1:4) as well as from the judgment to come, as opposed to neo-evangelicalism’s appeal to nations and to society in an effort to improve world conditions.
- 4) Our responsibility to “rightly divide the Word of Truth,” proclaim the unadulterated “gospel of the grace of God” and the “preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery,” as opposed to neo-evangelicalism’s confusion of the “the gospel of the grace of God” with “the gospel of the kingdom,” the Body of Christ with the Kingdom of Christ and the mission of the twelve apostles with that of the Apostle Paul.

Finally, BE IT RESOVLED that we continue to designate ourselves as Bible-believing “fundamentalists,” this designation indicating that we stand for the fundamentals of the faith, as compared with the terms “conservative” and “evangelical,” which convey little definite meaning and may indeed be used to convey false impressions. (Stam, 153)

Conclusion

- On August 1, 1968 Pastor Stam and the Berean Bible Society published a booklet titled *Silence Now Would Be Sin* formally renouncing all affiliation or cooperation with the Grace Gospel Fellowship and Grace Bible College. The opening lines read as follows:
 - “For **two years** a behind-the-scenes struggle has been going on within *Grace Gospel Fellowship*, involving the leadership of several of our grace organizations, particularly Grace Bible College.” (1)
- Toward the end of the pamphlet Stam officially severs his ties with the GGF and GBC:
 - “Thus it is with deep regret, after twenty-five years of fellowship and co-operation in the Grace Gospel Fellowship, and after two years of futile efforts to reverse the trend indicated above, that this writer feels that he can no longer conscientiously remain a member of GGF, and the board of directors of Berean Bible Society feel that we as a society should no longer be associated with GGF as one of its approved organizations. We are convinced that it would be dishonoring and displeasing to God if we went along further with these brethren in their permissive attitude, and that if we fail to speak out against it we would be

justly held accountable as increasing numbers of GGF members were gradually and subtly drawn into the same compromise, and sincere but uninformed father's and mother's sent their children to the GGF-approved Grace Bible College.

We hold no ill will toward anyone in any way associated with Grace Gospel Fellowship or the above two GGF-approved organizations. Indeed we love them sincerely in Christ, but they have gone too far in their permissiveness to expect us to accompany them on the road they are traveling." (9)

- In our next study we will begin studying what occurred during the previous "two years" to precipitate this action on the part of Stam.

Works Cited

Stam, C.R. *The Present Peril: The New Evangelicalism*. Chicago, IL: Berean Bible Society, 1968.

Stam, C.R. *Silence Now Would be Sin*. Chicago, IL: Berean Bible Society, 1968.