

Sunday, December 29, 2013—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 120  
The Stam/GBC Controversy, Part 4

### **1967 Continued**

Vernon A. Schutz to Administration of Grace Bible College (summer, 1967 exact date unknown due to deterioration)

- Unfortunately the first page of this letter had suffered some deterioration and was very hard to read, however, pages 2-4 survived intact and made for very interesting reading. In this letter Schutz expresses his thoughts regarding the ongoing controversy between Stam and GBC. Schutz, whom I have always had much respect for, generally sided with Baker and Dean against Stam. Schutz viewed the dilemma as stemming from “a contentious spirit” that he had seen developing for “a good while.” Schutz perceived that arguing with Stam about the facts was a waste of time because “we are not dealing so much with a set of factual issues, but an ATTITUDE.”
- Specifically Schutz took exception to an article published by Stam in the April, 1967 issue of the *Searchlight*. In an article titled “On Two Sides of One Fence” Stam made it appear to his readers that Jack Dean vacillates in declaring himself a Fundamentalist.
  - “Mr. Stam does not state Dr. Dean’s true position. Dr. Dean is merely being cautious, as I am, in reference to the term “Fundamentalist.” So often today the term “Fundamentalist” no longer carries a theological connotation. This term is often used in the sense of a narrow-minded, bigoted, back-biting, belligerent person who fights about everything and anything and with anybody. In some circles this is what is meant by “Fundamentalist” and I hastened to add, I hope these circles do not consider me a “Fundamentalist” in their sense of the term. I always answer the question, “Are you a Fundamentalist?” by saying: “If by Fundamentalist you mean Fundamentalist in its theological sense, yes, I am a Fundamentalist; but if you mean by the terms a person who is contentious in the faith, then I trust I am not that.” This is what Jack Dean meant by the statement: “I am a Fundamentalist in certain circles, as defined in certain ways.” What is wrong with this? This is what brother Dean does. I know, I talked with Him. But Messrs. Farrell and Stam have also talked with him and still they interpret Jack erroneously and make it appear that Jack is playing on “Two Side of One Fence.” It seems to me that these brethren are indeed “fundamentalist” in the contentious sense of the word.”
- Next Schutz attacks Stam’s statements that Dean is a neo-evangelical.
  - “Mr. Stam is quick to point out where Dean’s convictions seem to parallel with the Neo-evangelical approach to evangelism when Jack says that we should not “buttonhole” a person or be “offensive to friends, relatives and neighbors.” (Incidentally, as I understood Mr. Stam when he taught us personal evangelism, he said in substance the

same thing. Both these brethren had these convictions before the term Neo-evangelicalism was coined, I know I did.) Now because Jack Dean's own personal conviction may agree with the Neo-evangelical position here, does this make him a New-evangelical? Dean may agree with them in some areas, so do I, in some areas. If that makes us Neo-evangelicals then it is not incorrect to call us Ultradispensationalists because we agree with them in some areas also. Just because a man's point of view may at times parallel with another group, this does not make him one of that particular group . . . Roman Catholics believe in the Trinity, virgin birth, and inspiration of the scriptures, and so do I. Would you label me, or call me, a Roman Catholic? Of course not! If you did, you would be guilty of conjuring a caricature which, according to definition, is a ludicrous exaggeration or distortion. Neither should we brand each other Neo-orthodox and/or Neo-evangelical simply because our points of view at times run parallel with theirs in certain areas."

- Schutz viewed the tactics of Stam and Farrell as being the very same as used against the Grace Movement by their opponents who sought to brand them as Ultradispensationalists.
  - "The whole approach made by these men falls under reproach here. It appears to me that their labels of "liberal" and "Neo-evangelical" are CARICATURES designed to prejudice and inflame their listeners against some of our "grace" brothers and the school. To create a caricature and then proceed to demolish this in God's name, as though we are some kind of champion, is one of the "wiles of the Devil." Our opponents have done this to us with the caricature of "Ultradispensationalists" and now some of our own brethren seem to be using such tactics on their own grace brethren."
- Schutz also points out that Stam ought to have been more understanding of problems that arise within the student body given that Stam used to be the Dean.
  - "I cannot help but comment on the accusation that Mr. Dean and Mr. Baker are "defensive" about the spiritual problems of the school. The school has always had such problems. I remember some very serious ones arose when Mr. Stam was acting Dean at Milwaukee. If we students had chosen to let some of these out it would have indeed caused a scandal. Mr. Stam seems to forget how helpless he was to prevent such occurrences nor does he seem to be the least bit sympathetic or understanding toward the present administration."
- Schutz does agree with Stam that the writings of D.H. Lawrence are immoral. Schutz compares Stam and Farrell to the Pope and Arch Bishop of the Church of England in terms of their tactics.
  - "In reading over this material, I get the distinct impression that Messrs. Farrell and Stam, these self appointed executioners and guardians of the faith, depending on your point of view I suppose, are very much like the Pope of Rome and the Arch Bishop of the Church of England. Steele said of these two churches, that the only difference between them is the Church of Rome is infallible, and the Church of England is never wrong."

September 19, 1967—Stam to Unnamed Pastor

- Stam speaks of an August GGF Council meeting that took place during the Winona Lake convention. Stam writes that during this meeting “Win Johnson, Herbert Hinze, and C.R. Stam pressed for an afternoon panel discussion about the GBC problem with, perhaps, Messrs. Baker and Dean on one side and Win Johnson and Stam on the other.” According to Stam he suggested that:
  - “. . . the meetings be open to the GGF constituency since so many parents and lay people were already involved. According to Stam this suggestion was overruled in favor of a “special pastors” conference to be held Sept. 26-28 to discuss the issue. When I asked whether we might bring certain laymen along, the majority ruled that the conference should be for pastors only.”
- Stam complains that he learned on September 3<sup>rd</sup> that the GGF Council was planning to have its laymen attend. To which Stam replied via a letter to the National Secretary, Dan Bultema, stating:
  - “. . . it was the official decision of the Council that the meeting be open to pastors only . . . I am interested to know what the format of these meetings will be (I had suggested one). Does ‘our side’ have no voice in deciding this? We have not as yet been contacted about it. Also, some council members mentioned taping the proceedings, will this be done? If so, we should be notified, so that we can do the same.”
- Receipt of Bultema’s reply brought forth the following “amazing revelation” according to Stam.
  - “After Win Johnson and I were off the Council and its membership was stacked in favor of the College, the Council decided that it would be conducting proceedings at the pastors’ conference, in which one tape recorder would be permitted - theirs! Note, the proceedings are not to be taped to provide you and us with copies. Brother Bultema’s letter states: “The Council has voted for one tape recorder to be allowed, and all sessions will be taped, which will be for the official record of the GGF.

So there you have it! We are to have “impartial” proceedings by a council already overwhelming committed to the defense of GBC—the president himself also the president of GBC! They can have their laymen attend, but we can’t! They can tape our statements, but we can’t tape theirs! And, only upon inquiry, we learn of all this on Sept. 16<sup>th</sup>, just ten days before the conference is to begin! We are not consulted about the conference in any way. This arbitrary action certainly makes it appear again that the defenders of Grace Bible College do not want this matter discussed on equal terms over open Bible; they want to silence us.

After reading Brother Dan’s letter I immediately called Win Johnson and Jeff Farrell to ask them to think and pray as to what we should do now. The result: we have

unanimously decided that we will not take part in any such proceedings. We are not on trial. If anybody is on trial it is GBC—for published statements and pursued policies which violate the plainest Scriptures and dishonor the God we are supposed to serve. But, most assuredly, we will not participate in any hearing held on the above arbitrary and unequal terms. We are not about to be “stoned” into silence.

We will attend the conference, however, to answer any questions you may have to ask—and perhaps to ask a few of our own. Like you, we will be praying that God will help us all and somehow bring glory to Himself out of this difficult problem.”

- The letter contains a post-script stating that when Stam had finished writing the letter he received a copy of the agenda for the scheduled meeting.
  - “Please note: Jack Dean, Ed Ericson, Dave Weddle, Chas. F. Baker one hour and twenty minutes together. Stam: twenty minutes, Win Johnson and Jeff Farrell none! Ask yourself whether this does not fully justify our action above, and our conclusion that the defenders of the college want to overwhelm and silence us rather than engage in a confrontation on equal terms over open Bibles.”

September 26-28 GGF Pastors’ Conference at the Ascot Hotel in Chicago, IL

- This is the meeting to which Stam referred to above in his letter to an unnamed Pastor. We have in our possession a copy of the agenda from this meeting. According to the agenda the controversial parts of the meeting were to be handled as follows.
  - Tues. Sept. 26—7:45 pm—Consideration of “Journal of Grace Theology”
    - Editorial Policy—Jack Dean (20 min. statement)
    - “Anti-Intellectualism & The Grace Movement”—Ed Ericson (20 min. statement)
    - “The Spirit of Bereanism”—Dave Weddle (20 min. statement)
      - Discussion will follow each 20 min. statement
  - Wed. Sept. 27—9:00 am—Charges and Criticism in Respect to Grace Bible College
    - Since the pastors have received both points of view through the mail packets pertaining to this subject, there will be only twenty minutes of introductory remarks from:
      - Cornelius R. Stam (20 min. statement)
      - Charles F. Baker (20 min. statement)
        - Discussion will follow each 20 min. statement
    - 1:30 pm—Ethical Methods in Respect to Charges and Criticism
    - 7:00 pm—Continuation of Discussion on Ethical Methods
  - Thur. Sept. 28—9:00 am—Our Attitude Toward Growth in the Grace Movement
    - Evangelism
    - Educational Methods

- I spoke to Dr. Dale DeWitt about this Fall, 1967 meeting at the Ascot Hotel in Chicago during a dinner meeting in July, 2013. Going purely from memory, forty-six years after the fact, DeWitt reported the following outcomes regarding this meeting.
  - 80-90% of the pastors voted to support Dean, Baker, and GBC.
  - Minority support for Stam which precluded his withdrawal.
- Stam paints a somewhat different picture in his March 31, 1970 publication *Why Berean Bible Fellowship*. Writing in 1970 only about three years after the events at the Ascot Hotel in the Fall of 1967 Stam writes:

- “Finally, a special GGF Pastor’s Conference was held in October, 1967 to deal with the problem at Grace Bible College. The results of this conference have been widely misrepresented. It has been reported that at this conference a resolution was passed clearing the school of all charges, only three out of the seventy opposing this resolution.

Actually, such a resolution was proposed by those supporting the college, but this resolution did not even get a second. Then as GGF’s own published minutes show, another resolution was passed, not clearing the school of the charges but “dropping all present allegations.”

Further, the GGF records show that there were nine out of sixty, not three out of seventy, who declined to support even this resolution, and it is well-known that some of the 51 remaining voted for the resolution only to give the leaders at Grace Bible College another opportunity to reconsider and to return the college to the purpose for which it was founded.”

- After encountering these discrepancies in my research, I emailed Dr. DeWitt in early August, 2013 a message containing the paragraphs quoted above. I asked him to compare Stam’s comments with his recollection of the events. While I cannot share his entire answer because it contained many personal points that he asked me not to share in this setting, I can give you the gist of his response. According to DeWitt, the goal of the meeting was to gauge the GGF’s support of Dean and Baker (GBC) and gain an understanding of how the greater GGF saw the controversy. DeWitt did not dispute Stam’s numbers in terms of the percentages involved in the voting but stated that he had used 80-90% as a cautious number at our earlier dinner meeting not wanting to overstate things. Furthermore, DeWitt stated that it was probably true that the first resolution was made by the supporters of the college but that he has no recollection of whether or not that motion was ever seconded. Moreover, he also indicates that Stam’s statements regarding a second motion to “drop all present allegations” were probably correct. In terms of the meaning of the 51 votes in support of the college, DeWitt stated the following:
  - “What they were voting on was whether to continue to support GBC, Dean, and Baker or not. There may have been some, possibly several or even quite a few who expressed privately to Stam that the meaning he describes in the article was the meaning of their

vote. Formally the vote was yes or no, but everything here was not all black and white among the two groups—the yeas and the nays. I think there were many shades of opinion and many probably had some reservations on both sides about their vote. That the whole of the 51 gave Dean and Baker their unqualified support would probably be an over-estimate, but formally the support for Dean and Baker and GBC was very strong on the yes or no.”

- Regardless of how one understands the events that transpired in Chicago during the fall of 1967, Stam did not immediately part company with the GGF. It was almost a year before Stam formally left in August of 1968. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that the outcome of the meeting at the Ascot Hotel did not immediately indicate to Stam that his controversy with GBC had come to an end, or was hopeless, or we theorize he would have parted company with the GGF and GBC much sooner.
- It is important to note that in DeWitt’s email of August, 2013, he was very clear that there was a “range of values” within the college’s faculty with respect to the neo-evangelical platform during the 1960s. Without quoting directly, DeWitt depicted the following continuum.
  - DeWitt—most committed to the NE platform except its renunciation of dispensationalism. This too needed to be reworked as DeWitt did in his *Dispensationalism Theology in America During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*.
  - Dean—more conservative than DeWitt. Entertained aspects of the NE agenda, especially in the realm of evangelism. Dean favored liberal arts education and was committed to counseling in pastor ministry along with its psychological underpinning. He did not want to be called a Fundamentalist if it meant being compared with an “Appalachian snake-handler.”
  - Baker—was the most conservative and cautious. DeWitt suspects that Baker never quite fully understood the NE movement. Baker was committed to the study of science and its being a part of the college’s curriculum. DeWitt described all three men as having doubts about the Creation Research Movement.
- DeWitt described what was going on as a synthesis of faith and learning that the faculty wanted to share with others in the Grace Movement and its college.

October 26, 1967—Dr. John T. Dean is officially inaugurated as the official 2<sup>nd</sup> president of GBC.

- Given the facts above, this was probably not taken very well by Stam, yet he does not appear to have immediately withdrawn from the GGF over it. At some point, within the next ten months, during the summer of 1968 Stam made the decision to withdraw from the GGF and form a new fellowship organization, the Berean Bible Fellowship or BBF. We will have much more to say about the events of 1968 in our next lesson.