

Sunday, January 5, 2014—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 121
The Stam/GBC Controversy, Part 5

1968

- This was the year of decision for Stam and the Berean Bible Society. It was in 1968 that Stam and the Society formally separated from the GGF and took steps to establish the Berean Bible Fellowship (BBF). According to DeWitt's file in the Bultema Library, the letter writing stream dried up toward the end of 1967. There were very few significant pieces of information in DeWitt's file regarding the events of 1968.

April 4, 1968—Dedication Service for the Bultema Memorial Library at GBC

- In both *Silence Now Would be Sin* and *Why Berean Bible Fellowship?* (March 31, 1970) Stam mentions the dedication of the Bultema Memorial Library amongst his list of reasons for separating from the GGF. In *Silence Now Would be Sin* Stam states the following regarding the dedication of the library, “not one word about any stand for the Pauline revelation” was mentioned. In addition, a responsive litany was read that stated in part, “We set it (the new library) apart for the learning of thy holy Word and of all man's wisdom which is a gift from thee. . . Bow down thy heavens, O Lord, and come down and make this house now and forever thy dwelling place.” Stam viewed this dedication and litany as having cast a shadow over the man they were trying to honor by promoting viewpoints that Bultema would have repudiated.

Summer, 1968—GGF Conference

- In *Why Berean Bible Fellowship* (March, 31, 1970) Stam mentions an additional reason for his separation from the GGF not mentioned in *Silence Now Would be Sin*. Stam took exception to a tape recorded message delivered by Raymond Reich at the 1968 GGF Convention in which Reich allegedly “urged pastors to invite modernist, Roman Catholic priests, and even atheists to lecture in their church so as to then “reach them for Christ!”” Stam is quick to point out that “neither Grace Bible College nor Grace Gospel Fellowship has repudiated this serious departure from the plain teachings of the Word of God (II Cor. 6:14-18).”
- This appears to have been the last straw for Stam. This is the last clearly dateable event before the publication of *Silence Now Would be Sin* on August 1, 1968 when Stam formally announced his separation from the GGF.

The Formation of the BBF

- According to a booklet titled *Why Can't We Get Together?* dated March 6, 1979, shortly after deciding to leave the GGF Mr. Stam and others moved to form a new fellowship organization called the Berean Bible Fellowship. Specifically Stam states:

- “In our booklet, *Why Berean Bible Fellowship?* we have listed and explained the basic reasons for our withdrawal from Grace Gospel Fellowship and the formation of the Berean Bible Fellowship in 1968.”
- This establishes the fact that, shortly after Stam and the Berean Bible Society left the GGF, they moved to form the BBF as an alternative Grace Fellowship organization to the GGF. This point is also brought home in the pages of *Why Berean Bible Fellowship?* where, after concluding that GBC had been lost to the neo-evangelicals, Stam states the following about why the BBF was formed.
 - “. . . Berean Bible Fellowship has been formed upon a declaration of faith which states in part: As saints and members of the true Church, we are to maintain a Christ-honoring testimony separate from all forms of worldliness and apostasy, demonstrating obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ and love to all men (Rom. 12:1, 2, 9; II Cor. 6:14-18; Eph. 5:11; I Tim. 6:20-21; II John 9-11).”
- Reflecting back in *Why Can't We Get Together?* (1979) on the events of the past two decades, Stam goes all the way back to 1958 (coincidentally the year of O’Hair’s death) as the time when the leaven that led to his departure began to infiltrate the GGF.
 - “In 1958, however, “a little leaven” was introduced into the GGF’s school, and then more, and more, and more. By the late 1960s, after much anxiety, soul-searching and prayer—and much discussion with the leadership of both Grace Gospel Fellowship and Grace Bible College, some of the members of the GGF became convinced that it would be displeasing to God to continue in this already-seriously-compromised fellowship. In 1968, after ten years of futile effort to bring about a change, the Berean Bible Fellowship was formed to provide opportunities for Scriptural fellowship among those who desire to remain true to the truths and principles upon which GGF and GBC had originally been founded.”
- Two sources clearly indicate that at the time of its formation BBF retained and adopted the same doctrinal statement as the GGF.
 - “Grace Believers; The Grace Movement; The Grace Message” by Charles F. Baker in the December/January, 1977 issue of *Truth*. “Personality differences have caused some to withdraw from the Grace Gospel Fellowship and they have formed their own fellowship organization, adopting word for word the original doctrinal statement of the Grace Gospel Fellowship as the basis for their new organization.”
 - “A Word From the Berean Bible Fellowship Board of Directors” in the March, 1978 issue of the *Berean Searchlight*. Responding to Baker’s article in *Truth*, the BBF board of directors wrote, “Berean Bible Fellowship did indeed retain the same Doctrinal Statement, since they had remained true to it, while Grace Bible College had flagrantly violated it.”

- The BBF was founded in 1968 as the alternative to the GGF and viewed themselves as the pure successors to the ministry of J.C. O’Hair. In this case, we agree with the BBF Board that Mr. Baker’s statement that personality differences were responsible for the split between the GGF and BBF is only partially true. It needs to be remembered that there were major philosophical differences in terms of philosophy of ministry that impelled their separation.

Post-Separation Controversies

- Even after formally leaving the GGF in 1968 and moving to form the BBF, Pastor Stam continued to keep tabs on what was going on at GBC. The College often found itself as Stam’s target in various articles in the *Searchlight*.
- During a dinner meeting with Dr. Dale DeWitt in July, 2013 he shared with me that there were four stages to Stam’s controversy with GBC. The following is a general summary of that conversation.
 - Mid to late 1960s—Weddle/Neo-Evangelical/Intellectualism—led to split
 - 1970—DeWitt—Translation of Psalm 8 Controversy
 - Early 70s—Dean—Psychology—Sensitivity Training Controversy
 - 1980s—DeWitt—the Gospel’s Controversy

Translation of Psalm 8 Controversy

- This controversy shows up as the eighth reason for leaving the GGF and forming the BBF in the March, 1970 publication *Why Berean Bible Fellowship?* This controversy swirls around the September, 1969 GBC publication *Comment* in which Dale DeWitt changes the King James rendering of “angels” in Psalm 8:5, to read that man is “but little lower than God Most High!” Stam viewed this as yet another example of the intellectual elevation of human wisdom taking place at GBC.
 - “The article is largely self-contradictory, but DeWitt goes to great lengths to exalt the human intellect. Charles F. Baker, president emeritus of Grace Bible College, later wrote an article in *Truth* (Feb.-March, 1970), defending DeWitt’s rendering and insisting that Psa. 8:5 does declare: “Thou has made him but little lower than God.” We contend that whether we consider man before or after the fall, in his present or future state; to represent him at any time as “but little lower than God” borders on blasphemy. Man is, always was, and ever will be far, far lower than God, and God will always be far, far greater than he. It is sad to see our dear Brother Baker, so long and so greatly used of God, actually defending the apostasy at Grace Bible College as he does in this case . . .”
- Stam addressed this controversy in a series of articles in the *Searchlight* between June and September, 1970 (possibly longer). The matter is again mentioned in the 1979 publication *Why*

Can't We Get Together? as one of Stam's reasons leaving the GGF. In this publication Stam states the following regarding the state of affairs within the GGF by 1970.

- “By 1970 at least four GBC instructors (including its president) and one member of the Board of Directors (Veltman) were already involved in the declension—not to mention the involvement of the GGF and GBC official boards and of all in both organizations who have condoned all this. Perhaps they have not considered that they will have to answer for this at the Judgment Seat of Christ.”

Psychology—Sensitivity Training Controversy

- *Why Can't We Get Together?* (1979) contains a section titled “Since 1970” in which Stam lays out events that had transpired since that year which drove further wedges between the GGF and BBF. One of these was the subject of something called “Sensitivity Training.” Stam reports that “by March, 1972, we had abundant evidence that such courses were indeed part of GBC’s curriculum: that mixed groups of students were meeting in “interpersonal relationship” classes, pledged to keep their secrets between themselves alone—not even their parents were to know what they were discussing. We also had much evidence that these sessions were largely made up of confessions and discussion about sex. Protests about this were met with denials that any such thing existed, even though we had presented voluminous evidence from 26 pages of their own classroom papers.”
- In 1973 the BBF published a booklet titled *Sensitivity Training and the Bible* warning fathers and mothers in the grace movement about what was going on at GBC. Written by Stam, this booklet outlines what Sensitivity Training is, its use at GBC, and the Scriptural answer to it. In the section titled, “What is Sensitivity Training?” Stam states the following:
 - “Sensitivity training is a modern psychological approach to personal and interpersonal problems. It is used by police departments, business firms, schools and even church organizations, supposedly to help the participants to get rid of their frustrations, hostilities, “hang-ups,” etc., and to develop self-confidence and leadership abilities. . . (Mentions who the Nazis and Communists used to instill fear). . . There are numerous forms, or degrees, of sensitivity training, ranging from discussion to discussion with “touch and feel” added, and even sessions at which the participants meet, sometimes for days at a time in the nude. The most popular form of sensitivity training and the one from which the other forms sprang, is the discussion group at which the participants are urged to be totally open and honest about themselves and each other, to hold nothing back, but to tell all, thus encouraging the others to do the same, one and all revealing their most secret feelings and failings at “gut level.” These groups are small (generally 10 to 15 in number), meeting together under the direction of a leader to discuss their problems. The leaders impress upon those present the prime importance of “complete honesty.” . . . The sessions are closed to outsiders, and all the members of the group are pledged to keep their secrets between themselves alone. . . the individual members are expected to keep their parents in ignorance of what is going on. . . Sensitivity training is practiced

under various names, such as Group Encounter, Group Therapy, Group Dynamics, Interpersonal Relations, Truth Sessions, Self-examination Sessions, Self-awareness Sessions, Group Confrontation, Group Interaction, Leadership Seminars, etc., . . . Grace Bible College has used a least three of these titles and, like many other institutions of learning, has hidden them under other titles in their published curricula.

- In a section titled “The Dangers of Sensitivity Training” Stam outlined the dangers of this psychosocial technique. After using a fictitious scenario to highlight the dangers of Sensitivity Training, Stam makes the following accusations against GBC:
 - “We proved by documented evidence in our April issue that Dr. Jack Dean of Grace Bible College gave out a quiz on *The Taste of New Wine*, in which the students were instructed as follows: “Give some illustrations of how Christian parents are dishonest.” Could this say any more clearly than it does: “Tell us how your parents are dishonest?” Another question follows, regarding the student’s relationship with his parents: “Do you really know your father and mother?” There it is, dad and mother. They are asking your children questions about you: asking them to tattle on you, jeopardizing their relationship with you. Think it over seriously you who have been blindly loyal to a school that may do untold damage to your children—and to you, not to mention to the cause of Christ. Another matter to consider seriously is the fact that in these sessions we have young college students discussing sex with each other all too freely—and they are encouraged to do this; to tell all. We saw from the documented evidence presented in the April *Searchlight* that sex had a considerable place in these discussions and that only where sex was discussed in the reports did President Jack Dean make complementary marginal notes. Those who are loathe to believe that the leaders themselves promote such sex discussion should refer to the April *Searchlight* and note also there that under “Practical Theology, #453, and Christian Education #445, Dr. Jack Dean, Professor, there is a list of assigned and supplementary reading which includes no less than six books by Sigmund Freud, and another about him titled: *Freud, His Dream and Sex Theories*.” There are also other books in the list by unregenerate “intellectuals,” destitute of faith in what the Bible says about sex and the Christian life.”
- Jack Dean and Charles Baker are taken to task by Stam in the next section “What Saith the Scripture?” for promoting unscriptural thinking and contradicting their own prior statements.
 - “Again and again the leaders of GBC have made it clear that they hold to the pagan dictum: “Know Thyself.” In a classroom paper titled, “Practical Theology #454, Jack Dean, Professor,” we find this opening statement: “Group interaction—this is the major part of this course—coming to know and understand yourself.” Similarly, an official GBC statement dated May 13, 1972, and distributed at the 1972 GGF Convention, says in part: “The purpose of group interactions is to help a person come to understand himself so that his own hang-ups will not get in the way of his working with other people. And how many times have we not read the testimonies of GBC students graduating comments to the effect that they have come to know and understand themselves better through their

studies at GBC. . . Along with coming to know one's self and others, sensitivity training is also (allegedly) concerned with acceptance of self and others. Dr. Dean's writings have much to say about accepting ourselves and others as we are. A report on "Group Counseling, Feb. 23, 1971, Therapist, Jack Dean," states that "Basically the group was concerned about acceptance." . . . Unwittingly GBC's official statement on the subject shows how one's personal, Scriptural convictions about right and wrong are apt to be subjected to the standards of the group. It reads as follows: "Now this individual knows that if he would violate the standards of the group he has a responsibility in his relationship to the group and therefore he would hesitate even more." . . . Did it originate with godly men or teachers of the Word? No, it originated with unregenerate psychology professors in Bible-denying colleges and universities. Dr. Dean has been well brainwashed in two of these universities and has come out a strong advocate of modern psychology, albeit, with "a Christian emphasis"! Dr. Dean, it should be remembered, did not obtain his doctorate in the field of theology, but of psychology, thus his doctorate hardly applies to his position as president of a Bible college."

- Stam quotes from an article written by Pastor Baker that originally appeared in the April, 1951 issue of *Truth* to prove the duplicity of the leadership at GBC. Regarding psychoanalysis and popular psychology he wrote:
 - "I feel that Christian people and parents in particular need to be aware of these theories which are behind so much of the education, socialism, communism and many-sided propaganda which confronts us today. . . Christian people need to exert every influence possible to see that their children do not get infected with these diabolical doctrines and, of course, first of all to see to it that they themselves are not taken in by this thing that has the appeal of the modern and the popular. There is need that Christian homes become strong fortresses for the truth—places where the Word of God is honored and is taught. . ."
- These accusations on the part of Stam against GBC regarding Sensitivity Training were denied in the following statement made by the College on May 13, 1972, "We do not, nor have we ever endorsed sensitivity training." Baker addressed the issue in the August/September issue of *Truth* with the following statement, "Is it not a shame then that this word (sensitivity) which has such rich spiritual meaning has become associated with a practice where mixed groups of people sometimes in the nude even, interact with one another in an effort to overcome hostilities, a practice which has been labeled sensitivity training?" In Stam's mind this is not a denial on Baker's part that Sensitivity Training was ever practiced at GBC but that the most extreme forms involving nude participants were never practiced. For Stam this was not analogous with saying that "no form of sensitivity training has ever been used at Grace Bible College."
- According to Stam, the College never answered the specific charges brought against GBC in the April, 1973 issue of the *Searchlight*. Instead they responded with the following three vague denials: 1) Stam got his information from a disgruntled dismissed former student; 2) Stam's statements were taken out of context; 3) Stam had not visited GBC for many years so how does he know what goes on at the school.

Conclusion

- How should we view this controversy? It is the opinion of the Grace History Project that the best way to evaluate these dark chapters in the history of the Grace Movement is to judge each side by its fruit.
- Milwaukee Bible College was founded in 1945 to teach young men and women the mid-Acts Pauline Grace Message and train them for the ministry. While the College has maintained that they have always done this and that they have never abandoned their commitment to Grace Theology many observers from both inside and outside the GGF would not agree.
- By adopting the nuanced arguments we have documented in these lessons that professors ought to have the “academic freedom” to teach anything that was not in violation of the doctrinal statement of the College/GGF, the door was opened to various portions of the Neo-Evangelical agenda and its resulting implications. On paper the college has always maintained a commitment to the principles of the school’s founding, however, in actuality students today are exposed to both Progressive Dispensationalism as well as notions that Peter and Paul preached the same gospel among other things. In order to meet the academic requirements of the State of Michigan, the college was forced to hire non-Grace professors to teach in certain academic disciplines - a practice that continues to this day.
- Stam, on the other hand, was not always very gracious in the manner in which he conducted himself during this controversy. In the end, judging from the fruit of their ministries, we cannot help but side with Stam. Stam remained firm to the original purpose of both the GGF and GBC as standing for the unique and distinctive ministry of the Apostle Paul. Unfortunately, Stam’s conduct and manner of operation during the controversy manifested certain less than desirable personality traits that would show up again in another controversy during the 1980s.
- The move on the part of Stam and others to immediately form a new organization (BBF) highlights, in our opinion, the greatest weakness of the Grace Movement – the fierce desire to organize beyond the local church. As we have stated previously, the heyday of the Grace Movement was when the men and ministries involved remained independent and loosely facilitated independent Bible churches. The decision to organize beyond the local church introduced a political element into the movement that would stall their progress and ultimately divide the movement. Formed in protest against the GGF, the BBF has always felt the need to explain and justify their existence. This has created a legacy of hostility between these two organizations as they have both claimed to be the rightful heirs to the legacy of J.C. O’Hair.
- Within ten years of the death of O’Hair, the movement that he was so instrumental in creating had fractured into two opposing camps with identical doctrinal statements, each considering themselves the rightful successors of O’Hair’s legacy.