

Sunday, March 9, 2014—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 130 The Life and Ministry of C. Richard Jordan: Leaving the Bible Society, Part 3

The Controversy Continues

- At the conclusion to his *Searchlight* article “The KJV Controversy and Common Sense” from November, 1987, Stam stated the following regarding the King James Version (KJV) controversy:
 - “. . . Be assured, however, that we have no intention of engaging in a running battle over this subject . . .” (240)
- However, remaining true to form, Stam could not let it go. Three times in 1988 Stam ran articles in the *Searchlight* addressing the issue. Moreover, the sermon he delivered on June 19, 1988 at the 20th Annual Bible Conference of the Berean Bible Fellowship was titled “Here, By Grace, I Stand” – it was devoted to the Bible issue.
- In September, 1988 Stam ran an article in the *Searchlight* titled, “A Plea for Renewal: To Close the Chapter on the KJV Only Controversy.” In this article, Stam calls this controversy the “greatest crisis of our histories.” (173) In addition, Stam accuses Richard of launching a “secret movement” to promote KJV only theory from the BBS.
 - “In addressing the Annual Bible Conference of the Berean Bible Fellowship four years ago (1984), this writer said in part:
 - “This is a bright day for the so-called Grace Movement, with so many dedicated young men on fire for ‘the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery.’”

I said this with a full heart for, during the years that had preceded, there had been a steady growth of interest in the Pauline message with its riches of grace and glory. Here at Berean Bible Society from 1980 to 1983 it seemed everything was growing: the *Searchlight* circulation; our radio ministry; and our written ministry in general were all expanding as increasing numbers of people, especially young people, ordered quantities of our Bible study books for themselves and others. Most encouraging letters were received from those whose eyes had been opened to the truth of the Pauline revelation, and increasing numbers of young men were being asked to speak at the BBF Bible Conferences. Some even became members of the Board of Directors.” (171-172)

- What Stam does not tell his readers, or at least hopes they will not realize, is that the great growth he describes occurred during the exact years that Richard took over running the ministry and began the network of regional Bible conference meetings. Consequently, it is not a stretch to say that the growth Stam is describing in those years was largely due to the efforts of Richard Jordan.

- Next Stam pivots and begins attacking Richard:
 - “Even as I spoke, in 1984, a secret movement was already afoot to promote a KJV ONLY theory, an extreme philosophy concerning our beloved King James Version that does not have one scintilla of Scriptural support. This theory, so far from being edifying to the saints, resulted in heated debates, prolonged arguments, widespread division and deep bitterness, with the breaking up of churches, families and close friends.

In the years following 1984, Berean Bible Society and the Berean Bible Fellowship were caught up in the greatest crisis either of us had ever experienced—a crisis I surely did not need at age eighty and in ill health.

Here at BBS we began receiving letters warning us that a KJV ONLY movement was being established through Berean Bible Society. Some asked pointedly whether I believed this unscriptural doctrine; was I compromising; was I trying to gradually introduce a new doctrine? Not a few stopped supporting BBS.

This, of course, led to more frequent discussions about the matter with the then president of BBS, until it became necessary to hold a Board of Directors’ meeting with him about the subject in November, 1986. Even before this he had written, at my request, an article for the November, 1986 *Searchlight* in which he acknowledged that he had indeed taught this doctrine, but that he had been in error. Also, he wrote a very touching letter of apology to the Board of Directors and to me, promising that he would do all in his power to set things right.

That he did the very opposite has now been widely proven. As a result of his teaching, both BBF and BBS found ourselves, as we have said, in the greatest crisis of our histories.

Thank God, both organizations have now dealt openly and firmly with the matter, both holding the doctrine to be unscriptural, and some of its leaders less than honorable in their efforts to propagate their beliefs and attain their objectives.” (172-173)

- In his *Memoirs* published in 2003, Stam makes similar statements regarding the King James Controversy of the late 1980s.
 - “. . . the greatest crisis of my life and of the history of the Berean Bible Society. This one involved the Bible itself, for a KJV ONLY group was whittling the eternal, infinite Word of God down to the words of one TRANSLATION.

They argued, and still do, that the King James Version (they called it the King James Bible) and it alone, is the inspired, infallible Word of God, verbally inerrant, and our final authority in matters of faith and practice.

It was in the summer of 1986 that it became evident that, right from headquarters here at the Berean Bible Society, a secret attempt was being made to establish a strong KJV ONLY movement. In fact, we were being blamed for this, for naturally it was thought that we were behind it and the teachings were emanating from Berean Bible Society.

Information as to all the intrigue involved and the person's responsible will be better left untold in this volume, but suffice it to say that, but for the grace of God, Berean Bible Society might soon have become a KJV ONLY organization under KJV ONLY auspices. . .

A year later our sister organization, the Berean Bible Fellowship, was faced with the same crisis (different details, same people) and, thank God, also ruled that the KJV ONLY doctrine was wholly unscriptural and the tactics of some of its leaders less than honorable." (Stam, *Memories*, 104-106)

- As we stated above, Stam carried the controversy forward into 1988 by continuing to write about it in the *Searchlight*. Once again, a consideration of these comments reveals that Stam not only never understood Richard's position but was arguing for a nebulous Bible that he could not locate.
- "More Light on the KJV Question" appeared in the February, 1988 issue of the *Searchlight*. Stam begins the article by stating the following in the section titled "First, A Personal Testimony."
 - "I believe the *complete* Bible to be the absolute inerrant, infallible Word of God and our final authority in matters of faith and practice.

I say, complete because no *translation* can possibly convey all the truth set forth in the manuscripts (mss) which God originally inspired. Something is *always* lost in an extended translation from one language to another. Thus, sometimes we must dig further into the original languages to find light which the translation cannot and does not reveal." (332)

- Please recall from our last study that Stam said the Bible was not preserved in the original manuscripts or in any translations so where is this "complete Bible" that Stam is speaking of?
- Despite these statements, two paragraphs later Stam writes, "Is it legitimate, then, to call KJV the Bible, or God's Word? I believe it is, on the basis explained by the translators themselves in their letter "To the Reader." Next Stam turns his reader's attention to various editions of the KJV to argue that it cannot possibly be inerrant.
 - "If so, which edition? The late edition, which most "Inerrant KJV" believers use? This would be like the pastor saying, "The bible the King James Version, is word-for-word,

the inspired, inerrant Word of God,” while holding up a late edition of the KJV! For remember, the King James Version has been edited and revised several times.

Is it then the original 1611 edition of the KJV that is word-for-word inspired and inerrant? Then what about the hundreds of marginal notes put in by the translators, suggesting alternate readings? This itself proves that the KJV text is not inerrant—not even the original 1611 edition. . .

But more: if the 1611 edition of the KJV is the word-for-word, inspired, inerrant Word of God, it surely must follow that the English-speaking people had no Bible prior to 1611 and that non-English-speaking people today have no Bible at all. (332-333)

- There are two issues here we need to address. First, we addressed in 2011 in our lecture on inerrancy at the Grace Impact Summer Family Bible Conference how the slight differences in wording observable in the various editions of the KJV do not equate to differences in meaning. Second, Stam’s comments regarding English speaking people not having a Bible prior to 1611 demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of Richard’s position as does his comments regarding non-English speaking people. As we observed last week, Richard believed that the King James Bible was God’s Word for English speaking people because it was a proper translation of the proper text. Remember that the underlying text is the issue.
- After already stating in November, 1987 that the originals were not preserved, Stam stated the following in February, 1988:
 - “*Obviously*, beloved, complete perfect inerrancy is to be found *only* in *the original manuscripts*. We surely have Scripture for that, but none for the inerrancy of any future translation. Indeed, if you now hold the inspired mss, *plus* a translation to *both* be inerrant, you have *two, different* inerrant Bibles, do you not? (335-336)
- This statement is a complete straw dummy for two reasons: 1) it is not consistent with his comments from his article from November, 1987; 2) it is not even remotely reflective of what Richard’s position actually was.
- Stam concludes his February, 1988 article by stating:
 - “Ever since the fall, everything man has touched has been tainted by sin and imperfection—EXCEPT THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS OF THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD. That is what the Bible teaches—yes, our King James Version of the Bible.” (336)
- So once again we must ask Mr. Stam, “is the King James Version the Bible or isn’t it?”
- In December, 1988, the *Searchlight* ran an article by Pastor Stam titled, “A Personal Testimony About Hebrew and Greek.” In this article, Stam gives his thoughts on the place Hebrew and

Greek concordances ought to play in one's Bible study. As we read his comments keep mind the quote above as well as the totality of what we have observed Stam to have said regarding this issue.

- “In consulting these concordances, we are actually studying *the very words* (Hebrew and Greek) of the original God-breathed manuscripts, and again and again God gives us one precious glimpse into His original meaning. Only a glimpse, we say, and only now and then, for our English Bible is remarkably accurate in most cases—but not always, and then these Hebrew and Greek concordances can be of great help. Moreover, one does not need to be a Hebrew or Greek scholar to be able to use the two volumes mentioned. They were compiled for ‘Englishmen.’” (269)
- We already observed Stam to have said that the originals were not preserved (November, 1987). He already argued that it was impossible for an English translation to be the preserved word of God (November, 1987). Furthermore, EVERYTHING man has touched since the fall has been tainted by sin and imperfection EXCEPT THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS OF THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (February, 1988).” Yet in December, 1988, Stam argues that by studying the ENGLISHMEN’S HEBREW AND GREEK CONCORDANCES one is “studying the *very words* of the original God-breathed manuscripts.” So a concordance prepared by a man contains the words of the originals that were not supposed to have been preserved according to Stam, but a translation into English by a great company of men cannot possibly be the Bible. So does Stam want his readers to believe that God’s word is preserved word-for-word in the Englishmen’s Hebrew and Greek Concordances? This is the height of absurdity.
 - **“This is so important to understand, for God’s Word is not limited to one translation in any language, but to the words of the original manuscripts,** and it is these we need to consider more carefully. But since all, obviously, cannot go into the Hebrew and Greek, our ascended Lord graciously gave “some pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11). Also, remember John 10:4: “His sheep . . . know His voice,” and John 16:13: “the Spirit . . . will guide you into all truth.”

God, for His own wise reasons—and we know some of them—has not seen fit to preserve the original manuscripts for us in one book, but diligent students are richly rewarded as they find these words preserved for us in Hebrew and Greek reference works, and so learn to better understand the sense of His precious Word. By this method, He gives us perhaps just one glimpse of further light at a time, but what is more precious to the child of God than one ray of light from His blessed Word?” (270)

- Richard’s successor, Pastor Paul Sadler, continued to address the KJV controversy in the *Searchlight* into 1989. The October, 1989 issue of the *Searchlight* contained a letter from the editor (Sadler) addressing the Bible issue. Sadler advanced the same narrative that we have observed in Stam and adds nothing new to the discussion that we have not already considered. Sadler continued to address a position that Richard did not hold, namely that the KJV was a word-for-word preservation of the original manuscripts. To date we have studied no printed

documentation that would indicate that Stam or Sadler ever grasped Richard's actual position much less adequately refuted it.

- Paul Sadler moved to Chicago to become the new president of the BBS in December, 1987. Pastor Sadler had been pastoring Falls Bible Church in Menomonee Falls, WI when Stam approached him about replacing Richard as President of the BBS in the fall of 1987. Sadler agreed on the condition that the congregation and board of his church support the move. The congregation agreed to relinquish their pastor provided he could still preach as they searched for his replacement. Sadler immediately began commuting to Chicago three days a week to keep the ministry of the BBS moving forward. Sadler has been the president of BBS since December, 1987. (Berean Bible Society Webpage)
- A book was published in 1990 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Bible Society. Unfortunately, there is no mention of the fact that Richard Jordan was ever president of the BBS during the 1980s. In fact, Richard's name appears nowhere in this volume. The chronology leaves out his tenure and picks up with Pastor Sadler, thereby leaving the unsuspecting reader with the impression that Stam handed the Presidency directly to Sadler.
- Pastor Stam died Sunday, March 9, 2003 from cancer at the age of 94. (Chicago Tribune) While we have been critical of Stam at times throughout this study we must, for the record, acknowledge that Stam was the greatest champion of the 20th century for the distinct message and ministry of the Apostle Paul. The body of Christ owes a huge debt of gratitude to Pastor Stam for his works sake. His books *Things That Differ*, *Moses and Paul*, and *The Two Fold Purpose of God* are classic works that introduced untold numbers of people to the truth of God's word rightly divided. *The Berean Searchlight* has been read in more homes for a longer period of time than any other Grace periodical. The men who came to understand the Grace Alternative Doctrines (GADs) did so largely on account of what they learned about rightly dividing the word of truth from Pastor Stam. While we wish Stam would have been more open to further advancement in dispensational Bible study and that his position on the Bible would have been more coherent and consistent, there is much to respect regarding the stand this man took for mid-Acts Pauline Dispensationalism.

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