

Regular Baptist Review



"A Perspective of Historic Baptist Principles"

Dr. Richard A. Harris, Editor

Spring 1989

Columbus: What Is Our Agenda?

Dr. Richard A. Harris

"You must have a hidden agenda. What is it?" A few people have said this to us, and we understand why they say it. We are living in an age, when everyone seems to have suspect motives, or at least many are accused of it. Everybody is suspicious. It is only natural no doubt for us to be lumped together. We do not blame anyone.

If however, you are looking for a hidden agenda, you will be disappointed. There is none. We are publishing everything we are doing. There should be no surprises. Like the Apostle Paul, we are attempting to manifest the truth "commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." (II Cor. 4:2b)

It is not our intention to dissolve the GARBC, take it over, oust anyone, or start a new group. Rather, our objective is to sound the alarm for a return to our original purpose in terms of belief and practice. What might happen as a result of our insistent alarm we can neither predict nor foresee. We have no particular goal in mind, except to see traditional truth prevail in our Fellowship.

We see the current departure from our original purpose as serious and giving rise to the need for revival in all of our hearts. We see the issue of agency men on the Council of 18 as contributing to the decline of the proper position and importance of the local church. We are fast losing the uniqueness which existed at the founding of the GARBC. We cannot do God's work effectively and attract other churches to our Fellowship, if our position cannot be distinguished from other Baptist bodies. Our GARBC forefathers did not go along to

get along. Rather, they paddled their own canoe at first on an unaccompanied tour. When the righteousness of their position was evident, many others were glad to follow such distinct, independent leadership for the glory of God!

True doctrine never changes, because neither God nor His Word does. If what the GARBC represented at its outset was right, then such a position today still is! How can we even tolerate a thought in the direction of the neo-

evangelical and ecumenical positions in our world today?

It is no secret that the GARBC is on the decline in various ways, including numbers. Those numbers were built by God blessing the efforts and positions of those early, godly men. They can be restored the same way. Our goal should not be size and numbers - but truth - whether we be small or sizable. However, God many times does provide
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Bending or Burning A Banner

Dr. Gordon L. Shipp



the college. Dr. Shipp was long a champion of Biblical Baptist separatism and was a true friend of Regular Baptists for Revival. This article is just a small sample of the legacy of doctrinal purity he has left us.

A godly pastor who is so much a part of my life regularly stood before his congregation with a challenge. "Unless," said he, "we are different from other Baptists, the GARBC has no right to exist." He then proceeded to expose our unique position as it related to a number of concepts known as the Baptist distinctives. His point was not that other Baptists had not historically held to many of these concepts, but that, for the first time in this era, the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches had put them all together in a unique fellowship that would be a haven for beleaguered Baptist believers.

It disturbs me greatly that individuals and institutions within our constituency seem to rely upon Baptist history

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(Editor's Note) This article is printed in its entirety with permission. Dr. Gordon L. Shipp, now in Heaven, was formerly President of Faith Baptist Bible College in Ankeny, Iowa. This article first appeared under his regular The President's Note column in the June/July, 1982 (Volume 10, Issue 4) of the Faith Witness, an official publication of

Some Things Shouldn't Change

Dr. L. Duane Brown

A pastor in New England recently sent me a photostat of an article from the November, 1943 **Baptist Bulletin**. It reveals how the Council of 14 faced a problem in one of the approved agencies in that day, forty -six years ago.

The following statement is from a GARBC pastor who wrote about the prompt and decisive action which the Council took on the matter: *"You know, this whole Mid-Missions affair has proven one outstanding thing to me, and that is that the men of the G.A.R.B. meant what they said when they declared that it was their holy purpose to maintain for independent Baptist churches two things: First, a clean missionary channel for our money, and second, a Biblically-based fellowship for our churches. The G.A.R.B. has declared that the moment infection of any kind showed up in the independent Baptist work, that instead of covering it up, it would be faithfully dealt with, and if it could not be corrected, the hand of fellowship would be withdrawn. I happen to know how near the Council was to recommending to the G.A.R.B., the withdrawal of the hand of fellowship and recommendation from Mid-Missions. And had not the Mid-Mission Council itself taken the final step to remove the difficulty, I am sure the Mission would have been taken off the approved list. Thank God that the Mid-Missions Council was determined to maintain a clean missionary channel, and thank God that the G.A.R.B. patiently waited for them to come through. All of this proves to me that men in our independent Baptist movements meant what they said, and at any cost to their own reputations and comfort, they are going to see to it that the independent Baptist churches and pastors of this country shall have a missionary enterprise and a Biblical fellowship to which they can wholeheartedly give themselves. I have greater confidence today in Mid-Missions, in the ABWE, and the GARBC, than I ever had."*

How interesting and gratifying to note the courage which the Council of 14 demonstrated in 1943. The agen-

cies' influence on the Association was not so strong, that their friendships with men on the Council prevented their corrective action. The Association's welfare and testimony were placed ahead of their own personal comfort and reputation. They were courageous men. Not only was the Association protected by the Council's action, but this is one of the great benefits of a **local church-controlled** Association. The agencies actually are helped and strengthened.

It is apparent in this present day, that the same atmosphere no longer prevails. Agencies are, by far, the most dominant influence in our Fellowship. It seems we have forgotten that we are an association of churches. Instead, the GARBC has become a platform for the agencies. To raise a voice for the sovereignty of the churches is anathema. To insist that our approved agencies adhere in practice to the principles of the GARBC in order to receive approval seems tantamount to being a troublemaker.

What can we do? The first step is to approve an amendment making agency men ineligible to be elected to the Council of 18. The Council receives plenty of input from the agencies, since many of the Council members serve as trustees on the boards of the agencies. In addition, all the agencies are invited to send representatives to the June Council of 18 meeting, and are permitted to present their views.

The fact is that the salaried employees of the agencies have different priorities and goals than pastors do. There was a time in our infancy when this was not a problem, but today our churches and pastors are overshadowed by the dominance of agencies grown large and independent of the fellowship's historic purpose.

Let's get closer to the churches and to the Scriptures. After all, it is the **local church** that the Lord uses and blesses for this age. Agencies are needed and loved, but they exist to serve the churches. The churches do not exist for the agencies. Agencies

should be loyal to and supportive of local church doctrine, so churches may safely use the agencies as organizations through which to fulfill the Great Commission. Let us return to the days of a courageous and aggressive stand for our first principles. ■

"BANNER" continued

as a license to stand for most any doctrine or practice that can be found within some corner of Baptist history. These "historical precedents" range from fermented communion wine to multi-pastor church administration. It seems that some would desire to infiltrate our beloved fellowship with all kinds of historic Baptist practices while choosing to ignore the fact that these **are not** historic GARBC practices. One cannot deny sovereign, independent, local churches and institutions, all made up of members with **full, soul liberty**, the right to practice and believe as they choose. On the other hand, to equate some of these stands with the GARBC movement is to request a position from this Association that was never intended. It is less than fair to reap the benefits of a banner while seeking to bend that banner into a course for which it was never designed.

If one cannot unite behind a banner, it would appear to me that the logical course of action is for that one to burn it and raise another so others may clearly see where one stands and not mistake one's true position. To bend a banner so that it blends with others is to blight it while still benefiting from its blood. The time has come within our fellowship for "a distinction of the sounds," (I Corinthians 14:7). As sounds become distinct, one may at least battle behind the banner that purports his belief.

Faith Baptist Bible College, by the grace of God, will not bend the banner of the historic GARBC position. The position and training provided at FBBC is and will be a "distinct sound" in support of this banner. ■

The Doctrine of Separation in These Days

Dr. Chester E. Tulga

The doctrine of separation is in danger of losing its vitality and becoming nominal. We need to take a new look at it and check the current practices with the Word of God.

The principle of separation is theological and not simply organizational as many seem to think. Many Southern Baptists will inform you that the Southern Baptist Convention is not a member of the National Council of Churches or the World Council of Churches, overlooking the heavy inroads of modernism in their midst and the involvements with the ecumenical movement on the local level, and on the part of their institutions and societies. Separation is primarily separation from false doctrine, and not merely questionable organizations (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

The principle of separation is based upon the simple but sensible idea that the people of the Word have no religious interests in common with the enemies of the Word of God. It is based upon the simple idea that fellowship is based upon a common faith and not a common profession. It is based upon the idea that it is impossible for two opposite faiths to work together, since they differ in faith, methods and objectives. It is preeminently sensible and logical.

Separation has a two-fold frame of reference. It is negative: we separate from God's enemies, to be more fully separated unto God. We separate from unbelief to be more fully separated unto faith. We separate from unrighteousness to be more separated unto righteousness.

Separation is not isolation. "We are out of the fight" is often heard. Who let you out? How did you get a discharge from the age long conflict between light and darkness, good and evil, truth and error? God isn't out of it. Christ isn't out of it. The Holy Spirit isn't out of it. Many of God's people are still in it. Who let you out? Whence that superior piety which isolationists often profess? How can one desert the battle and have a superior piety? Separation is not isolation, but a change of position to do more effective service.

Separation is not escapism. Three separatist movements emerged from the American Baptist Convention through the years.

There was the exodus of orthodox individuals to Bible institutes, faith missions and other inter-denominational interests. Many of them were more interested in escape, than warfare for which they had little taste or felt they could not win. The curious thing is that many who have separated and found refuge in ivory towers look with some distaste upon those who engage in the warfare which they shunned, or advocate separation from that out of which they have escaped. Separatists are not escapists who flee conflict, but soldiers who seek a new vantage point from which to continue conflict.

There was the Baptist Bible Union - GARB churches, who early saw the futility of working for reform and the desirability of making a new beginning under the blessings of God.

The Conservative Baptists stayed in to reform the Convention and failed. Many who quit the Convention were genuine separatists, while others went along with the bandwagon for a variety of reasons.

Separatism is not a discharge from the war, nor an escape into pacifism or pietism, but an adjustment of position to contend more effectively.

Separation is not to demonstrate our superior orthodoxy but to preserve our orthodoxy. Separation is two-fold in purpose: to preserve our doctrine from contamination and to preserve our hearts from backsliding, heresy and apostasy.

Many who have separated from the American Baptist Convention are willing to fellowship with the same kind of men (and sometimes the same men) in other organizations. These men are separated, but they are not separatists.

Many are willing to be separatists if they can get a good separatist church. They may go along and be loyal, but the root of the matter is not in them, and sooner or later they may embrace another opportunity which is not separatist. One can be a pastor of a sepa-

rated church and not be a separatist, a frequent contradiction in the evangelical world.

Many men believe the principle of separation to be right and Scriptural, but they do not have a deep enough consecration or a deep enough spiritual experience to maintain such an unpopular stand, or to accept the hardships that go with it. Separation is first of all a spiritual experience, and only then can it be firmly held as a principle. Separatism today stands in danger of becoming nominal, legalistic, pacifist or opportunistic.

(Editor's Note) This article has been significantly edited to conform to the Regular Baptist Review journalistic format while being faithful and fair to its content. This article consists of excerpts from an address by Dr. Tulga given at Cedarville (Ohio) College. It first appeared in the May, 1957 issue of The Baptist Bulletin. ■

Winter Conference Report

On February 16 - 17, 1989, the Calvary Baptist Church of Bremerton, Washington, hosted the 7th annual Winter Conference on the Fundamentals of the Faith (WCFF).

A number of subjects relevant to today's Regular Baptist separatists were included: Baptists and Biblical Ethics; Contemporary Christian Music and the Ecumenical Movement; Discerning the Trends; Is It Time to Move to the Middle? (i.e. Regular Baptists and the CBA); and Seduction of the Charismatic Movement.

The featured speaker of the Conference was Dr. Myron Houghton, Professor of Theology at Faith Baptist Bible Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa. Dr. Houghton spoke on Fundamentalism - Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.

The Conference was well-attended and brought a time of spiritual refreshment to all. Tapes of the messages may be purchased by contacting the First Baptist Church of South Whidbey, P.O. Box 113, Freeland, WA 98249. ■

'AGENDA' continued

numbers where He can find faithful pastors.

We are for growth, but we have learned that sheep must be healthy in order to bring forth lambs. It is normal to grow. When reproduction is at a standstill, symptoms are prevalent which indicate the lack of health. Growth does not produce good health. Good health produces growth.

We yearn for the day when again, thousands of separatist, Baptist churches will stand aggressively and unashamedly for our Biblical heritage. If that is a hidden agenda, then we are guilty. If desiring significant change in the GARBC and working toward that end is a hidden agenda, then we are guilty. It would be so much fun to lay our pen aside and go back to spending more time with the precious people God has allowed us to pastor. We must publish or perish.

The debate goes on because the tide has not even been stemmed - let alone turned. We are not really against anyone. It is just that we are for so much. We mean things like soul-winning, reemphasis of the office of pastor and the sovereignty of the local church, and for the return of great prophets to our pulpits who will courageously declare the whole counsel of God.

If revival comes, it will come from the mass moving by the Spirit of God upon the hearts of pastors and people. We want to encourage that. Then our Fellowship, its leaders, and its agencies will benefit with integrity, credibility, vitality, and growth.

What is our agenda in Columbus? It is simple. Let's begin to care again. Pastors, let's meet at 2:00 p.m. on Monday at the Holiday Inn. We will pray, seek God's direction, and discuss the merits of the proposed amendment:

"No salaried employee of the approved agencies shall be eligible to be elected to the Council of 18." Let's send a signal across the Land. We as pastors and churches are accountable to God to adhere to the original purpose He gave us. Our agencies should be accountable to the churches, if they want our approval.

We should not underestimate the use God can make of the GARBC to accomplish His purposes even in a wicked world. We can be salt. We are not a part of the Regular Baptist movement for what we can get out of it. Rather, we join in to lend a hand, voice, influence, and to support the holy standards being raised. We want to be among those who "occupy till He comes." It is just that for right now we must concentrate on regaining what we have lost, as well as attempting to conquer new horizons. "Rouse then, soldiers!" ■

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