

THE INDEPENDENT BAPTIST REVIEW

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PERSONALITIES, PREFERENCES OR PRINCIPLES?

By The Editor

The author of a book examining the teachings of a prominent Christian psychologist came under fire from the admirers of the good doctor. They accused him of making personal attacks on the man. The author said in response: "Rather than looking at issues and examining doctrine, they assume that anyone who would question _____'s teachings is attacking him personally. And in zealously defending him they fail to see the gravity of doctrinal impurity eating away at the foundations of the faith."

Often when there is a controversy those who would like to minimize or obfuscate the issue say that it is a personality conflict, or that it is "majoring on minors".

The National Representative of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches has characterized the organization of the Independent Baptist Fellowship as "schismatic", and says, "It is wrong to be schismatic with reference to personal preferences and diverse methodology". He characterized the conflict as being over tastes in music, differences in Bible versions, uses of non GARBC speakers and hair styles.

Anyone who has followed the controversy over the last five years knows very well that the issue was Biblical separation from disobedient believers.

The Independent Baptist Review will not rehash the facts regarding the drift in the GARBC in every issue. We think this has been done adequately in the past. In this issue, however, we want to set the record straight and correct the misinformation and misimpressions regarding the reasons for the formation of the I.B.F. The issue is not preferences, nor whether the GARBC is true to most of it's doctrinal statement, but whether it is true to it's position on separation and church polity. Many organizations have gone astray while pointing to an orthodox doctrinal statement.

Many churches are voting to leave the GARBC by unanimous or near unanimous votes. Congregations are not "resisting" their pastors as urged by the National Representative in his column in the November Baptist Bulletin. These churches are stating the reasons for withdrawing and the reasons given are doctrinal reasons.

In case these churches are dropped at the annual conference for the reason, "desire to be unaffiliated", we are publishing the statements from some of these churches.

We are also featuring an article by Pastor Lloyd Streeter on some reasons why a church might consider dropping their affiliation with the GARBC at this time.

FIVE REASONS

Pastor Lloyd L. Streeter

There may be some arguments that could be put forth for staying in the GARBC. It could be said that most of the churches are doctrinally sound and pastored by Bible believing, separated men. It could be said that the testimony of the GARBC is, for the most part, one that stands for sound Bible teaching. Furthermore, the organization has a great history with the names of many great fundamentalists associated with it. And as far as pastors are concerned, they might feel more secure within a denominational structure where they will find it easier to obtain new pastorates.

However, it has become increasingly more evident that there are stronger reasons to leave the Association than to stay in. Comfort must give way to Biblical commands.

Some members of the Council of 18, leaders of the GARBC, and some of the approved colleges have departed from the historic and published doctrinal position of the Association regarding the Bible doctrine of separation. This is true in both the personal and ecclesiastical applications of this truth. Contrary to the denials of the National Representative, there has been a "drift" (departure) away from the historic stand that the GARBC took in the past. Inasmuch as every local church in the GARB fellowship is identified with this departure we cannot in good conscience continue in association with it.

1. Compromise

A. The president of Grand Rapids Baptist College, Dr. Charles Wagner, preached in a Lutheran Church in an ecumenical lenten service in Grand Rapids. This was widely publicized in the newspapers. Yet GRBC & S continues as an "approved" school.

B. Professors at Grand Rapids Seminary desired that Dr. Carl Henry speak at the Seminary. The President brought

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Dr. Henry to his home, instead, to avoid criticism. Students were invited to the President's home to meet with Dr. Henry. I consider that arrangement to be theologically compromising.

C. Some professors at GRBS hold more to the neo-evangelical position than to the separatist position. While attending classes in 1984 and 1985 I personally heard professors speak glowingly of Billy Graham and other neo-evangelical men and institutions. At the same time they ridiculed separatist men and the separatist position.

D. Some professors at GRBS speak approvingly of Karl

GEORGI VINS ON SEPARATION

Pastor Vins returned to Russia last summer after 16 years and was warmly welcomed by his Christian brethren. He had many opportunities to preach the Gospel while there. At Vinnitsa a large number came to the service including many from the registered churches. Brother Vins said, "Ministers from registered churches were present at some meetings. They invited me to speak in their churches, but I declined. I explained that my conscience does not permit me to speak in a pulpit where liberals have also spoken. They said they understood and respected my view."

Barth, the neo-orthodox theologian. Indeed, they speak of him as if he has had more to offer theologically than any other scholar in modern church history.

E. A speaker was brought to Cedarville College who spoke approvingly of modern feminism. Subsequently a student chapel was held where teachers conducted a round table discussion on feminism. Some of these teachers spoke a) in favor of feminism and the ERA; b) spoke approvingly of the feminist speaker who had been on campus that week; c) spoke approvingly of politicians Jesse Jackson and Patricia Schroeder; d) made such foolish statements as "When he [God] said that woman would have a role and man would rule over her that was part of the fall. That is not what God intended." [Aren't we still in a fallen creation?]; e) spoke with approval of CBA Seminaries; f) criticized the college before the students for not having more women in the administration and on the Board of Trustees [The chapel session is on tape]. Cedarville College is an "approved" agency.

F. GRBC and Cedarville continue to bring such compromising men as Dave Jeremiah and John MacArthur on campus as chapel and conference speakers. The issue is not non GARBC speakers as the National Representative and others claim. Our complaint is that some of the speakers do not take a good stand and consequently the reputation of all GARBC churches is weakened.

G. GRBC cooperates with Calvin College [Christian Reformed] and Western Baptist College cooperates with Western Seminary [CBA]. We consider this an unhealthy and unscriptural alliance. A relationship with CBA churches is being developed at Western to gain students and financial support. There are CBA men on the faculty and Board of Trustees [Including a former President of the CBA. Ed.].

H. Northwest Seminary did not hold to the separatist position of Dr. Ernest Pickering. The resignation of Pickering was directly related to the displeasure of the Trustees with his position, even though they were well informed of it before they called him! At Ames, Ia. [GARBC Conference] Dr. John Balyo, then President of Western, made it clear that he did not agree with Pickering's position.

I. In June 1990, the Council of 18 knowingly recommended a church to the association which had a board of lay elders. This action was contrary to the Constitution of the GARBC.

2. No Change Anticipated

We do not expect to see any change in the practices of "approved" schools or in the "approval" system for the following reasons:

A. The leadership of the GARBC denies that there is a "drift" in the GARBC.

B. A few of the leaders of the GARBC now admit there is more "latitude" in the GARBC than there used to be. It is said that this should continue because a majority favor it.

C. History shows that theological compromise eventually gets a foothold in all denominations and that this compromise enters through the schools and seminaries. Once begun there is never a return to the former position. One writer put it this way,

"... Church history follows a common pattern: false teaching begins to infiltrate the evangelical church. A few lone voices speak out against it and are attacked -- not on the basis of theology, but on their personality. Finally, there comes a point where taking a stand on either side of the issue pits Christian against Christian." This is happening in the GARBC.

D. The warnings sounded and the calls to revival have gone unheeded. Calls to return to the original position of the GARBC have been vigorously (and vociferously) opposed by the National Representative, by a majority of the council of 18 and by others who are considered to be the strongest leaders of the GARBC.

E. A proposed amendment to remove college presidents and other paid servants of approved agencies from the Council of 18 was very strenuously opposed by the National Representative, the Council of 18 and others. Consequently this amendment was defeated by a vote of approximately 38% to 62%. This arrangement reveals a conflict of interest.

F. The present size and influence of the colleges with thousands of loyal alumni in the pastorates and in the membership of GARBC churches makes it highly unlikely that these schools could ever be disapproved no matter how much they drift from their doctrinal moorings. This is a situation which the pastors and leaders of the Association did not foresee 25-50 years ago. The GARBC would lose many more churches by refusing to grant approval to Cedarville, Grand Rapids and Western than will be lost by continuing it's present drift. That is why we will continue to hear excuses and denials of the obvious. Approval of colleges is the seed of death in the GARBC, and it is a seed which cannot be disposed of without causing disintegration.

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3. Hierarchical Mentality

A third area of departure from Biblical doctrine involves the fast developing hierarchical mentality in the GARBC. To have Association officials interfering in local churches, or attempting to "lord it over" pastors and churches is a development which should be anathema to all Regular Baptists. Here are some examples:

A. At Columbus, Ohio, (1989) after the first reading of the proposed amendment to remove paid agency men from the Council of 18, the Council read to the messengers their own resolution telling the messengers that the Council opposed the proposed amendment. The Council gave forth the official position from headquarters about the matter. This was big time denominationalism which we deplore.

B. The Baptist Bulletin and other GARBC publications are being used to give forth the hierarchy's position and to chastise those who disagree with the denominational leaders.

C. At the Niagara conference (1990) the National Representative mounted a personal vicious attack against those who disagreed with his views about the direction of the GARBC.

D. A pastor was publicly censured by the Council of 18 for recommending separatists for nominees for the Council of 18 election. This is a classic example of denominational coercion for something the pastor had an absolute right to do.

time when there was a debate in the association about whether we should be latitudinal or not.

F. The National Representative used the Baptist Bulletin (Nov. 1990) to urge "church leaders" to oppose the pastor if he tries to lead the church out of the GARBC. This is the very kind of denominational interference that Baptists have always opposed.

4. Ethics and Integrity

The Council of 18 and the National Representative acted unethically and without integrity in their treatment of those with whom they differed at the Niagara Falls Conference.

A. A biased parliamentarian was selected who consistently ruled against the strong separatists and in favor of Council leaders.

B. The National Representative, under the guise of giving a report, made a vicious, mean spirited attack upon Pastors Brown, Harris and Colas. This had the effect of inciting resentment against those men so they would not be elected to the Council.

C. The Council of 18 members made speeches calling the ballot "skewed", prejudicing the messengers against all but incumbent members.

D. The Council of 18 censured Dr. Allen Griffith. The Council has no authority to publicly censure and castigate a pastor. A church or messenger might be censured for heresy or wrongdoing by the association; but the Council has power to censure no one.

E. There was name calling and harsh speech from the platform. There was an ungentlemanly, unloving, unkind attitude portrayed by the "moderates" in the association from the conference platform. The separatists, on the other hand, spoke in loving, kind, considerate terms about the erring brethren [Tapes of the business session are available].

5. By Invitation

Finally, we at First Baptist Church of La Salle have withdrawn from the GARBC because we were invited to do so by a member of the Council of 18. Bill Rudd wrote to me (September 26, 1990) saying, "... if you or others cannot live with the direction and latitude of the Fellowship ... then perhaps you need to prayerfully consider whether it would be better for the cause of Christ ... to leave the Fellowship and join or start one with a more narrowly defined position and purpose."

Conclusion

The struggle in the GARBC today, is over the issue of secondary separation. Is it right to separate from a brother who walks disorderly in regard to identifying with men who take a compromising position? All of the other issues are collateral to this. Our answer is that we must obey 1 Timothy 6:3-5, 2 Thessalonians 3:6; and Romans 16:17.

"UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES"

FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE INDEPENDENT BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP June 17-19, 1991 Philadelphia, Pa.

Speakers:

Dr. Charles Bergerson	Rev. Virgil Romans
Rev. Fred Mattocks	Rev. F.W. Darrow
Dr. Richard Harris	Rev. Jeff Bailey
Rev. Frank Williams	Rev. Lloyd Streeter
Evangelist and Mrs. Herb Taylor	Music
Dr. Charles Dear	Moderator

Host Church: Crescentville Baptist Church

Pastor Charles Dear

521 East Godfrey

Philadelphia, Pa. 19120

Telephone (215)722-8491

Write or call Brother Dear for information on hotels and travel arrangements.

E. The secretary of the Council of 18 wrote pastors and churches on Association letterhead instructing them on the nominating process. He said they should nominate men who will "allow differences of opinion about Calvinism, degrees of separation and the value of certain translations". Here was the hierarchy instructing the churches to be latitudinal and to nominate men who are latitudinal at a

WHY DISFELLOWSHIP?

On Jan. 27, 1991 the Bethel Baptist Church of Sellersville, Pa., voted to sever it's relationship to the GARBC by a unanimous vote of the congregation. In a statement read to the congregation, a brief history of the

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efforts to restore the GARBC to it's original separatist position was presented. The statement included a list of attitudes and actions on the part of the GARBC leadership which led to the break. The reason given for withdrawing from the Association was: "... the GARBC departure from it's original stated purpose and the growing convention machinery within it that is transforming it from a fellowship of churches into a denomination."

The Calvary Baptist Church of Meadville, Pa., voted to withdraw from the GARBC by a 90% vote of the congregation. In a letter to the Association informing it of the action, the church stated "... we withdrew from the GARBC because of doctrinal compromise within the GARBC as well as some approved agencies. Led by the Council of Eighteen and the National Representative, the GARBC has moved away from it's historic position."

On Oct. 14, 1990, the Parsippany Baptist Church of Parsippany, N.J., voted to withdraw fellowship from the GARBC by a vote of 94%. The reasons given by the church were "doctrinal compromise and convention like tactics."

On January 23, 1991, The congregation of Faith Baptist Church, Missoula, Montana, voted unanimously to withdraw fellowship from the GARBC. The reasons given were compromise in doctrine and practice. "The doctrinal areas are in separation and ecclesiology and the practice has to do with the continued approval of compromising schools, and the apparent elevation of the Council of eighteen to a position of control rather than representation."

The Fellowship Baptist Church of Whitmore Lake, Michigan, voted on August 15, 1990, to disassociate from the GARBC. The reason given was "doctrinal compromise in the areas of separation and ecclesiology".

There are many other churches that have decided to end a longtime relationship with the GARBC. These are not churches that have been marginal. Most of them gave financial support to the association and their pastors have been active in the fellowship for 20, 30 and 40 years. Some of these churches are:

Bible Baptist Church, West Chester, Pa., Bible Baptist Church, Arleta, Ca., First Baptist Church, LaSalle, Ill., Galilee Baptist Church, Kent, Wa., Crescentville Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pa., First Baptist Church, Lock Haven, Pa., Marsh Creek Baptist Church, Wellsboro, Pa., Bible Covenant Baptist Church, Media, Pa., First Baptist Church, Harrison Mi.

MEMBERSHIP IN I.B.F.

To apply for membership in the Independent Baptist Fellowship write to the Secretary, Rev. Jerry Johnson at R.D. 3, Box 49W, Hanover, Pa. 17331.

Membership is open to Baptist Pastors and church members who agree in writing to our provisional doctrinal statement and position papers.

The I.B.F. is a Baptist, Separatist, Fundamental, Pretribulational, Independent Fellowship of Bible loving Christians. We do not cooperate with those who walk disorderly in their personal or ecclesiastical relationships.

In order to participate in the business sessions you must be registered as a member before the first business session.

DR. PAUL JACKSON ON SEPARATION

"This church shall fellowship with the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches as long as the Association is characterized by Biblical convictions and vigorous opposition to apostasy and compromise. If the GARBC forsakes it's present Biblical position, this church shall take appropriate action to withdraw from it's fellowship.

The Doctrine and Administration of the Local Church.
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