African American Fundamental Baptists and the Regular Baptist Movement

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In June of 1996, the new National Representative of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches stood before the assembled messengers to propose a resolution on "Racial Relations." The resolution acknowledged both the oneness of all believers in Christ and their duty to love one another. It then admitted that "racial discrimination has manifested itself in our Association in various forms, including failure at one point to receive Black-American churches into fellowship with the Association." It continued by stating that the messengers "acknowledge the sin of excluding brethren because of their race, and express our sincerest regret for the offense against those so treated, including those who formed the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship Association." The resolution asked forgiveness "where we individually have done wrong."[1]

At the time, the GARBC inluded twenty-three predominantly black congregations within its fellowship. For most of the association, the episode was a bit of a mystery. Many who had grown up in Regular Baptist Circles—indeed, many who had pastored churches within its fellowship—had no idea of the situation that the resolution sought to rectify. Some questioned the propriety of apologizing for events that had occurred more than thirty years before, while others doubted whether those events were being remembered correctly. More than a few voiced the opinion that the whole truth had not yet come out. They wondered whether other considerations than sheer racism might help to explain why certain African-American congregations were not received into the GARBC during the late 1950s and early 1960s.[2]

The purpose of this presentation is to explore the episode, primarily from the Regular Baptist side. It will trace the development of events from the beginning of an African American fundamentalism within the Regular Baptist movement to the separate organization of a black fundamentalist fellowship, mission, and training center. It will attempt to determine whether the leadership of the GARBC really did reject the inclusion of African American congregations within its fellowship and, if so, what the reasons were. The most important result of this study will be to evaluate the charge that the Regular Baptist rejection of African American churches was primarily racially motivated. If racial motivations did play a significant role in that rejection, then a secondary result will be to distinguish those who actively promoted racial considerations from those who did not share them or who even opposed them.

Early Controversy

In 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled against state-sponsored racial segregation (the so-called "Jim Crow laws") in the case of Brown v Board of Education. The

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[1]"Racial Relations," resolution passed by the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (Lakeland, FL: May 22-26, 1996).

[2]My knowledge of this background information is personal.

court's ruling was based on the principle that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. In the court's opinion, this inequality entailed a violation of the fourteenth amendment.[3]

One leading Regular Baptist, Kenneth R. Kinney of Johnson City, New York, responded to the ruling by publishing a defense of segregation in the GARBC's official magazine, the *Baptist Bulletin*. Kinney argued that God has assigned geographical areas to the descendents of each of the three sons of Noah. Japeth and his children were to live north of the latitude of Palestine, Shem and his children were to live within that latitude, and Ham and his children were to live south of the latitude of Palestine. Kinney further stated that the Hamitic family showed a "spirit of *rebellion*" by migrating to the land of Shinar (Kinney connected this rebellion with Gen. 10:6-10; 11:1-9). The judgment of Babel was the result of this Hamitic rebellion.[4]

According to Kinney, the biblical evidence indicates that God intended each of the three original groups to "maintain the family and national identity," and that "the *descendents* of these groups are therefore Scripturally bound to do so." Specifically, any intermarriage between the groups would merit God's displeasure. Kinney identified the "Japetic" group as European, the "Shemitic" group as Oriental, and the "Hamitic" group as African. For further evidence of this intended segregation, Kinney cited Acts 17:27, arguing,

> Each group, as the writer understands it, was to be under the blessing of God as long as it observed "the bounds of their habitation." That the Hamites did not, and have not been content to do so, may well account for the inferior position to which they have fallen through the years. However, the correction of their condition is not to be found in falling in with the spirit of Hamitic rebellion, but for them to return to the proper observation of God's order; thus to develop their own culture. Thus, we believe, to return to the principle of *separate* but *equal* cultures.[5]

By no means were Kinney's views universally held among fundamentalists, or even among Regular Baptists. The GARBC office was flooded with responses, many quite negative. The *Baptist Bulletin* published several of these in its next issue. One unnamed correspondent stated that Kinney's position was "no more logical than saying that God ordained that some people should be infirm and, therefore, we ought to abandon the practice of medicine." Ralph T. Nordlund of Fostoria, Ohio, replied to Kinney that, "there is not a verse in the Bible that hints it is a sin for the descendants of Ham and Japeth to intermarry. . . . Both Joseph and Moses married Hamites, and Miriam was rebuked when she murmured against Moses for it." Richard H. Mosher of Naples, Italy, objected that blacks were brought to the United States against their will. He further wondered who would be showing the spirit of rebellion in the Union of South

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[3]http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/history-brown-v-board-education-re-enactment. Accessed 15 July, 2015.

[4]Kenneth R. Kinney, "The Segregation Issue," *Baptist Bulletin* (Oct. 1956), 9.

[5]Ibid.

Africa—a state dominated by white, European immigrants that fell within Kinney's "Hamitic" territory.[6]

In spite of these objections, Kinney's article did attract some agreement. One minister suggested putting the article in pamphlet form for distribution. Another thought that the article was "wonderful and instructive," and asked for extra copies.[7]

Kinney himself remained unmoved. He intimated that his critics had gone "far out on a limb" and that they were guilty of "heated, vehement, and intemperate language." The core of Kinney's answer to his critics, however, was the following paragraph:

> Do they believe that white and colored people generally, should marry? Do they believe that white and colored people who are Christians are free to marry. . . ? If they do *not* believe in such intermarriage, then, on what Scriptural ground? If they do *not* believe in intermarriage between whites and negroes, then it follows, so I believe, that they believe in *segregation* at some point. Therefore, let them tell us *where* they believe they should implement *their* view, and how! Further, do they hold that the Christian faith of negroes involves the necessity of making them one with whites in a common social environment? (And I am not referring to the American social environment, but to our *homes* and *churches*.) Too, should white mission boards deny or allow white missionaries the right to marry among the negroes to whom they go with the Gospel?[8]

In other words, for Kinney, the core of the issue was interracial marriage. He seemed sure that most or all Regular Baptists should share his objections at this point. He was also confident that most or all Regular Baptists would object to welcoming African Americans into their churches. As Kinney saw it, those Regular Baptists who objected to his article were really willing to concede the main point: they all wanted segregation at some level.

Among others, Kinney's article was seen by African Americans. Some of those were Baptist fundamentalists. At least one responded:

> . . . Sirs, as a *Negro* member, a Sunday School teacher, and a choir member of an *all white* Baptist Church, am I to conclude from Dr. Kinney's article that it is both unscriptural and unchristian for me to be there?
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> If Dr. Kinney does not want to worship with Negro people he does not have to, but where does he get the authority to say it is *Scriptural* to encourage segregation?[9]

This response must have been echoed among African American fundamentalists. Their number was small, but it was growing. These black fundamentalists were, among other things,

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[6]"The Segregation Issue," *Baptist Bulletin* (Jan. 1957), 5-7.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Kenneth R. Kinney, "A Further Word from the Author," *Baptist Bulletin* (Jan. 1957), 7.

[9]"The Segregation Issue," 5.

the result of work by Regular Baptist churches and missionaries. Their presence was about to force the Regular Baptist leadership to respond to the issue of segregation, particularly with respect to its own fellowship. Kinney's article and its replies foreshadowed the attitudes of the parties who would be participating in the conversation leading to that decision.

Initial Contacts

A key institution in the development of an African American branch of Baptist fundamentalism was Baptist Seminary of the Bible in Cleveland, Ohio. During the 1950s, the Cleveland area was a hub of Regular Baptist activity. Many of the area Regular Baptist churches had organized a vigorous local fellowship called the Hebron Association. The Cleveland area was also home to the offices of both Baptist Mid-Missions and the Fellowship of Baptists for Home Missions.

Donald Douglas, an alumnus of Moody Bible Institute, moved to Cleveland shortly after the Second World War. Douglas had a special interest in Christian education and a desire to help educate African American church leaders. He became instrumental in organizing Baptist Seminary of the Bible in 1948. The school, which operated as a Bible institute, first met in the home of Rev. and Mrs. Fred Miller. It eventually secured its own building on Kinsman Avenue. Its first certificate students were graduated in 1953, with Rev. Walter Banks delivering the commencement address. Much of the early work at BSB was done by missionaries. The school fell under the umbrella of Baptist Mid-Missions until it was incorporated separately in 1955.[10]

One of the major emphases at BSB was church planting. Many of its graduates went on to organize Baptist churches. One example is Robert F. Hunter, who helped to establish a congregation in Decatur, Illinois, in 1958. The little group was first gathered by Ethel Spitzer, a member of the predominantly white Riverside Baptist Church in Decatur. Prompted by Spitzer, the church started a Sunday school for African American children in December of 1957. Before long, both children and adults began to profess faith in Christ, and the little Sunday school became a fellowship with morning and evening services. It then added youth work and a vacation Bible school. To this point, speakers from Riverside Baptist were supplying the pulpit of the little group. About four months into the work it became clear that the congregation needed a leader of its own—preferably an African American leader. The church contacted Baptist Seminary of the Bible, which recommended Robert F. Hunter.[11]

Other African American churches were being organized at about the same time. Among these were two churches in Cleveland: Community Baptist Church, pastored by Richard C.

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[10]Walter L. Banks to Russell W. Farrell (15 May 1964). GARBC archives; Otha L. Aden and Robert F. Hunter, Sr., eds., *The Second Mile: The History & Development of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship Association* (Fort Wayne, IN: Fundamental Baptist Fellowship Association, 1993), 31-32; "Brief History of the Seminary," *BSB Challenge* (Cleveland: Baptist Seminary of the Bible, 1961), n.p., quoted in Otha Aden, "History of the FBFA," unpublished paper, 3.

[11]Robert F. Hunter, report on Baptist Bible Church of Decatur, Illinois, quoted by Robert T. Ketcham, "What About Our Negro Brethren?" *Baptist Bulletin* (Jan. 1960), 11.

Mattox, and Bible Baptist Church, pastored by Walter L. Banks. The latter pastor had been a Methodist deacon who came to Baptist convictions after studying the Scriptures. He possessed a scholarly bent of mind, eventually going on to teach for Moody Bible Institute. Mattox was more of a visionary and organizer. Like Hunter, Mattox was invited to pastor a Bible study that grew out of a children's work. As with Hunter, the work had originally been started by a woman. Also like Hunter, Mattox had the responsibility of transforming the Bible study into a church. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, both Mattox and Banks were teaching at BSB, and both were emerging as leaders among African American fundamentalists.[12]

Like many church planters, the graduates of BSB faced the problem of raising support. Their first inclination was to apply to Regular Baptist agencies to become missionaries. They could find no agency, however, that would accept them. In some cases they still operated as missionaries under individual Regular Baptist churches, but no agency was willing to offer them its endorsement.[13]

By late 1957, Robert Clater, a Regular Baptist pastor from Mishawaka, Indiana, was becoming concerned for planting African American churches. This concern led him to write to Robert T. Ketcham in early 1958. Ketcham, the National Representative of the GARBC, was by all accounts its most respected leader. In his letter, Clater stressed the need to establish African American churches. He further emphasized how badly these churches needed fellowship.

In May of 1958, Ketcham shared this correspondence with the GARBC's Council of Fourteen. Properly speaking, the council was not the association's board, but it was the executive body and provided leadership to the Regular Baptist fellowship. Under Ketcham's prodding, the council voted to organize a committee to investigate how fellowship could be provided for black churches.[14]

As National Representative, Ketcham generally published a synopsis of each council meeting in the *Baptist Bulletin*. He included the following paragraph in the July issue:

> While there has never been an application on the part of a negro church to come into the GARBC, the matter was brought to our attention by some correspondence, and this question was quite thoroughly discussed. No definite action was taken; however, it was decided that every possible assistance should be given to fundamental negro brethren to

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[12]Telephone interview with Otha Aden (8 July 2015); Otha Aden, "History of the FBFA," 4-5. The leaders of the present-day Fundamental Baptist Fellowship Association would be quick to point out that there can be no such thing as an African American church: "The church is neither black nor white, but scripturally, it is called the 'Body of Christ.'" Aden and Hunter, *The Second Mile*, 25. In this paper, the expressions *black church* or *African American church* are used as shorthand for churches whose memberships are primarily African American.

[13]GARBC Reconciliation Meeting Minutes (16 May 1996), 4. Both Ezell Wiggins and Robert F. Hunter reported similar treatment.

[14]GARBC Council of Fourteen Minutes, meeting at Columbus, OH (May 1958), 4. The committee was known informally by various names, but usually as the "Committee on Colored Churches." That name will be used throughout this paper.

help them organize fundamental Baptist churches and possibly form an Association of their own.[15]

Ketcham's synopsis is significant for what it did not say. It never hinted that the council gave serious consideration to receiving black churches into the GARBC. Rather, a vision of "separate but equal" seems to have controlled the discussion from the very beginning. The council was willing to render "every possible assistance," but only to help African American fundamentalists organize their own group.

The council's Committee on Colored Churches was initially chaired by James Jeremiah, president of Cedarville College. Over the next six months, the committee considered two alternatives. The first was to receive black churches into the GARBC. The other was to help these churches to organize their own association (briefly designated as the "Colored GARBC"). In his report to the Council of Fourteen that December, however, Jeremiah stated that the committee had rejected both alternatives, though it had no other to offer. He did point out that Donald Douglas (still a Cleveland pastor) was already trying to help the black churches organize their own fellowship.[16]

The committee's recommendation appeared to forestall further action. Nevertheless, after receiving its report, the Council of Fourteen decided to continue the committee. Why continue a committee that was doing nothing? Perhaps Ketcham's report in the *Baptist Bulletin* provides a clue: "The very serious question of what to do about negro Baptist churches which are sound in the faith and desire some affiliation with the GARBC was given long consideration, and a move was launched to try to set up some kind of a fundamental fellowship, nationwide, by and for such churches."[17]

Ketcham's report seems to conflict with the council's own minutes. Ketcham says that "a move was launched," while the minutes show that the committee had already rejected this possiblity. Perhaps Ketcham simply understood the council to be giving its blessing to Douglas's efforts in Cleveland. Perhaps the secretary neglected to report some action taken by the council (an unlikely explanation). More likely, Ketcham was reading his own preference into the council's discussion. Whatever the explanation, one thing remains clear: no serious consideration was given to receiving African American churches into the GARBC. At best, the Regular Baptist leadership would help Black churches to organize their own fellowship.

Under Robert F. Hunter's pastoral leadership, the African American congregation in Decatur was blossoming. On January 13, 1959, it was formally organized as Baptist Bible Church. The new church invited ministers from GARBC churches in Illinois to form a recognition council. This council formally recognized Baptist Bible Church as a regular [*sic*]

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[15]Robert T. Ketcham, "Council Meeting Report," *Baptist Bulletin* (July 1958), 22.

[16]GARBC Council of Fourteen Minutes, meeting in Chicago, IL (Dec. 1958), 12.

[17]Robert T. Ketcham, "Report of December Council Meeting," *Baptist Bulletin* (Feb. 1959), 10.

Baptist church. According to Hunter's later recollection, Robert T. Ketcham stated that it "had the most complete constitution and bylaws of any young church he had ever seen."[18]

Not long after the Decatur council, Ketcham suffered a heart attack from which he nearly died. He found himself hospitalized for months, then homebound for months more. In the meanwhile, Baptist Bible Church applied for fellowship with the Illinois Association of Regular Baptist Churches (later renamed the IL-MO Association). According to Hunter's recollection, the "state secretary" (probably the association representative) asked the church to withdraw the application or "somebody would get hurt." Some Regular Baptists (he said) would fight to receive Baptist Bible Church into the association's fellowship, while others would fight to keep it out. Disappointed, Hunter and the church temporarily withdrew the application, but Hunter continued to attend the associational meetings.[19]

Ketcham was still hospitalized when the GARBC met in Rochester, Minnesota, that June. James Jeremiah was also absent. In his absence the Council of Fourteen barely discussed the problem of the black fundamentalists. Committee member George Bates (pastor of Riverside Baptist in Decatur) did give a brief report of the "splendid work being done" by the black churches. In a puzzling note, the Council of Fourteen minutes record that after this report a motion was passed to "appoint a committee, without any publicity, to study this matter most prayerfully and bring in a report a year from now."[20]

Ketcham was back for the December council meeting in Gary, Indiana, but little progress was made toward meeting the concerns of the African American churches. One member of the council, Arthur Woolsey, offered the observation that "it looks as though we are on the horns of a dilemma." The precise nature of that dilemma would be clarified in later meetings. For the moment, the council's sole action was to authorize the committee to "continue the research of this problem" and bring a report to the next meeting of the council.[21]

What Ketcham did next seems to have caught everyone by surprise. In January of 1960 he published an article in the *Baptist Bulletin* entitled "What About Our Negro Brethren?" Ketcham professed his personal "very special love for the colored people," and insisted that he did not "look askance at my colored brethren." The position that he articulated, however, was one of hardened segregation.

> Regardless of my personal fondness for this great people, however, I am sure the idea of a combined white and colored membership in the GARBC will not do what needs to be done. I surely realize that in some communities an individual colored family or two may

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[18] Robert F. Hunter, report on Baptist Bible Church of Decatur, Illinois, 11; idem, *Don't Ever Give Up: The Autobiography of Robert Hunter Sr.* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 2011), 129-130.

[19]Hunter, *Don't Ever Give Up*, 129-130.

[20]GARBC Council of Fourteen Minutes, meeting in Rochester, MN (June 1959), 13.

[21]GARBC Council of Fourteen Minutes, meeting at Gary, IN (Dec. 1959), 4.

worship in a white church, and possibly even become members of it, but these are the exceptions, and should not be the rule.[22]

Ketcham insisted that Regular Baptists ought to do something to meet the needs of black Christians: "We all stand condemned for our failure to really get at this problem and do something constructive about it." His proposal was that the GARBC should engage in "an all-out effort to help our colored brethren organize their own local, sound, regular Baptist churches, and then aid them in organizing their churches into a nation-wide Fellowship such as ours."[23]

With a long-established reputation for candor, Ketcham was doubtless sincere in what he wrote. Therein lay the problem: he sincerely thought that the most loving thing he could do for African American fundamentalists was to keep them out of the GARBC. His article came as a blow to those black leaders who had hoped for some kind of formal fellowship with the Regular Baptist movement. Still, the article was nothing like a formal decision from the council. The door was not yet closed.

Indecision

Some time in late 1959 or early 1960, the board of Baptist Seminary of the Bible in Cleveland invited Ted Wimer to become its president. Wimer was white, a retired missionary of Baptist Mid-Missions. Shortly after accepting the presidency of BSB, Wimer received a visit from Robert Ketcham, who expressed support for the Cleveland school. Ketcham spoke to Wimer about "the multiplying of little colored Baptist churches all over the country." He insisted that BSB was the place to train their pastors. Specifically, Ketcham told Wimer that he wanted to see a curriculum that was strong in "Bible knowledge, Baptist principles, and the separatist issues."

Wimer agreed with Ketcham about the curriculum, stating that he intended to "step up the tempo of the school" to produce African American leaders who shared Regular Baptist principles. He also emphasized that he could not produce this result overnight. He asked for Ketcham's help, inviting him to spend a week during the fall semester teaching on separation.

Ketcham was delighted with this conversation. He immediately wrote to Arthur Woolsey, current chair of the Committee on Colored Churches, to express his approval. He also sent copies of the letter to other members of the committee, stating, "I thought you brethren ought to be made aware of the possibilities involved in this Cleveland school."[24]

A year had now passed since Ketcham's heart attack, and it was becoming clear that the episode had left him permanently weakened. At the June meeting of the Council of Fourteen, he announced his retirement from the position of National Representative, urging the council to

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[22]Robert T. Ketcham, "What About Our Negro Brethren?" *Baptist Bulletin* (Jan. 1960), 11.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Robert T. Ketcham to G. Arthur Woolsey, n.d. but early 1960.

appoint Paul R. Jackson in his place. The council consented, also creating the new position of National Consultant for Ketcham.[25]

Also at its June meeting, the Council of Fourteen decided that the time had come to sit down for a face-to-face conversation with key African American leaders. An invitation was extended for three men to meet with the council in December of 1960. Expenses for the meeting would be covered by the GARBC.[26]

This meeting appears to have been the best opportunity that the black leadership was ever given. It was held at Belden Avenue Baptist Church in Chicago. The three who traveled to Chicago were Walter Banks, Richard Mattox, and Robert Hunter. After they were introduced, Arthur Woolsey invited them to "pour out their hearts to the council, telling them what they feel is their problem, and a possible solution." According to the minutes, the three responded by naming three needs. The first was financial: their churches were poor and needed help. The second need was simply a need for fellowship—by which they meant organizational fellowship. The third need was for help in conducting a variety of organizational endeavors such as a missionary program and young people's work.[27]

The council took action only on the first need. Ketcham suggested that the Fellowship of Baptists for Home Missions (a GARBC-approved agency for church planting) could serve as a clearing house for donations from Regular Baptist churches. Upon receiving funds, FBHM could pass them along to a committee headed by Mattox. That committee would then apportion the monies to the African American leaders and churches as it saw fit. The council quickly approved this suggestion, and the three black leaders were dismissed.

For the African Americans, that dismissal was bitterly disappointing. True, they did need money—but as they saw it, they needed fellowship far more than they needed funds. Fellowship was just what they were being refused. Their disappointment would have been far worse if they could have heard the rest of the council's discussion. A year earlier, Arthur Woolsey had commented that the situation placed the council on the horns of a dilemma. Now he expanded on that remark in a lengthy report.

Woolsey began by comparing the African American leadership to teenagers who make exaggerated claims of their rights in order to establish their identities. The moment they are given their rights, however, they have no idea how to carry out their responsibilities. The teenager actually yearns for some father figure to help him with his problem.[28]

Woolsey further noted that "this is a day of colored solidarity." As he saw it, "colored folk are fighting for colored folk." He continued, "These particular colored folk are saying, 'You have trained us--what are you going to do with us?'" He argued that financing would certainly have to rest upon the whites, but that was not the core problem. The black leadership and churches would also need white involvement in ordinations and recognition councils. Woolsey

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[25]GARBC Association Minutes, meeting in Long Beach, CA (June 1960), 8-9.

[26]Ibid., 2.

[27]GARBC Council of Fourteen Minutes, meeting at Chicago, IL (Dec. 1960), 4.

[28]Ibid., 9.

stated that their success or failure would depend upon whether or not they were accepted by whites.[29]

That was the crux of Woolsey's dilemma. On the one hand, the black leaders were like adolescents who would not be able to succeed on their own: "If we urge them to do for themselves, nothing will be done." On the other hand, "The minute we go into such joint relations we cannot ditch the matter of integration."[30]

In the face of this dilemma, Woolsey offered two suggestions. The first was to give the black leaders a careful hearing—he thought that this was the most important contribution the council could make. The second was to "be very careful what we say." In the actions that followed, however, the council would virtually ignore Woolsey's first suggestion, and it would implement the second by saying almost nothing at all.

Growing Distance

Woolsey's attitude toward the African American leadership was nothing if not paternalistic. On his view, these men were incapable of acting on their own. They were about to prove him wrong.

Already by the time of the Belden meeting, these pastors were setting up additional organization with only minimal help from whites. An article in the February 1961 issue of BSB's periodical tells about alumni who were establishing congregations across the country. One was planting a church in Paterson, New Jersey, scraping by on $93 per month as he worked part-time. Another was using a park pavilion in Decatur, Illinois, for Sunday services. A third had arrived in Des Moines, Iowa, with $22 in his pocket, starting a church that had already grown to around 30 and that had purchased a church bus. A female graduate had begun gathering a little congregation in Elyria, Ohio, and a male graduate was volunteering to step in and pastor it. The same report states that James Parker (a developing leader within African American fundamentalism) was working with Xenia Bible School. Furthermore, missionaries had been authorized by "our Missionary board" to begin a work in nearby Dayton, Ohio. Ironically, at the time when Woolsey was commenting on the inability of the African American leadership to "do for themselves," they had already organized a mission agency and were sending out church planters.[31]

A later reference makes it clear that this board had been operating for some time. By 1962, it had eight missionaries in the field. In effect, the Council of Fourteen had left the black leadership "to do for themselves," but beyond their expectations something was indeed being accomplished.[32]

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[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid.

[31]"Newsarama," *The Baptist Seminarian* (Feb. 1961), 2-3.

[32]"BSB Missionary Board," *Our Challenge* (Feb. 1962), 4.

It was just as well. In early February of 1961, Mattox (who was emerging as spokesman for the African American leadership) received a copy of a letter written by a prominent Regular Baptist leader. The author of the letter stated that he had encouraged "the colored brethren" to start small, separated Baptist churches, and then to organize an association of these churches. The writer continued,

> During the past two years approaches have been made . . . by some of our colored brethren asking that what few churches they have established be admitted to the [GARBC] and also local state groups. This has brought the [GARBC] face to face with the dangers inherent in such a move. Chief among these dangers is that of intermarriage among the young people. These brethren do not want that to happen. We do not want it to happen. But we both know that it does happen when young people are brought together in such affiliation.[33]

There was the nub of the problem, the heart of the dilemma faced by the Council of Fourteen. To accept African American churches into the fellowship of the GARBC would lead directly to the problem of integration. To accept integration would lead to intermarriage. That was what some Regular Baptists feared, and that was the fear that paralyzed the council.

The GARBC held its 1961 meeting in Winona Lake, Indiana. The members who were appointed to the Committee on Colored Churches included Kenneth Muck of FBHM, James T. Jeremiah of Cedarville College, George Bates of Riverside Baptist Church in Decatur, and John R. Dunkin, new president of Los Angeles Baptist Theological Seminary. By this time, Cedarville had begun to accept African Americans as students. One of the earliest was James D. Parker.

The council held an extended discussion about how to "solve the negro problem." Muck believed that this problem could be faced at the level of the mission agencies without bringing black churches into the GARBC. An unnamed member responded that the council was not yet facing the problem: "we are eventually going to have an integrated fellowship." This member went on to argue that the council needed to begin creating a climate for integration, partly by going on record that "we have a real burden and interest in their salvation and spiritual growth." Even this member, however, thought that the council had to be careful about pushing the fellowship into "premature action."[34]

The consensus among the council was that "to take any stand on the issue at the present time would be terribly unwise." If someone were to bring up the situation on the floor of the association, then the council would still be able to respond that the GARBC had never taken a position. For the moment, FBHM was left as the channel for monies to go to black churches.

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[33]Quoted by Aden and Hunter, *The Second Mile*, 39-40. The editors are careful to name neither the author of the letter nor the fellowship within which it was written, but internal evidence clearly points to the GARBC as the fellowship, and most likely to Robert T. Ketcham as the author.

[34]GARBC Council of Fourteen Minutes, meeting at Winona Lake, IN (June 1961), 3.

Furthermore, "If a colored church presents itself, the Council of 14 can only review the application and present it to the Fellowship in normal process."[35]

This was actually a key concession by the Council of Fourteen. The council was now internally on record that it would not automatically exclude an African American church that applied for fellowship. Even so, its members clearly dreaded the possibility of having to deal with an application from a black church—so they did nothing to communicate their consensus externally. It remained an in-house understanding only.

Kenneth Muck was now assigned to chair the committee, and over the next six months he threw himself into the task. His initial suggestion to the council had been to use the mission agencies as a contact point with African American churches. He now leveraged his position as chairman of the board at FBHM to try to do just that. He brought a resolution to a board meeting in Fresno that would have integrated the African American work into the structure of the Fellowship of Baptists for Home Missions. This proposal led to nothing but questions from the board.

In November, Muck met with African American leaders in Cleveland. What he discovered was that their attitude was beginning to harden. They were not angry, but they had been deeply hurt and they were perplexed. Mattox again emphasized to Muck that the black churches wanted to come into the fellowship of the GARBC. He added that these churches had already set up their own mission board and had a skeleton organization.

Muck met separately with Ted Wimer, who restated much of what Mattox had already said. Wimer observed that the black leaders did not want money, but fellowship. Neither Mattox nor Banks would be satisfied until their churches were welcomed into the GARBC. Wimer frankly took their side, pressing Muck for integration.

In December, the Council of Fourteen again met at Belden Avenue. Muck reported on the results of his efforts. "I am afraid," he said, "that sooner or later we will receive an application from a negro church." Nevertheless, FBHM was still willing to act as a clearing house for money going to African American churches.

Another council member, W. Wilbert Welch, reported that the Hebron Association (a local Regular Baptist association around Cleveland) had "opened their arms to the negroes." In response, R. L. Powell observed, "The negroes are not going to be satisfied with anything short of absolute equality." Then he continued, "The fundamental problem for us in all of this is the fear of intermarriage."[36]

There it was again. Powell stated the nub of the problem for the whole council. Fellowship would bring integration, and integration would bring intermarriage. That was the issue that Regular Baptists were not prepared to face.[37]

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[35]Ibid.

[36]GARBC Council of Fourteen Minutes, meeting in Chicago, IL (Dec. 1961), 10.

[37]The fear of intermarriage continued to be a significant concern for years within GARBC agencies. Robert Hunter later recalled how his children were rebuked at Cedarville College for carrying on conversations with whites of the opposite sex. Ezell Wiggins, a black pastor in Iowa, was asked to "counsel" Charles Ware, then a student at Baptist Bible College, against the dangers of interracial dating and marriage. According to Wiggins, the college actually

At least, not *all* Regular Baptists. From his position at Baptist Seminary of the Bible, Wimer was still pushing for integration. George Bates was also arguing for integration, making his case from Colossians 3:11, "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all." What is more, James T. Jeremiah suddenly reversed himself, coming out in favor of admitting African American churches into the fellowship of the GARBC.[38]

Over the next several months, Muck continued to pursue action within FBHM. What he eventually got was a resolution, which he presented to the Council of Fourteen in May of 1962. The resolution opened with the following paragraphs:

> We realize that men outside of the Lord Jesus Christ are eternally lost. This includes all men. We realize that a great portion of the population of our Country is made up of the Negro. There is a tremendous need for evangelization in the Negro population of our Country. There is also a growing need for churches among the Negroes that will be Biblical, Baptistic, and established upon the Word of God in order to reach these people for Jesus Christ.
>
> We fully recognize that there are great and rather unusual pressures being brought to bear upon the Negro in America. These pressures are political, they are social, and they have brought about a great state of confusion in the minds and hearts of everybody concerned. This is a burden that we must accept, and must also deal with on a positive basis.
>
> The greatest need of every man is Jesus Christ. The outreach and business of our Churches is to win men to the Lord Jesus Christ. With this in mind, we recognize our responsibility to our Negro population. This responsibility is irrespective of every other pressure. It is a responsibility given to us through the Word of God, and by God himself to win men to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the burden that has been increasingly heavy upon our hearts. This is the burden that we want to fulfill in obedience to God's direct command.[39]

The resolution continued by making several specific recommendations. First, FBHM would set up a department to help African Americans establish Baptist churches. Second, this department would have its own director, to be chosen by FBHM. Third, the Council of Fourteen

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offered a scholarship to female black students to "provide potential dates and/or a marriage partner" for Ware. When Ware finally proposed to a white student, she was told that she would be denied graduation if she did not break off the engagement. GARBC Reconciliation Meeting Minutes (16 May 1996), 4-6.

[38]Ibid.

[39]FBHM Resolution on Colored Churches, quoted in GARBC Council of Fourteen Minutes, meeting at Springfield, MA (June 1962), 7-8.

would help the African American churches establish their own fellowship, with the Committee on Colored Churches acting in an advisory and liaison capacity.[40]

These recommendations touched off quite a debate within the council. R. L. Powell stated that no spiritual issue was at stake, but only a social question. Ray Hamilton replied that if the association was not going to receive black churches, then it ought to state specific reasons why it would not. John Balyo responded that the problem was sociological. A few expressed structural concerns: they thought that the Committee on Colored Churches should continue as a liaison committee, while a separate committee should be appointed to "express our attitude on this question."[41]

Paul R. Jackson then interrupted to offer a correction to something that was said in the December meeting, where W. Wilbert Welch had reported that the Hebron Association was opening its arms to black churches. Actually, he said, the Hebron Association had conducted a plebiscite on the question. Of thirty-five churches, only five had responded, and only two of those favored receiving African American churches.[42]

The result of this meeting was just what it had been many times before. The Council of Fourteen took no action whatever. A year and a half had passed since the three African American leaders had been invited to "pour out their hearts" to the council. Their churches had received a small amount of money, but they were no closer to being received into fellowship than they had ever been.

Final Rift

The African American leaders were brokenhearted. As Mattox told Ketcham, "The GARBC birthed us in fundamentalism, but put us on someone else's doorstep to be raised." They were also tired of waiting on the Council of Fourteen. Had they known it, one of their churches could have applied for fellowship in the GARBC. The application would have been examined just the same as any other application and then presented to the association at its annual meeting. But how would they have known? The council certainly was not advertizing this decision.[43]

The last public word had been Ketcham's article in January of 1960. At that time he had articulated a vision of separate but equal associations. The letter of February 1961 reaffirmed this position. More than two years had passed without any welcoming signal from the Regular Baptist leadership. Discouraged, the African American leaders determined to seek some other venue for fellowship.

Their main problem was numerical: they had very few churches. Banks and Mattox began to examine other fundamentalist groups. They looked at a couple of Baptist groups and discovered the same attitude toward African Americans that they had seen in the GARBC. They

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[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid.

[43]The quotation is from the GARBC Reconciliation Meeting Minutes (16 May 1996), 3.

looked at the Christian and Missionary Alliance. They even investigated some fundamental Presbyterians, simply seeking to establish contact with other black fundamentalists.[44]

Increasingly, the two leaders came to believe that their churches would find fellowship only if they took the initiative in organizing it. With Banks's approval, Mattox sent out a call in May of 1962.

> Several fundamental pastors have expressed their desire to see a united effort in this regards (a national fellowship of fundamental churches among our people) in these last days. We believe that this is the leading of the Lord that such a fellowship of churches become a reality at this stage of Negro fundamentalism. The potential of such an organization are [*sic*] many.[45]

The formal meeting was held at Mount Moriah Baptist Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on August 21-22. Mattox and Banks were both present, probably the leading figures in organizing the new fellowship. Though prevented from attending, Hunter certainly supported the idea of a new association. One young leader who was at that meeting, John Williams, would go on to become a significant voice for African American fundamentalists within the Regular Baptist movement. The organization that came from the Milwaukee meeting was called the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship Association.

The Council of Fourteen remained unaware of the new association for several months. At their December meeting they discussed the need to supply study materials for black pastors. Their solution was to appeal to Regular Baptist churches and pastors to cull their libraries, sending the culls to Baptist Seminary of the Bible. Aside from this discussion, the Committee on Colored Churches did not even report—nor would it again. The minutes from the next meeting (May of 1963) simply record, "It was recommended that we drop this Committee because the colored brethren are forming their own association."[46]

A tie of sorts did still exist through Baptist Seminary of the Bible in Cleveland. BSB had been an independent school since 1955, governed by a self-perpetuating board. By 1964 several of the board members were African American, including Mattox, who served as secretary. Some staff members were white, including the president, Ted Wimer, and the field representative, Fred Alexander. Banks was acting as dean. The school was still receiving some money from Regular Baptist churches, though how much is uncertain. Five of the ten trustees were associated with the GARBC.

The tenuous nature of the relationship between BSB and the GARBC is illustrated by an exchange of correspondence in 1964. First Baptist Church of Monroe, Iowa, was giving regular financial support to Baptist Seminary of the Bible. Under the leadership of their new pastor, Russell Farrell, the church had begun to narrow the focus of its missionary budget, concentrating

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[44]Aden and Hunter, *The Second Mile*, 4-5.

[45]Ibid, 2.

[46]GARBC Council of Fourteen Minutes, meeting at Fort Wayne, IN (Dec. 1962), 11; GARBC Council of Fourteen Minutes, meeting at Omaha, NE (May 1963), 23.

on approved, Regular Baptist agencies. Consequently, Farrell wrote to the school, inquiring about its relationship to the Regular Baptist movement.

Farrell's letter went to Walter L. Banks, who replied that the school was not approved by either the Ohio association or by the GARBC. Banks added, "The reason for this . . . I cannot explain in the brief compass of a letter." He did insist that "We have always had strong ties with these groups though no organic connection." He also pointed to the school's strong connection with Baptist Mid Missions and its use of personnel connected with the GARBC.[47]

Puzzled by this reply, Farrell wrote to Paul R. Jackson, now the National Representative of the GARBC. Jackson replied that the BSB had never applied for formal approval, perhaps because the school was not yet prepared to meet the academic, financial, and other standards that applied to approved institutions. Then he added, "However their lack of approval is no mark of disapproval," pointing out that Regular Baptists supported many fine agencies that were not on the approved list.[48]

Baptist Seminary of the Bible was about to pass through a period of rapid change. In January of 1965, Ted Wimer left BSB and Banks was placed in the presidency. The school was in financial trouble: when he left, Wimer's salary was $1,000 in arrears. James D. Parker took Banks's place as dean. Parker was an alumnus of BSB who had gone on to graduate from Cedarville College. This shift in administration signaled a new direction for the school, but that direction would not be achieved without conflict.

The first casualty of the new direction was Fred Alexander, the school's field representative. Alexander had come to BSB out of a Regular Baptist pastorate. He was also a printer, a skill which served him well in promoting the school. Under the new management, however, he became alarmed about the school's finances. The Banks-Parker administration was running a deficit of $8,000, while the school's assets totaled only $15,000. Alexander also thought that the curriculum was not being adequately taught. He left the institution in June of 1965 and immediately began working with another Regular Baptist ministry to African Americans.[49]

Alexander was not alone in his concerns. While he respected Banks in other ways, Richard C. Mattox, secretary of the board, was becoming alarmed over what he perceived as Banks's lack of administrative ability. At least some members of the board shared a perception that a crisis had come and emergency measures had to be taken.

It is not clear who convened an impromptu board meeting during December of 1965. The meeting was called so precipitously that it circumvented the regular constitutional process, which required a thirty-day notice. The board included eight members, five of whom were African American and three of whom were white. None of the white members received notice of the

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[47]Walter L. Banks to Russell Farrell (15 May 1964).

[48]Paul R. Jackson to Russell Farrell (26 May 1964).

[49]Richard C. Mattox to Fred Alexander (June 1965); George O'Keefe to Whom it May Concern (15 June 1965); Fred Alexander Prayer Letter (Aug. 1965); Handwritten notes in GARBC files (Jan. 1966). These notes were probably taken by Paul R. Jackson from an interview with George O'Keefe, a member of the board at Baptist Seminary of the Bible.

meeting, and not all of the black members attended. It was later discovered that the board lacked a legal quorum to conduct business. Banks was at the meeting, and so, evidently, was Parker. Stopping short of a vote or a formal request, the board members pressured Banks for his resignation. After he agreed to step down, they quickly chose Parker as the new president of the school. Then, in a surprise move, they voted to change the school's name to Central Bible College.[50]

At the time these decisions were made, the school was being supported by some forty-two churches. The most that any church was giving was $50.00 per month. The majority of the churches gave less than $20.00. Tuition and individual donors were not enough to close the gap and keep the institution solvent.[51]

One of the original board members of Baptist Seminary of the Bible was George R. Gibson. By March of 1966 he had left the board. He wrote to Paul R. Jackson that many of the school's problems stemmed from lack of support.

> Personally, having been a member of the Trustees for many years, I have not been satisfied for some time with the way things have been going. First, it disturbed me no end that the churches of both our State and National fellowship would not come through and support the school when it was in good hands and possessed of a good faculty. If some of our leaders had not been so timid about becoming "involved" by supporting and encouraging a "Negro" school, I believe the situation could have been vastly different. Because this happened several years ago some of the negro members of the Board lost all interest in "the White Man's" support, and cut loose from that interest.[52]

According to Gibson, the result of this situation was that unqualified individuals were added to the board. This change led to many resignations from the board, including his. As Gibson saw it, the situation had gone from bad to worse. Even though he did not know the reasons for the name change, he stated, "I do not believe the school is in any way qualified to be called a 'College of the Bible.'" Then he added, "I do not believe it is worthy of support on the part of the churches or of our State or National fellowship."[53]

Gibson did say that he saw the need for a school like Baptist Seminary of the Bible. He opined that "It is a tragedy that so many of our people seemingly are so very much interested in helping the Negores [*sic*] of Africa, or the West Indian Islands but shy away from involvement here in their own back yard." Somewhat wistfully he stated that if a school like BSB could be

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[50]Walter L. Banks to "Friends" (29 Dec. 1965); Handwritten notes in GARBC files (Jan. 1966); "Resignation at Cleveland School," *Baptist Bulletin* (Mar. 1966). The *Baptist Bulletin* shows Banks resigning as dean, but Banks's letter states that he is leaving the presidency.

[51]*Central Bible College (Baptist) Newsletter* (Mar. 1966), 5.

[52]George R. Gibson to Paul R. Jackson (4 Mar. 1966).

[53]Ibid.

brought back into existence, it "would go far toward changing some of the racial tensions presently existing."[54]

Years before, Jackson had served as Gibson's assistant pastor. The two had maintained a close relationship over the years, and Gibson's opinion carried significant weight with Jackson. Even before Jackson saw Gibson's letter he was writing that "It would seem to me that we can no longer endorse and recommend this school in its present situation." For a while, Jackson even considered alerting the GARBC to the situation through his *Information Bulletin*. Gibson's letter served to confirm the GARBC leadership in its negative attitude toward Central Bible College.[55]

By July, even Mattox had left the board. A rumor was beginning to spread that Parker and the remaining board members were "anti-white," though just what that meant is not clear. Another rumor suggested that Central Bible College was moving in the direction of the National Baptist Convention—a serious matter for Regular Baptists, many of whom believed that all of the conventions were imbued with theological liberalism.[56]

For his part, Parker felt the pressure of these whispers. He could do little to respond to the charge of being "anti-white," but he was clearly nettled by the accusation that the school was leaving its fundamentalist roots. The college's published position was fairly clear: "The Central Bible College takes a definite stand against all forms of liberalism and modernism. We are in full accord with the scriptural demands of separation from any church, school, or group that adheres to apostate views."[57] Parker addressed directly the question of whether this stand was changing.

> Central Bible College has not, and has no intentions to change its doctrinal stand or ecclesiastical position. I take the liberty to say in behalf of the trustees and administration of Central Bible College, we are fully satisfied with the doctrinal and ecclesiastical beliefs that have been a vital part of the school since its conception in 1948.[58]

At its peak, Baptist Seminary of the Bible had enrolled nearly 300 students. By January of 1967 it was down to around thirty. It owed more than $3,000 on a mortgage that was due in February, then another $7,000. Parker was acting as both president and dean of the institution, and was hoping to find thirty people who would donate $100 each. As was rapidly becoming clear, however, the future of Central Bible College was in peril.

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[54]Ibid.

[55]Paul R. Jackson to George O'Keefe (3 Mar. 1966). The *Information Bulletin* was an occasional news bulletin sent from the National Representative to the pastors of GARBC churches.

[56]Paul R. Jackson to Wayne K. Anderson (2 Mar. 1966); Paul R. Jackson to Richard W. Johnson (5 July 1966).

[57]"Stand," *Central Bible College (Baptist) Newsletter* (March 1966), 1.

[58]James D. Parker, "President's Pen," *Central Bible College (Baptist) Newsletter* (March 1966), 1.

In July of 1967, the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship Association met at Keystone Baptist Church in Chicago. The pastor, Lloyd Lindo, was also president of the association. Resolutions passed during the meeting were grounded in the belief that "Open housing, equal employment, and integrated schools and churches are based on Biblical truths." The speaker for the meeting was Howard O. Jones, an African American evangelist associated with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.[59]

The Council of Fourteen may have been divided on the question of integration, but they were united in their opinion of Billy Graham. No council member would have endorsed the use of a speaker from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Over the past ten years the GARBC had gone out of its way to oppose the methods adopted by that association and to dissociate itself from its ministry. The Regular Baptist leaders could hardly avoid seeing Jones's appearance at the FBFA as a rejection of the position they had tried to communicate. They did not respond publicly, but they certainly took notice.[60]

By 1967, the break between the Regular Baptist leadership and the leaders of African American fundamentalism was nearly complete. Fortunately, a few channels of communication remained open. These would eventually be used to begin rebuilding some of the ties between the two groups. For that to happen, however, more than a decade would have to pass.

Assessment

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, a vigorous form of African American fundamentalism arose in Regular Baptist circles. To some degree, this movement resulted from the personal Bible study and solidifying convictions of the African American leaders. To some extent it was also the result of investment made by white fundamentalists, particularly through Baptist Seminary of the Bible. The question was whether these African American fundamentalists would be welcomed into the Regular Baptist fellowship. The short answer to that question is that they were not.

Those were the years during which the American Civil Rights movement was in its heyday, from *Brown v Board of Education* in 1954 to the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (often called the "Fair Housing Act"). The leadership of the GARBC failed to keep pace with changes in American civilization. Faced with the social costs of integration, these leaders chose to maintain an institutional gulf between themselves and the African American churches. Some attempted to justify their choices on biblical grounds, while others were driven by more pragmatic concerns. Still others did press for integration, but they were never able to carry the day. In the end, the Regular Baptist leadership failed to welcome African American churches into their organizational fellowship.

The suggestion has been made that the decision was not purely, and perhaps not even primarily, racial. To be sure, other factors did play a role. The GARBC was passing through a period of leadership transition. It was facing other controversies, both internally and externally.

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[59]Press release from the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship Association (15 July 1967), 1.

[60]For example, the GARBC files include a copy of the July 15 press release in which the announcement of Jones's appearance is the only underlined sentence.

Some of those were siphoning away churches and support. The fellowship was having trouble meeting its financial obligations. From one point of view, adding another controversy was unnecessary—especially if the controversy were both as potentially volatile and as actually avoidable as one over racial relations.

None of those considerations, however, gets to the heart of the issue. Why did the Council of Fourteen stonewall the African American leadership? Arthur Woolsey put his finger on the answer: to receive black congregations into the GARBC would force the fellowship to deal with the issue of integration. Why was that a problem? Kenneth Kinney, R. L. Powell, and others answered that question: the fear of intermarriage. Sometimes an obvious explanation is the correct one. African American churches were kept out of the GARBC mainly because of racial prejudice, pure and simple.

Granted, the Regular Baptist leaders were men of their times. It is unfair to judge them by the perspectives of a later generation. The rejection of integration and intermarriage, however, was far from universal among Regular Baptists. Some Regular Baptist leaders did try to make a biblical case for the full acceptance of black congregations. The problem is not that the Council of Fourteen did not know or could not have known the truth. When the Regular Baptist leadership chose to stiff-arm the African American churches, theirs was not a decision made in ignorance, but one made out of fear and expediency.

This episode occurred during a critical upheaval in American civilization, and one of the issues in that upheaval was race relations. Anyone who believes in Providence has to suspect that God granted the Regular Baptist movement the opportunity to model the oneness of the Church, that genuine brotherhood that is unaffected by racial differences, before the watching world. One wonders how things might have been different had the Council of Fourteen acted on principle and advocated the admission of African American churches to full fellowship. That question cannot be answered.

What can be said is this: choices have consequences. One of the consequences is that many blacks were simply driven from fundamentalism. Because they were afforded little fellowship in fundamentalist circles, many turned toward a broader evangelicalism. Fundamentalism lost good minds and voices as African American leaders settled in broader evangelical circles.

The leaders of the FBFA were and are convinced that most of the blame for their rejection rests with Robert T. Ketcham. His *Baptist Bulletin* article of January 1960 was certainly the most public pronouncement on the issue. In conversation, black fundamentalist leaders still intimate that Ketcham was working behind the scenes to block any attempt to allow their churches into the GARBC. Of course, it is possible that Ketcham was simply the most visible figure because of his position as National Representative and then as National Consultant. Nevertheless, the perception is real (and may be correct). Richard Mattox is reputed to have said that "if one man has that much power over an entire association of churches he did not want to have anything to do with them."[61]

Thirty years later, the GARBC acknowledged that the fault was on its side. It made at least an attempt to repair the damage. Forgiveness was sought and received. The GARBC and

[61]Aden, "History of the FBFA," 6.

the FBFA have, on occasion, even held their annual meetings jointly. Much healing has taken place. One former president of the FBFA has written of his

> . . . respect for Dr. John Greening, GARBC, who voluntarily took the "fall" for the men who brought shame and humiliation to Richard C. Mattox and Dr. Walter L. Banks. . . . Dr. Greening went to Pastor Mattox's house on Orville Street, went inside his house, got on his knees before him and . . . asked Pastor Mattox to forgive them for what they did in refusing to allow their churches to fellowship together with FBFA. I often wonder what America would be like today had the Christian churches obeyed the command of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20. Would the Civil Rights marches of the 60s have been necessary?[62]

Fifty years of history cannot be reversed. Both the GARBC and the FBFA have traveled their own roads, though each has remained committed to Baptist fundamentalism. Perhaps the future will see even greater degrees of fraternity and cooperation between the two groups.

A Personal Afterword

While this paper is properly concluded, I feel that I cannot leave the matter there. To this point I have written as an academic historian. I have tried mainly to tell a story in as factual and fair a way as possible. The very sterility of such historiography, however, runs the risk of allowing facts to distort truth.

This was a very hard paper to write. What made it difficult is the fact that a wrong was done, and people whom I know, admire, and love were on both sides of that wrong. Because I grew up in Regular Baptist circles, I cannot write dispassionately about its leaders. I knew many of the men whose names are mentioned in this paper, and have studied the lives of others. I have never seen them as evil men, nor do I now. Rather, they are men to whom I owe my spiritual heritage. Directly or indirectly they were my mentors and models. Names like those of Kenneth Kinney, James Jeremiah, Arthur Woolsey, John Balyo, and especially Robert T. Ketcham are inscribed upon my heart. They are among the best men I have known. I am grateful for their biblical knowledge, spiritual insight, moral courage, and above all their (usually) self-effacing and gentle leadership.

Nevertheless, even the best of leaders make mistakes. Even the most sanctified Christians still commit sins. This paper records a very large mistake and a very serious sin that was committed by very good Christians.

As a historian, I believe the story needs to be told. As a Christian, I believe the lessons need to be learned. Sadly, the most important lessons could not be brought forward without charting the details of the conversation and naming the names of those who shaped it.

The principle of justice is also at stake here. Much as I respect and love these leaders of the GARBC, I also respect and love certain leaders within the FBFA. That is a story of its own.

I was reared in an FBHM church plant in Freeland, Michigan. During the mid 1960s, when I was only a boy, Ezell Wiggins came to preach for a missionary conference. He was the first black man to whom I had ever spoken. He was young and full of life, handsome, hilariously

[62]Aden, "History of the FBFA," 7.

funny, and deadly serious about the things of the Lord. Both that year and the next, God used him to awaken something in my heart. Pastor Williams became one of my heroes, and my opinion of him only grew when my family moved to Iowa and I saw him periodically at Regular Baptist events.

We moved to Iowa so that my father could attend Faith Baptist Bible College. While still a student he was licensed as a minister and became pastor of a church in Cambridge, Iowa. As I recall, the first wedding that he performed was to marry a black man to a white woman. The event actually made very little impression upon me at the time. I was in high school and had not seen much of the fundamentalist world, so I naively assumed that such a marriage must be considered normal in our circles. I thought that only unsaved people would object.

Years later, John Williams came to speak at the GARBC seminary where I was a student. I was captured by his thoughtful and theological discussion of ministry in the black community. John took the time to show an interest in this rather quirky seminarian, opening a vision for ministry that I had never before glimpsed. A few years later he became pastor to one of my siblings, providing effective pastoral care at a critical point in life. Dr. Williams also became one of my heroes, a teacher and model, a man to whom I owe much and whom I love much.

As I say, I grew up in the GARBC. I was baptized in a GARBC church, attended GARBC camps, graduated from a GARBC college and seminary, and held pastoral positions in three GARBC churches. Not only that—I have been a student of Regular Baptist history, having written hundreds of pages on the early years of the GARBC. Yet the 1996 resolution of apology caught me completely by surprise. I had no knowledge whatever of the events that it referenced. Furthermore, it did not seem to match the respect with which I had seen people treat Ezell Wiggins and John Williams. Nor did it match my own father's willingness to marry blacks to whites. I was simply incredulous.

The writing of this paper has been a genuinely grievous experience, much akin to watching my close friends fall out with each other. At moments I have had to stop reading, stop writing, and simply dry the tears from my eyes. I have experienced pain because men whom I so admire have been treated so badly. And I have experienced pain because men whom I so admire could have treated them so badly.

For the sake of those Regular Baptist leaders whom I admire, I wish that this episode could simply be covered up and forgotten—much as it had been before it was made public in 1996. For the sake of those African American pastors and church planters who were shunned and even shamed, however, it must not be forgotten. While they are not interested in retribution, they deserve at least some measure of vindication. Furthermore, we really do need to know how we have got to where we now are.

I am grateful to the staff and council of the GARBC for their transparency as I have researched this story. I am also grateful for leaders in the FBFA who have provided me with documentation and insight. Above all, at this moment I am grateful for the evident fruit of the Spirit in the lives of God's children—fruit that led the leaders of the leaders of the GARBC to humble themselves so that they could seek to right a wrong, and fruit that led the leaders of the FBFA to forgive. Here, perhaps, is the most important lesson of all.