

The GARBC—A Rich History and Heritage (Part 2/2)

April 2004

George Houghton, Th.D.

A continuation of a literature review showing the historic position of the GARBC on primary and secondary ecclesiastical separation, personal separation standards, and an attitude of militancy regarding its historic convictions.

Likewise Dr. Robert Ketcham wrote, "We received a letter which deplored what has been called the present 'trend' of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. The 'trend' which is referred to has to do with what is called the 'present policy' of the GARBC in relation to the matter of separation. Our correspondent insists upon separation from apostasy and commends us to that extent. He takes exception, however, to what he describes as the Association's attitude toward others who, while believing the Gospel themselves, feel perfectly free to fellowship and co-operate with those who do not. Our correspondent asserts that this [attitude] is a departure from the original standards of the GARBC and constitutes a 'trend' and 'present policy' which, according to him, is causing concern among many.

"There is no 'trend' or 'present policy' in the GARBC which in any wise deviates from the original spirit of the Association. Our correspondent is very critical of any slightest criticism of ours directed toward those who will not separate themselves from apostasy, while at the same time they are 'sound, godly' men. He implies that the Association, in practicing its present policy, has too severe an attitude toward men of this category. . . .

"From the beginning of our Association we have taken the position that clean-cut, total, and absolute separation from apostasy is the only logical and Biblical ground upon which to stand. We have always held out a brotherly hand and maintained a sympathetic and understanding heart toward those who were honestly seeking to implement that position. We have always maintained that there could be no fellowship and co-

operation with those who were content to stay in the camp of the apostates. . . .

"In this connection it is interesting and significant to cite the conclusions which Dr. Richard Ellsworth Day ascribes to the great 'Breakfast Table Autocrat,' Mr. Henry Parsons Crowell, and which he sets forth in his biography under the above title. Mr. Crowell, the great multi-millionaire breakfast cereal king and a life-long Presbyterian, withdrew from the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. a few years before his death. Dr. Day says that Mr. Crowell feared the battle between modernism and fundamentalism was not being lost because of the modernists, but because of those who 'were tolerant toward those who were tolerant toward unbelievers.'

"We can conceive of no greater statement of the position of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches than this one ascribed to Mr. Crowell. We all know that the modernists left to themselves would be a rather sorry lot. But this army of men who are fundamental and conservative in their own personal views, yet see no reason why they cannot retain their relationship to and co-operation with the apostates make up the very class referred to in Mr. Crowell's biography. According to Dr. Day that which caused Mr. Crowell to doubt ultimate victory was not the *modernist* nor the *conservative who was tolerant of the modernist*; but the *conservative fundamentalist who was tolerant of those who were tolerant of modernists*.

"In other words, Mr. Crowell feared that the battle would be lost unless what some people call 'secondary separation' would also be made a working principle. It may be true that there is an occasional pastor or church in our Fellowship who honestly feels that such co-operation is 'within bounds.' The Association has no ecclesiastical power to forbid such a pastor and church to exercise their own

conscience before God; but let it be understood also that, on the other hand, the Association as such must not be expected to remain silent as to its over-all conviction that co-operation with men and churches who have no notion of separating from the apostasy is out of bounds. There is no justification for stating that there is a 'trend' away from our original position when we remind ourselves occasionally of the great principle of separation from apostasy, and separation unto Christ, which gave us birth" (from "The Position of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches," GARBC Literature Item #6 and October 1953 issue of the *Baptist Bulletin*, 13 and 29, "The 'Trend' of the GARBC").

This review of where the GARBC has historically stood needs to be articulated again today. Such an emphasis might result in a smaller number of churches identifying with the GARBC initially, but the Association would know who it is, what it stands for, and what direction it wishes to go in the days ahead. This emphasis does not indicate any need to be unkind or mean-spirited toward those with whom we differ, but it does mean that we let others know what we believe the Bible teaches about ecclesiastical and personal separation and that we believe these issues are important and foundational to living in obedience to our Lord. Dr. Ketcham, in concluding his Literature Item #6, *The Position of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches On Separation*, said, "Perhaps we could do no better in clarifying this matter than to quote herewith the official statement of the GARBC issued as far back as 1936, and republished in 1943. The statement was headed 'THE ATTITUDE OF THE GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCHES.'

"In all the constant and current battle betwixt the hosts of the Lord and the hosts of darkness, both as it affects the church in

her mission to a lost and dying world, and the presence of apostate ministers in her pulpits, the General Association believes that the clearest and most essential convictions may still be held by all in its fellowship, and at the same time we may exercise consideration of and gracious regard for brethren in Christ who, truly loving the Lord and preaching His Word, are unable to see eye to eye with the separatist policy and program of the Association.

"Let no pastor of a Convention church or any of his people consider that the General Association has an attitude of caustic criticism, bitter antagonism, or of egotistical superiority in pious pride. We are glad where men may lead souls to Christ; we rejoice wherever men may build up the body of Christ in the nurture of the Lord; we rejoice whenever a true missionary who holds to the Gospel of unadulterated grace is sent by any board, Baptist or otherwise, to the field to aid in completing the task of world evangelism and hastening unto the day of the appearing of Christ.

"Frankly, however, we deplore the fact that souls saved under such ministry are led to give to missions and support a general program which in such large portion is unorthodox, un-Biblical and un-Baptistic. We believe the cause of Christ in all of its purity would be greatly profited if all the pastors and churches who in themselves believe and teach the old historic faith would also insist that every dollar of their money and every effort of their co-operative service should be spent to propagate the same Gospel abroad which they believe and cherish at home.

"In spite of those who differ with us, we desire to be constantly patient and courteous, and while unswerving in our loyalty to our convictions, nevertheless, heedful of the Divine injunction to 'be kindly affectionate one to another.'"

PAST LEADERS IN THE GARBC

Throughout the years of the Regular Baptist movement's history several individuals have had significant pastoral and other ministries which benefited the Association.

Some of the men who have been leaders within the GARBC and who are now with the Lord include:

Bryce Augsburger (1922-1988)
Well-known pastor, Bible teacher and educator. He pastored Baptist churches in Indiana, Detroit, Chicago, Denver and Romeoville, Illinois. He served on the GARBC Council of Eighteen; for thirteen years he was President of Denver Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary.

Floyd Davis (1926-1982)
He pastored churches in North Jackson, Ohio; Enid, Oklahoma; Littleton, Colorado; and Shawnee Mission, Kansas. He was the founding director of ABWE-USA (Association of Baptists for World Evangelism) and served for many years as a board member for Faith Baptist Bible College and as a member of the Council of Eighteen of the GARBC.

David Otis Fuller (1903-1988)
Well-known pastor of Wealthy Park (formerly Wealthy Street) Baptist Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan (1934-1974). He led in the founding of what became known as Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary in 1941 and served as an early editor of the *Baptist Bulletin* (1935-1938). He was known for his strong defense of the King James Version of the Bible.

Merle R. Hull (1921-1990)
Executive Editor for Regular Baptist Press and editor of the *Baptist Bulletin* for many years.

Paul R. Jackson (1903-1969)
President of Baptist Bible College, Johnson City, New York, for many years and third National Representative for the GARBC (1960-1969).

Robert T. Ketcham (1889-1978)
Pastored several Baptist churches in the Midwest, served as second National Representative for the GARBC from 1948-1960, and as National Consultant from 1960-1976. He was known as an outspoken separatist leader within the GARBC.

David Nettleton (1918-1993)
Successful pastor of several Baptist churches in Massachusetts, Iowa, New Jersey and Florida. For fifteen years he served as president of Faith Baptist Bible College (1965-1980).

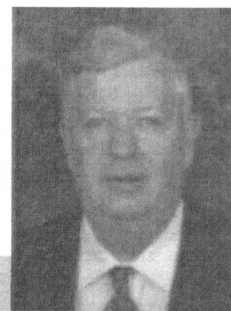
Ernest Pickering (1929-2000)
Outstanding educator, pastor, author and Christian leader among fundamental Baptists. He served as president of Central Baptist Seminary (Minneapolis), Baptist Bible College (Pennsylvania) and

Northwest Baptist Seminary (Washington). His many writings include *The Theology of Evangelism*, *Biblical Separation—The Struggle for a Pure Church*, and *The Tragedy of Compromise*.

Gordon Shipp (1930-1987)
Pastor of several churches, including the historic Belden Avenue Baptist Church in Chicago, where the GARBC was formed. Served as President of Faith Baptist Bible College from 1980-1987.

Paul N. Tassell (1934-2002)
Pastored Bethany Baptist Church in Galesburg, Illinois, Campus Baptist Church in Ames, Iowa; and Grandview Park Baptist Church in Des Moines, Iowa. He also served the GARBC as National Youth Representative and later as National Representative (1979-1994).

H. O. Van Gilder (1897-1987)
A successful pastor, he also served as president of Western Baptist Bible College from 1948-1964, and as the first National Representative of the GARBC (1944-1948).



Dr. George Houghton, Th.D.

Dr. Houghton is the Vice President for Academic Services and Academic Dean for Faith Baptist Bible College and the Adjunct Professor of Historical Theology for Faith Baptist Theological Seminary. He received his B.A. from Bethel College, his B.D. from Central Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, and his Th.M. and Th.D. from Dallas Theological Seminary.