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## The Debate Over Interracial Cooperation Among Black Baptists in the African Mission Movement, 1895-1905

One of the perennial problems facing Afro-Americans since their introduction into the western hemisphere has been that of choosing between integration and separation in their quest for political and economic justice and equity. W.E.B. DuBois's often quoted observation that American blacks have within them two warring souls, one black and one American, is in many ways at the root of any discussion concerning this problem.<sup>1</sup> For, throughout American history blacks have been confronted with the goals, aspirations, and demands attendant to their American presence and those relating to their African or racial heritage. Concisely, should they struggle to become a part of the American system in a manner which relegates their African and Afro-American traditions to a secondary or tertiary consideration? Or, do they commit themselves to a nationalistic, separatist course which accents the peculiarities, strengths, and needs of their race and thus place lesser emphasis upon their American identity?

Historical examples abound to illustrate this tension. The aim of this paper, however, is to consider the issue as it has been dealt with religiously and theologically in the black community. In so doing, I wish to concentrate on the debates and divisions among black Baptists during the period 1895-1905, especially as that tension related to their attempts to Christianize the continent of Africa. Even more specifically, I wish to examine the debate which ensued between those black Baptists who urged cooperation with their white counterparts, represented by those who founded the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention in

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<sup>1</sup> See "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" in W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1903; repr. New York: North American Library, Inc., 1969), pp. 43-53.

1897, and those with whom they broke ranks, members of the National Baptist Convention, because the latter had decided to shy away from cooperative links or agreements of partnership with white Baptists.

It is necessary, however, to provide a brief historical background on black Baptists and their quest to evangelize Africa.<sup>2</sup> From the beginning of active missionary efforts in the U.S. to Christianize Africa, black Baptists lent support to the cause. Only one year after the predominantly white and national Triennial Convention (officially known as General Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions) was established in 1814, a white deacon and two black ministers in Virginia organized the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society. Support for African missions increased among blacks in the Triennial Convention and occasional interest was expressed among those in racially independent or separate denominations. When the Triennial Convention divided into northern and southern groups over the ever-increasingly explosive issue of slavery, black Baptists continued their support for the cause through their respective geographical conventions. After the Civil War blacks maintained their commitment to African missions and began to organize at the state level. By 1880 a significant number of these state conventions, mainly in the south, gave their support to the formation of the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention. Though in practical terms it was a southern body and was organized later than the General Baptist Association of Western States and Territories founded in 1873, it aimed at a national audience and was probably the most successful black convention in African missionary endeavors.

#### *Creation of the Lott Carey Convention*

By 1895, however, it was clear to many black Baptists that they needed a more organized, comprehensive, national convention which would, among other things, more efficiently conduct African missions. Despite this significant move towards national unity, the National Baptist Convention (NBC) within two years made two significant decisions which had the effect of driving many Baptists to form the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention (LCC), a rival group, in 1897. (1) The NBC, for whatever reasons, eliminated all Virginians except one from the foreign mission board of the new organization and transferred the headquarters from Richmond to Louisville, Kentucky. (2) The new convention decided that it would write and publish its own religious liter-

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<sup>2</sup> For a history of black Baptists and African missions, see Sandy D. Martin, "The Growth of Christian Missionary in West Africa among Southeastern Black Baptists, 1880-1915" (Ph.d. diss., Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary, 1981), especially Chapters 1-6.

ature rather than subscribe to materials produced by the northern white American Baptist Publication Society.

Many disenchanted black Baptists had, therefore, several reasons to form a new organization. The treatment of the Virginians, who had clearly been the prime movers of African missions since the early 1800s, certainly created deep wounds. Undoubtedly, there were those who feared that this new national organization, committed to a variety of services, would not be capable of dedicated, efficient work in the area of African evangelism. But the issue of publishing independent, separate Sunday School literature pointed to a question having broader, far reaching implications in a variety of areas of religious work, including African missions: How should black Baptists relate to their white counterparts? Should they seek to establish partnership agreements with the white Baptist denominations to carry out African evangelism even if the terms of such agreements do not always clearly spell out that the arrangements are made between equal partners? Or should blacks pursue an independent course in an effort to maintain and highlight their sense of racial dignity and purpose?

#### *Calvin S. Brown and the LCC Position*

Perhaps no one Baptist better expounded the LCC's position than its president, Calvin S. Brown of North Carolina.<sup>3</sup> Born in Salisbury, North Carolina, the very able Brown served as president of the LCC practically from its inception in 1897 throughout the period under study. Brown also served as the president of the Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of North Carolina and the Waters Normal Institute. A valedictorian graduate of Shaw University in the Tarheel state, Brown also served as pastor for some of the largest and most prosperous churches in North Carolina; editor of the newspaper, *The Good Samaritan*; and editor and founder of the *Baptist Pilot*. The LCC constantly commended his annual addresses before the convention and authorized their publication in the local media. In sum, Brown was a well-versed, articulate, and highly respected clergyman whose ideas could not pass unnoticed by even his fiercest opponents.

Brown and other members of the LCC strongly favored cooperation with whites for moral, theological, and practical reasons.<sup>4</sup> Morally speaking, black Baptists' abrogation of cooperative ventures conveyed, in the

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<sup>3</sup> For a biography of Calvin S. Brown see Albert W. Pegues, *Our Baptist Ministers and Schools* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Wiley & Company, 1892), pp. 95-98.

<sup>4</sup> For a good exposition of Brown's and the LCC's stance on cooperation, see Brown's annual presidential address in the Annual Minutes, LCC, 1900, pp. 8-14. The LCC minutes are located in the archives of the American Baptist Historical Society in Rochester, New York.

minds of the LCC Baptists a sense of ingratitude to white Baptists for the great amount of humanitarian, educational, and religious works that they had done for black Baptists in the post Civil War south. Practically speaking, Brown believed that black Baptists had not reached the point in their development at which they could adequately execute major religious operations without the active, sustained help and guidance of white Baptists. Addressing the LCC convention in 1900, Brown stated:

We are weak, they are strong. We are poor, they are rich. We are ignorant, they are educated. We have no where to lay our heads; they own cattle on a thousand hills. We are a nonentity in politics, but they rule with iron. Destiny has shaped the situation, and I must accept it . . .<sup>5</sup>

In Brown's thinking, another practical consideration which would lend favor to cooperation was the belief that it was only in the arena of religious affairs that blacks and whites could meet on common, amicable, and solid ground. Cooperation between races in religious matters could be used to override human pettiness and to allow human beings to aim for the most noble ideals and practices.<sup>6</sup>

Theologically speaking, black Baptists' refusal to cooperate with white Baptists would be in contradiction to the expressed will of God. Brown and the LCC laid heavy emphasis upon the universal focus of Christianity. For this North Carolinian, race should not count as a valid factor in the life of the church.<sup>7</sup> In terms of foreign missions, the duty to evangelize the world was incumbent upon all Christians. Christians had to avoid hampering their mission by realizing that the whole family of Christians, regardless of their race or geographical location, was one. Scriptures taught no doctrines of racial differences in the pursuit of the work of the church; such things were mere human inventions and accretions to the Gospel message.<sup>8</sup>

Brown in this respect condemned calls for independence and noncooperation with whites as symptoms and expressions of racial prejudice on the part of NBC Baptists. In Brown's opinion, many independent preachers were men of "narrow" attitudes who acted contrary to biblical principles.<sup>9</sup> What was quite upsetting to many independent-minded Baptists in the NBC was the almost insistence on the part of some Lott Carey Baptists that racism did not exist. Brown advocated a course of action that would only be defensible if the church were devoid of racism. He saw no need, in other words, for a particular application of the Gospel to the needs of the race.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Annual Minutes, LCC, 1902, pp. 26-27.

It is not a question of race, it is a question of grace. I am not responsible for my race . . . This race and color business as preached in many of our churches was "born in sin and conceived in iniquity."<sup>10</sup>

Like the Tuskegee educator Booker T. Washington, Brown tended to downplay the significance of political activity by blacks. He adopted the idea that the most proper way to deal with the racial oppression was the spreading of true Christian principles. Men and women would know the duty of loving all people regardless of race and, thus, oppression would come to an end. Similarly, although Brown expressed delight in black business development for the material enrichment and general progress of black people, he did not believe, as did the NBC Baptists, that the black church should act as a means to promote businesses. The first and most important duty of the church was the preaching of the Gospel. Preaching the Gospel and sacrificing for the cause of Christ did not entail ecclesiastical support for black secular enterprises.<sup>11</sup>

For many Baptists in the NBC, Brown and the cooperationists often made a too sharp dichotomy between the secular struggle of blacks and the cause of Christianity. Less diplomatically, NBC members often pictured the LCC Baptists as willing to lower themselves to the level of subserviency and as sacrificing their racial integrity and pride for the monetary support of white Baptists. Comments from Brown like the following served as powerful reinforcements for such a negative viewpoint.

I have made up my mind to help the man who undertakes the job to improve my condition, and I am not going to waste time quarreling over the plan and especially if he proposes to furnish the instrument and the means and require me to furnish simply the subject. He may turn the mill to suit himself if he allows me to hold the sack and catch the meal.<sup>12</sup>

The above description of Brown requires some comment. It appears that he and many leaders of the LCC adopted an attitude of superiority toward the masses of black Baptists. In part this attitude was based upon color. Most of these LCC leaders were mulattoes. In other instances, some took pride in the sense that they were "pure" Africans. Also, many of these Baptists were products of schools founded and supported in the southeast by the white American Baptist Home Mission Society. This fact accounts not only for the sense on their part that they were academically better trained than the "uneducated" black leaders in the independent movement, but it explains their tendency to favor close cooperative arrangements with white Baptists. In short, much of the theological verbiage concerning the Christian virtues of cooperation camouflages a

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<sup>10</sup> Annual Minutes, BEMC-NC, 1903, p. 11. These minutes are found in the archives of the American Baptist Society in Rochester, New York.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Annual Minutes, LCC, 1900, pp. 12-13.

deeper belief on the part of many LCC Baptists that they were superior to their black Baptist counterparts who still required the guiding hands of whites to lift them from their lowly stations.<sup>13</sup>

Circumstances in time, however, caused LCC Baptists to modify their position on cooperation. Political events such as jim crow laws pointed to the need for greater unity among blacks. The tendency of northern white Baptists to subordinate cooperative links with blacks in preference to ties with southern white Baptists convinced many black Baptists, cooperationists and independents, that northern white Baptists were hardening in their attitude toward working with black Baptists.<sup>14</sup> Thirdly, many LCC Baptists undoubtedly realized in time that cooperation with whites discussed in theory was not an easy attainment in reality.

For example, in 1900 the LCC and the white Baptist Missionary Union made plans for their first joint missionary appointments in Africa. Despite the enthusiastic remarks that LCC spokespersons had made in favor of cooperation, correspondence between Henry C. Mabie, the Corresponding Secretary of the Union, and Brown<sup>15</sup> indicates that cooperation between the two bodies materialized with less alacrity and smoothness than one would imagine. It seems that Calvin S. Brown had agreed to a plan of cooperation which granted the Union a decided advantage in the managerial aspects of the proposed arrangement. When he presented the plan to the Executive Board of the LCC, however, the members registered their strong disapproval. Brown in a letter to Mabie commented upon their response.

The brethren understand from the terms sent us that your board is willing to cooperate with us as a subordinate body instead of a coordinate body. This feature does not meet the approval of our board. From the terms sent us, the brethren seem to get the impression that all of our efforts and doings must be submitted for your approval, and at the same time, we shall be expected to assume all responsibility so far as expenses go . . .<sup>16</sup>

It was only after the Union had approved a more equitable arrange-

<sup>13</sup> For an account of the role that the independent-cooperationist debate played in the unification of black Baptist forces in the late nineteenth century see "The Making of a Black Baptist Denomination, 1880-1895," in James Melvin Washington, "The Origins and Emergence of Black Baptist Separatism, 1863-1897" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1979). See especially, pp. 228-29; 239-43.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 226-29 for a discussion of the Fortress Monroe Agreement between the representatives of the Home Mission Society and the SBC.

<sup>15</sup> See Brown's letters to Henry C. Mabie, dated October 13 and November 10, 1900 in the correspondence of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention in the papers of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, Microfilm Number 197 in the American Baptist Historical Society in Rochester, New York. The American Baptist Missionary Union officially took the name American Baptist Foreign Mission Society in 1910.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Brown's letter to Mabie, October 13, 1900, p. 1.

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ment that cooperation between the groups became a reality. This is not surprising given the fact that many members of the LCC board—e.g., Anthony Binga, Jr., Joseph Endom Jones, Richard Spiller, James Holmes, J.W. Kirby, and J.A. Whitted—were among the members of the board of the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention in the 1880s when that body rejected what it considered to be an unequal cooperative plan with the Union.

*NBC and the Cooperation Issue, 1897-1907*

Emmanuel K. Love of Georgia was among those southeastern Baptists who defended the independent principles of the NBC. Born in the vicinity of Marion, Alabama in 1850, Love attended Lincoln University in that city and graduated in 1877 from Augusta Institute in Georgia. Love was a missionary of the Home Mission Society for the entire state of Georgia; pastor of the historic First African Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia; associate editor of the *Georgia Sentinel*; and President of the Foreign Mission Convention.<sup>17</sup>

Love, an active proponent of African missions, rose to defend the NBC's decision to print its own Sunday school literature. Although the comments of Love referred to below are specifically addressed to the issue of religious publication, his rationales for independency reflect the NBC Baptists' views towards cooperation with white Baptists on bases of inequality in all areas, including African missions. In an address delivered in St. Louis, Missouri, in September 1896, Love asserted that he held firm affections for the American Baptist Publication Society. Yet since the majority of the NBC delegates had voted to issue separate literature, he would support both the NBC and the black race. But it was more than simply a sense of denominational and racial loyalty which motivated this Georgia Baptist in his thinking. Love could think of no compelling reason why black Baptists should forego producing their own religious literature. It was natural and "fair," he maintained, that a people would desire to control certain institutions for themselves.<sup>18</sup>

NBC spokespersons could not allow their belief in the universal demands of the Christian faith (in terms of evangelization and religious practice) to obscure the concrete reality of racism on the part of many whites. Blacks might be ever ready to associate and work with whites on an equal footing, disregarding color and race. But in whatever walks of life the races met, NBC leaders contended, black people encountered dis-

<sup>17</sup> For a biography of Love, see Pegues, *Our Baptist Ministers and Schools*, pp. 319-21.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis Garnett Jordan, *Negro Baptist History, U.S.A., 1759-1930*. (Nashville: The Sunday School Publishing Board, National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., 1936), p. 124.

crimination and second class treatment.<sup>19</sup>

Love claimed that independent black institutions allowed his people to reach certain potentials which would elude them in a white controlled institution. Reminiscent of arguments advanced by the Foreign Mission Convention when it rejected cooperation with the Union in the mid-1880s, NBC leaders asserted that there were certain necessary qualities that black people had to develop for themselves. According to Love, the willingness of any people to do for themselves gained the attention and admiration of others.<sup>20</sup>

But the national Baptists did not adhere to a policy of racial prejudices as some LCC Baptists claimed. During these years of NBC-LCC separation, NBC Baptists remained open to cooperative overtures from white Baptists when those proposals were established on bases of equality. Additionally, they made concrete steps to manifest their adherence to the concept of the universalism of the Christian faith. For example, the NBC Foreign Mission Board as early as 1899 noted that black missionaries had never been sent by white denominations to any foreign lands but Africa. Also, the board stated that many whites taught immigrants to regard black people as inferior beings. Consequently, these people were rendered inaccessible to the NBC's evangelical activities. Nevertheless, the board stated that the Christian teaching of love for all human beings compelled all Christians to do some service for the salvation of all people. Thus, the board urged the convention to contribute on a yearly basis to the white Baptist denominations, the Baptist Missionary Union and the Southern Baptist Convention, and for foreign mission work in countries where the NBC did not operate mission stations.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Conflicts at the State Level, 1897-1905*

The separation of the NBC and the LCC over the issue of cooperation had a profound effect upon the movement for missions on the state level and between individuals. In the southeast the conflict was most severe in the states of North Carolina and Virginia where forces vigorously contended among themselves for either the support of the NBC or the LCC as the most viable instruments to carry out African missions. Perhaps the more dramatic split of the two states happened among the black Baptists of the Old Dominion. The conflicts which set the stage for the final division of the Virginia Baptist State Convention (VBSC) in 1899 involved some of the most prominent of the African mission supporters in

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. Also, see Sandy Dwayne Martin, "The Baptist Foreign Mission Convention, 1880-1894" in *Baptist History and Heritage*, (October 1981): 13-25.

<sup>21</sup> Annual Minutes, NBC, 1899, pp. 27-28.



Virginia.

A situation involving a former missionary illustrates this conflict. Lucy A. Coles served along with her husband (J.J. Coles) as a missionary to Liberia in the late 1880s and early 1890s under the auspices of the Foreign Mission Convention. The October 22, 1898 issue of *The Richmond Planet*<sup>22</sup> carried a letter to the editor written by Mrs. Coles which described a conflict between her and the prominent African mission supporter and Richmond pastor, Z.D. Lewis. Lewis, moderator of the Richmond's Ministers' Conference, had recently opposed an effort by Mrs. Coles to enlist the support of the conference in collecting funds for the erection of a mission building in Liberia in honor of her late husband. According to Coles, Lewis delivered a "fiery speech" in which he claimed that the enterprise fostered by Coles was an attempt by the NBC to gain the support of the conference by clandestine methods. Most of the ministers were absent from the conference.

Coles noted that other prominent Baptist leaders as well as laypersons in the state had promised their cooperation in the project. She accused Lewis of being unable to cope with the fact that the NBC had moved the foreign mission headquarters from Richmond to Louisville and had also displaced his membership on the board before he could make any contributions to the evangelization of Africa. Other former members of the Executive Board of the Foreign Mission Convention had accepted this turn of events with "dignity," but the same could not be said of Lewis.

Coles defended the fiscal record of the NBC. The former missionary asserted that Lewis lacked an adequate grasp of the foreign mission business affairs of the NBC, the Foreign Mission Convention, or the LCC. True, as Lewis had claimed, the NBC owed a debt of \$600 to the missionaries presently in the field in Africa. But Mrs. Coles noted that her recollection of African mission work of the late 1880s and early 1890s (when "Mr. Lewis was then only a school-boy . . .") was very vivid. During this time the Foreign Mission Convention had only two missionaries in the field, Mr. and Mrs. Coles, but owed them a debt of \$1,000. In comparison, the veteran missionary wrote, the present NBC indebtedness of \$600 in the support of fourteen missionaries represented a very paltry sum.<sup>23</sup>

If such debates had centered solely on the points at issue perhaps the breach between independents and cooperationists would not have widened so greatly. Such was not the case, however. Coles, justified or not, continued her attacks upon Lewis' character. She described Lewis as possessing a "continual fault finding distasteful and meddlesome disposi-

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<sup>22</sup> For Lucy A. Coles' account of her conflict with Z.D. Lewis, see *The Richmond Planet*, Richmond, Virginia, October 22, 1898, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

tion." In Coles's reckoning, Lewis was "by nature one-sided and not responsible for much he does." Coles further asserted that he had been hypocritical in his dealings with the NBC African missionary stationed in South Africa, R.L. Stewart.<sup>24</sup> I have been unable so far to locate material dealing with Lewis's view of the incident.

The battle, personality- and issue-wise, involved other prominent black Virginia Baptists and finally rent the Virginia Convention in 1899. The cooperationists (and supporters of the LCC) found themselves outnumbered at the 1899 session held at Lexington, Virginia.<sup>25</sup> The independents took advantage of their numerical majority and dissolved all cooperative arrangements between the white Baptists of the north and south, including the white General Association of Virginia.

The dissidents refused to surrender to this new situation. Five months after the Lexington Convention, in October 1899, the cooperationists gathered and formed a separate black Baptist state organization, the General Association of Virginia (GAV). The arguments between the two groups practically mirrored those of the larger bodies, the LCC and NBC Baptists. But the charges of personal misconduct were much more pointed. For one thing, the GAV accused the members of the regular state convention of dominating the session and employing "trickery and political methods of bygone days." Furthermore, the Virginia Baptist State Convention, the GAV Baptists claimed, had not been representative of its former constituency.<sup>26</sup>

North Carolina, another member state of the LCC, was able to avoid outright schism until 1903. The state minutes of this year show C.S. Brown (also president of this convention) as surprised and distressed over actions taken by Baptists in the eastern portion of the state to form their own convention. He recalled that through many years and struggles the North Carolina Baptists' "fears, hopes and aim have been one." He wished to avoid a disruption of this Baptist unity over "imaginary differences," a division which "would be a calamity of disastrous consequences." So concerned was Brown with the new movement that he had personally gone to the supporters of the new organization in an effort to halt the division.<sup>27</sup>

#### *Reunion, 1905*

Despite the sharp acrimony, neither the NBC nor the LCC ever com-

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Minutes, Founding Session, General (Baptist) Association of Virginia (Black), 1899, especially pp. 5-7. These minutes are located in the archives of the American Baptist Historical Society in Rochester, New York.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Annual Minutes, BEMC-NC, 1903, pp. 11-12.

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pletely ruled out some form of reunion. First, there was a general feeling, in both groups, that unity should exist among blacks. In an obvious reference to the deteriorating political situation of blacks in the south, Brown, for example, in 1903 spoke in broad terms about certain secular events that had increased the necessity of blacks to achieve as much unity among themselves as possible.<sup>28</sup> Secondly, there was undoubtedly a powerful interest in attaining some form of denominational unity among Baptists in both groups since some Baptists in each organization as former members of the Foreign Mission Convention had advocated and worked for such a goal. Besides a sense of fellowship, the financial problems of both groups served to heighten interest in a reconciliation of the two groups. The NBC found that it suffered from the lack of generous contributions of the Baptists in the LCC, especially those of Virginia. Similarly, the LCC probably realized that it had unintentionally exaggerated monetary and other perceived benefits which were to flow from cooperation with white Baptists.

Once rhetoric was lowered and an increased understanding (if not approving viewpoint) of the other's positions surfaced, progress toward reconciliation moved with greater alacrity. The Lott Carey Baptists refused to dissolve their organization and thus allow themselves to be completely absorbed within the NBC. Instead the two groups agreed that the LCC would maintain a coordinate existence as a district foreign mission group within the NBC. In that regard, the LCC retained the right to enter cooperative arrangement with any other Baptist group. The LCC secured the pledge of the NBC that the convention-at-large would be open to cooperative possibilities with other Baptists, white and black,<sup>29</sup> and that local congregations would retain the right to select their own Sunday school literature.<sup>30</sup> For its own part, the NBC, while granting recognition of a degree of organizational jurisdiction to the work of the LCC, exerted overall authority over the Foreign Mission Board and the work of foreign missions. The National Baptists perhaps also delighted, if only secretly, in the observation of LCC Baptists that the benefits of cooperation with white Baptists did not preclude the necessity of racial unity and solidarity.

Yet this new relationship effected in 1905 was short-lived. In 1915 a controversy over the ownership of the Publishing House split the NBC into two rival conventions: the NBC-Incorporated, and the new group, the NBC-Unincorporated. After years of negotiation, the NBC-Unincorporated and the LCC settled on an agreement whereby the latter group would conduct foreign missions for the Unincorporated Baptists. Not-

<sup>28</sup> *National Baptist Union-Review* 5 (October 7, 1903): 11.

<sup>29</sup> Annual Minutes, LCC, 1903, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> *National Baptist Union-Review* 5 (October 7, 1903): 11.

withstanding the LCC's legal prerogative under the LCC-NBC accord to establish such links with other Baptist organizations, this alliance with the rival Unincorporated group spelled doom for the LCC's continued relationship with the Incorporated Baptists.<sup>31</sup> Since 1924 the NBC-Incorporated and the LCC have followed separate paths.

### *Conclusion*

The unity of black Baptist forces which Afro-American Baptists within and without the Foreign Mission Convention had sought for years finally materialized in 1895 with the establishment of the NBC. But the decisions of the NBC to reorganize and to transfer the Foreign Mission Board and to cease subscription of Sunday school literature from the white Publication Society caused many Baptists of the southeast to desert the organization. Concern for racial and denominational unity, however, brought Baptists of North Carolina, Virginia, and other members of the LCC into a short-lived coordinate relationship (not a merger) with the NBC in 1905.

The cooperationist controversy among black Baptists in the 1895-1905 period illustrates the two souls which war in the body of black American Christians. On one hand, like the cooperationists, black Christians respect a long standing tradition which mirrors a fundamental Christian maxim: all persons redeemed by Christ should dwell together in unity. The Saviour shatters the walls of partition between different races, social classes, and genders. If it is true that the Christian religion, as Roger Schmidt points out in chapter three of his text *Exploring Religion*, is a "universal" religion which speaks to ubiquitous, existential needs of humanity wherever they are found,<sup>32</sup> then it should be a powerful force creating *one* people.

But what is true theologically is sometimes at variance with sociological reality. Men and women do differ in ways which are not—sociologically—eradicated by religious faith and devotion. Specifically, racism is a lie which maintains that people are divided into camps of superiors and inferiors, a division in the minds of the chauvinists which far from being eradicated by the Christian faith is often reaffirmed and strengthened by their interpretation of it. Thus, black Christians are faced with a dilemma. Should they prioritize too greatly the need for racial equity, they run the risk of ignoring or contradicting the Christian virtues of universal love and cooperation. On the other hand,

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<sup>31</sup> Leroy Fitts, *Lott Carey: First Black Missionary to Africa* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1978), pp. 97-98.

<sup>32</sup> Roger Schmidt, *Exploring Religion* (Belmont, California: Wadworth, Inc., 1980). See especially pp. 59-60.

should they seek to ignore an emphasis on racial justice and equity in favor of Christian universalism, they court the danger of ignoring concrete, material, even psychological needs of a powerless, unjustly treated people, making religion in many ways other worldly, over compensatory, an opiate, and useless in the quest for the full empowerment of a people. This paper has not sought to provide an answer to this dilemma, only to demonstrate its perennial presence in the history and religious consciousness of Afro-Americans.

Robot v. ...