

Published in *The History Of Higher Education Annual 2003-2004* , Volume 23. Roger L. Geiger, Ed. The Pennsylvania State University and Transaction Publishers, 2005.

In Pursuit Of Excellence:
Desegregation And Southern Baptist Politics At Furman University

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Among southern colleges and universities over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, desegregation became a litmus test for an institution's commitment to progress. At Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, desegregation was but one aspect of a clearly articulated campaign to achieve "academic excellence by national standards." Adherents to this vision confronted hostility from the university's denominational affiliate and parent institution, the South Carolina Baptist Convention; this conflict reflected an increasing ideological disparity between the university and convention. From November 1963 to December 1964, the ensuing desegregation debate purged conflicting values and forced a reevaluation of the university's institutional identity. Furman defied the convention and implemented token desegregation in January 1965. Resentment of convention governance grew among other southern Baptist affiliated colleges and universities over the next several decades as well. Throughout the 1990s, many of the Southern Baptist Convention's preeminent academic institutions, including Furman, accepted the fundamental nature of these conflicts and severed all relations. Southern Baptist ideology ultimately proved fundamentally irreconcilable with institutions seeking national prominence.

From a prison cell in Birmingham in April 1963, Martin Luther King wrote a letter in which he appealed to the white churchgoing people of the South, the so called "white moderates," or, perhaps more appropriately, those King thought ought to feel a moral imperative to support the civil rights movement.¹ As President of the Southern Christian Leadership Council, King believed that white churchgoers, whom he labeled the white moderates, must lead white southerners in support of the movement's aims. He expressed his disappointment regarding their lack of support, and noted that he had "almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride towards freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice. . . ."²

Many southern white religious leaders, however, were uncomfortable with King's insistent pleas for support; the religious right was particularly opposed. In his book *Southern Civil Religions in Conflict: Civil Rights and the Culture Wars*, Andrew Manis writes, "From Richard Furman's defense of slavery and the Lost Cause evangelism . . . to the mid-century segregationists, preachers have sought to give divine sanction to the southern social order and maintain its socially constructed world."³ Having been heavily indoctrinated into a society that viewed African Americans as inferior, many southern white churchgoers thus feared the increasingly assertive rhetoric of the civil rights movement.

Token desegregation of southern, predominantly white denominationally-affiliated colleges and universities forced the white churchgoing people of the South to confront changes introduced by the civil rights movement; the desegregation of Southern Baptist affiliated colleges and universities forced a reevaluation of institutional identity and, in the case of Richard Furman's namesake, Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, ironically furthered the increasingly disparate ideologies espoused by the university and its Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) state affiliate, the South Carolina Baptist Convention (SCBC).⁴

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) attorneys strategically instigated suits against state-supported universities in the southern states. Court-ordered desegregation became the primary means of desegregating the South's public universities. Until the 1964 Civil Rights Act, however, private institutions could, with few exceptions, avoid such changes if they so wished. State-supported institutions thus tended to desegregate earlier than the majority of the South's private institutions. For various reasons, however, some private and denominationally-affiliated colleges and universities hastened to implement desegregation before the 1964 Civil Rights Act financially forced most institutions to do so.⁵ Denominationally-affiliated institutions that desegregated before and after the congressional mandate confronted concerns and even opposition within their respective denominational affiliates. Largely because of the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, the few colleges and universities in the South that were associated with the Catholic Church tended to be somewhat progressive in their efforts to desegregate.⁶ State Methodist and Presbyterian bodies usually issued an official statement of support, articulating their trust and faith in the actions of an institution's board of trustees; behind these formal endorsements, however, often lay unresolved tensions.⁷ Southern Baptist affiliated institutions faced not only a lack of support but often outright opposition to the implementation of such change.⁸ Consequently, desegregation often contributed to existing tensions and thus forced some Southern Baptist affiliated universities to reexamine their value systems, goals, and, eventually, their long relationships with state denominational bodies. By the late 1990s, at institutions such as Wake Forest (N.C.), Furman (S.C.), Stetson (Fla.), Meredith (N.C.), and the University of Richmond (Va.), these increasingly tenuous relationships ceased to exist.

The desegregation of predominantly white denominationally-affiliated colleges and universities is a story of educational politics, of clashes between student activism and student conservatism, of the relationship between the federal government and denominationally-affiliated higher education, and between the state's religious bodies and their affiliated institutions. For many colleges and universities, it is also the story of how race became a litmus test of progress. Colleges and universities who implemented, or attempted to implement desegregation before the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act often viewed desegregation as a condition necessary for and indicative of a commitment to institutional progress. At Furman, desegregation was but one aspect of a clearly articulated campaign by President Gordon Blackwell to achieve "academic excellence by national standards." Racial issues purged underlying issues and tensions and thus provided an impetus for intense discussion of the university's identity. The university had become increasingly secular, and no longer derived the majority of students from the SCBC; by the early-1960s Furman had outgrown the purposes for which she had been founded.

The desegregation debate at Furman University was a widely publicized and controversial story involving the SCBC and the students, faculty, administrators, supporters, and trustees of Furman University. The story, which sporadically occupied newspapers across the

state for almost one year and a half, resulted in the matriculation of Joseph Vaughn into the university in January 1965. Motivated by an ideological commitment to institutional distinction that viewed segregation as an impediment to their vision, the Furman community welcomed the decision after nearly thirteen months of uncertainty created by segregationists within the SCBC.

Furman was not the first college or university in South Carolina, state-supported or private, to desegregate; the university did not begin the implementation process until 1963. The significance of Furman's history lies in the way in which the university community approached desegregation as a necessary aspect of a strategic plan to achieve academic prominence. Excepting the 1968 Orangeburg Massacre, South Carolina's history of race relations and higher education and specifically desegregation is less dramatic than other deep South states.⁹ No one threw bricks into dorm room windows as did mobs at the University of Georgia when Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes arrived on campus in January 1961; no federal marshals were required to calm the violent mobs as they were at the University of Mississippi on September 30, 1962; and no governor stood in the doorway to prevent desegregation as Alabama Governor George Wallace did at the University of Alabama in June 1963. South Carolina's colleges and universities implemented desegregation with relatively little commotion. In 1962, Our Lady of Mercy Junior College in Charleston, South Carolina quietly admitted ten African American students into its student body. Supported by a court order, Harvey Gantt matriculated at Clemson College on January 28, 1963. Certainly, Gantt's entrance into Clemson attracted the most national media attention. Reporters present, however, described it as a "non-event."¹⁰ After the lengthy court battle that resulted in Gantt's admittance, the state government maintained its policy of massive resistance by obstructing desegregation at the University of South Carolina; a judge ultimately ordered the university to admit Henrie Montieth and two others into the university in September 1963. Later that fall, Furman University laid the foundation for desegregation, only to have their efforts delayed by the SCBC. In the spring of 1964, President Charles Marsh of Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina, announced its newly passed desegregated admissions policy; Wofford integrated when Albert Gray began his studies in the fall of that year, while Furman and the SCBC debated the desegregation question. Furthering the dynamic nature of higher education and race relations in the upstate, Bob Jones University (BJU), located about five miles from Furman's campus and about thirty miles from Wofford, maintained the attention of national media as it both defended itself against the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and sued the Internal Revenue Service throughout the 1970s and 1980s.¹¹

Racial desegregation of Furman University was a necessary component of a deliberate campaign by Furman administrators to seek "academic excellence by national standards."¹² At various stages throughout the desegregation process, state-supported and private institutions across the South appealed to the morals and pragmatism of their supporters. Beyond this, however, Furman administrators strategically and successfully appealed to the Furman community's vision of a nationally esteemed liberal arts college.

FURMAN UNIVERSITY: ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

Furman University was established by the SCBC as an "academy-seminary," named for noted Baptist leader Richard Furman after his death in 1825. It served as a regional institution for white Baptist education throughout the 1800s. In 1845, the split between northern and southern

Baptists resulted in the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), and for many years Furman served as the training ground for the denomination's white ministry. In 1859, the SBC formally established the Southern Baptist Seminary in Greenville. During the Civil War, the all-male student body fought for the Confederacy. The Greenville Baptist Female College (f. 1854), which later changed its name to Greenville Woman's College and merged with Furman University, remained open, and was instrumental in assisting in the reconstruction of the university after the war's end.¹³ In 1877, the SBC Seminary moved to Louisville, Kentucky, and soon thereafter disagreements grew between Furman and the SBC.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Furman grew slightly more independent from the SBC, and began to test the SBC's power in what would become the first of many conflicts. In the early 1870s, when most southern institutions were highly skeptical of the new biblical scholarship, Furman hired an Old Testament scholar, Crawford H. Toy, who had recently returned from Europe where he had studied the latest historical-critical methods of Biblical study. Toy spent one year on the Furman faculty, transferred to a faculty position in the seminary, and moved to Louisville when the seminary changed locations.¹⁴ In his years at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, he was, according to former Furman University Professor of Religion Jeffrey Rogers, "considered the 'pearl' of the faculty." In the late 1870s, a dispute arose over his, as Rogers states, "doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture not because he didn't have one, mind you, but because he developed one that was consistent with his historical-critical investigation of the nature and origin of the Bible." The Seminary fired Toy and he accepted a position at Harvard University, where he became one of the most "respected and influential pioneers of American critical Old Testament scholarship." Although the denomination shunned Toy, Furman audaciously offered, before he assumed his position at Harvard, a professorship and the presidency of the university. Clearly, an ideological gulf existed as early as the late nineteenth century.

By the early 1900s, Furman University had become much more than a Baptist institution, and in the 1920s, Furman began to promote its image as an academic institution situated within a Christian environment. In 1925, the Scopes trial that posited Christian beliefs against the theory of evolution garnered national attention. In contrast to the religious fervor that many brought to the debate, David Ramsey, president of the Greenville Woman's College, suggested that religion and science are not irreconcilable, and that "it seems to me that we should get better results if we allowed both religion and science to pursue the even tenor of their ways in an earnest and relevant search for truth." At the meeting of the Baptist Assembly at Furman in the summer of 1925, Furman President William J. McGlothlin echoed similar thoughts and assurances.¹⁵ In 1939, the SCBC and administrators of Furman University and the Greenville Woman's College cemented the close relationship between the institutions when Furman assumed administrative and financial control of the College.¹⁶ At mid-century, Furman University had 1200 students and remained under the direction of the SCBC. In 1961, Furman built a new campus north of the city, and, for the first time in its history, became a fully coeducational university.

FURMAN UNIVERSITY: CAMPUS ATTITUDES TOWARDS CIVIL RIGHTS

As early as January 1950, Furman President John L. Plyler was an active surveyor of the changes occurring in race relations, often contacting university presses and the Carnegie Foundation with requests for written material about discrimination and private colleges.¹⁷ Plyler wanted Furman to be a place of academic freedom and, in his efforts to improve the quality of

instruction, recruited professors from respected graduate programs who exhibited progressive social ideals.¹⁸ Plyler was careful to maintain a subtle approach, however. The next month, when the Southern Conference Educational Fund contacted President Plyler and asked him to join others in sponsoring a Southwide Conference on Discrimination in Higher Education in April 1950, Plyler politely declined.¹⁹

Five years later a small but influential group of students created a community and statewide controversy when they publicly opposed racial segregation in *The Echo*, a university newspaper. In May 1955, student editor Joan Lipscomb's article "No Way Back" supported the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Lipscomb disagreed with the lack of respect with which southern politicians had responded to this ruling and emphasized the inconsistencies between the opinions of Baptist students and the Baptist Convention. She wrote of the Supreme Court ruling as "a fact which all the emotionalism of Southern politicians cannot alter with their oratorical eloquence." She encouraged leaders to "lead the way, not backward, by adding to already existing prejudice, but forwards by promoting a program of adjustment to the situation as it stands."²⁰ She noted the success of the integrated annual convention of the South Carolina Baptist Student Union (BSU), an organization to which significant numbers of Furman students belonged. Lipscomb quoted a convention delegate: "The spirit of the group was wonderful. Democracy prevailed, and Negroes were elected to top positions in the regional group."²¹ This issue of *The Echo* also included an article by Charles King, "Perversion of the Baptist Heritage," that criticized the SCBC's approach to race relations.

Thus, while the majority of white South Carolinians supported delaying tactics to avoid implementation of *Brown*, a group of students at Furman University inadvertently furthered student opposition to the conservative SCBC. Because of disputes between student opinion and the Baptist Convention regarding race, dormitory visitation hours, on-campus dancing, and a fraternity system, Furman administrators were hesitant to provoke the convention. Vice President Frank Bonner and a faculty committee examined *The Echo* at the printers and, deciding that the antagonistic articles would exacerbate relations between the university and convention, ordered the destruction of all 1,500 copies. In response, King submitted proofs of the articles to *The Greenville News Piedmont*, which printed excerpts from the articles and a story on the incident in the next morning's newspaper. A report of the incident also appeared in an article several months later in the *Journal of Negro Education*. When questioned about the event, Furman officials replied, "No comment."²² Largely because of previous unhappiness with the convention's limitations on student behavior, Furman students rallied behind the student editors and effectively created a campus atmosphere that furthered student resentment of interference from the SCBC.

In the late 1950s, Furman University decided to channel its energy over the next few years into a campaign to improve Furman's national reputation. Soon after the newspaper incident, Furman faculty and administrators grew increasingly frustrated with the SCBC's limitations, which curtailed their efforts to elevate Furman from a regionally recognized institution into a nationally esteemed liberal arts university. Most frustrating to the faculty was the Statement of Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure that contained a limitations clause in the terms and conditions of the contract for employment at Furman University. Passed in 1940, this clause required that professors "avoid making or approving any statements which run counter to the historic faith or present work of Baptists," and that employees of Furman lead a Christian lifestyle that advanced the aims of the denomination. By the late 1950s, Furman administrators became increasingly anxious about the effects that such a limitation on academic

freedom was having on faculty morale and the university's ability to recruit professors.²³ Just as Furman students rallied together behind The Echo incident, Furman faculty and administrators rallied together against the convention's censorship and in support of progress and academic excellence.

The results of The Echo incident and the convention's attempts to regulate intellectual freedom had immediate and long-lasting influences that contributed to student and faculty support for Furman and its policies, especially those that generated opposition from the convention. Student and faculty critics of the convention's limitations on free speech and extreme caution in regard to social progress articulated ideals of freedom and growth and would greatly contribute to the future success of Furman University.

The decision to elevate Furman's status included the recruitment of students from outside the southern United States, an emphasis on academic freedom, a campaign to increase the university's endowment, and the founding of a Phi Beta Kappa chapter on campus. Since 1924, Furman had applied for a chapter during the organization's evaluation of schools every three years, and was repeatedly denied. Each time the university applied throughout the 1950's, the governing committee of Phi Beta Kappa informed Furman that the high percentages of students majoring in home economics, the low percentage of faculty with doctoral degrees, and continued segregation reduced Furman's chances of approval. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the implementation of Phi Beta Kappa was chief among the administration's goals for elevating Furman's national reputation.²⁴

Throughout the early 1960s, the Furman University Advisory Council was another important element of Furman's campaign towards progress, and a reflection of the growing divide between the university and the SCBC. Established in 1960, the Advisory Council's purpose was to suggest ways to advance Furman's programs, facilities, and policies, thus enabling Furman to be placed on a par with nationally recognized liberal arts colleges and universities. Although the council had no official power, its recommendations for improvement fundamentally altered the future of the university. In reaction to increased hostility from the SCBC and its obstacles to growth, Furman administrators recruited influential men and women from across the country without regard for their denominational views to serve on the council. As more and more institutions across the nation and especially the South, including Clemson College and the University of South Carolina, admitted African American students, the Advisory Council, void of any affiliation with the convention, emphasized the necessity of desegregation if Furman hoped to realize its full potential for growth and recognition.

Student and faculty opinion continued to be more progressive than mainstream political sentiment in South Carolina, and certainly more progressive than most members of the SCBC. In December 1961, student members of the Baptist Student Union passed by a vote of 117-25 a resolution to "suggest that the Trustees of the institutions of our convention give careful study to this responsibility to open the door of knowledge and service to all students, regardless of race or creed." Students also adopted a resolution that was in direct contrast to a resolution taken at the November 1961 annual SCBC meeting. The resolution stated that, "We, the Baptist Student Union of the South Carolina Baptist institutions of higher learning . . . should accept all qualified applicants regardless of race."²⁵ Across the state, newspaper headlines publicized the students' act with headlines that read: "S.C. Baptist Student Vote in Favor of Integration" and "SC Baptist Students Ask Study of De-Segregation."²⁶ Faculty support for desegregation coincided with student sentiment. In a poll taken in 1961, soon after the BSU vote, almost ninety percent of faculty members polled supported a non-racially discriminatory admissions policy.²⁷ Another

article in *The Paladin* warned students of future relations with the SCBC: “The battle . . . is just beginning, and the struggle for power over this university, which now straddles the two worlds of a narrow, denominational school and a leading educational institution, will be bitterly fought.”²⁸

DESEGREGATION: A NECESSARY CONDITION

Meanwhile, across town, Joseph Vaughn, a native of Greenville raised in an impoverished neighborhood by his single mother, served as the president of the student body at Sterling High School, Greenville’s African American high school.²⁹ In the early 1960s, Sterling High students participated in protests that succeeded in desegregating the city’s airport, main library, skating rink, and lunch counters.³⁰ Joe Vaughn came to Furman from a socially and politically active and organized environment. The influence of these events on Vaughn taught him that people, especially young people such as himself, could effectively promote change

In their attempts to lay a foundation for students such as Joe Vaughn, Furman trustees, aware of the opposition the convention had posted to past university attempts to progress, questioned the power relationship of the Board of Trustees to the convention. Alester Furman Jr., a member of the Board of Trustees and grandson of Richard Furman, wrote United States Circuit Judge and Furman supporter Clement F. Haynsworth Jr. and inquired as to the legal constructs of this relationship. In May 1962, after examining Furman’s charter, Haynsworth noted, in his ten-page analysis,

it is apparent that all governmental powers are vested exclusively in the Board of Trustees and the Convention has no legal right or power to issue directions to the Trustees affecting their managerial authority. It is further apparent that the Convention has the right to elect successor trustees, but it has neither the right nor the power to remove duly elected trustees or to vacate the offices of elected trustees.³¹

Although Furman did not pass a racially non-discriminatory admission policy for another year and a half, its administrators and trustees were aware of the opposition that desegregation would generate from the convention and wanted to be knowledgeable as to the legal relationship between the two before acting.

Throughout the early to mid 1960s, Furman administrators, the Board of Trustees, and the Advisory Council officially focused their energies on molding Furman into an institution that could compete with other liberal arts universities across the nation. Furman constantly evaluated its standing among other institutions, specifically southern colleges and universities and other Baptist institutions. In early 1963, Furman hosted a meeting of administrators from institutions with ties to the Southern Baptist Convention. Academic freedom and desegregation were primary concerns among administrators. The limitations on academic freedom were increasingly becoming problematic for institutions that aimed to recruit talented students and professors. On May 10, 1963, one administrator remarked at the Southern Baptist Convention’s Education Commission that these limitations by Baptists presented “a mortal enemy to learning.” He emphasized that southern Baptist colleges and universities could lose their accreditation if nothing was done to abolish these limitations.³² Additionally, Furman administrators realized that Furman’s segregated status lagged behind other institutions in the Southern Baptist

Convention, including Mercer University in Georgia, Wake Forest University and Meredith College in North Carolina, Stetson University in Florida, and Oklahoma Baptist University.

Other colleges and universities affiliated with their state's respective Baptist Conventions had already taken steps within their respective state conventions to operate under non-racially discriminatory admissions policies. Trustees at Wake Forest University, affiliated with the North Carolina Baptist Convention, voted on April 27, 1962 to open its doors to students of all races.³³ At Stetson University, an institution of the Florida Baptist Convention, President J. Ollie Edmunds quietly chose a transfer student, Cornelius Hunter, to desegregate the school in the fall of 1962.³⁴ Mercer University had emerged only weeks prior to this meeting from a heated battle over the admission of Sam Jerry Oni, a young man from Ghana who had been christianized by missionaries from the Georgia Baptist Convention and wanted to study at Mercer in hopes of returning to preach in his native country. The debates among Georgia Baptists, as Oni noted in 1994, forced "our Southern Baptist brothers and sisters in America to confront gross contradictions in their Christian witness at home and abroad." On April 18, 1963, Mercer's Board of Trustees voted to drop its racial barriers.³⁵ Oni desegregated the college in the fall of 1963. Oni lived on campus, while two other African-American students, Cecil Dewberry and Bennie Stephens, attended as day students.³⁶

From observations of Mercer's experience and from the discussions that arose at the conference, Furman administrators were convinced that prestige and nationally competitive standards of scholarship were simply impossible if the university continued to abide by SCBC policies. Furman had little choice but to challenge the convention's convictions. Months after Clemson University and weeks after the University of South Carolina admitted African Americans, both by court order, Furman trustees passed a racially non-discriminatory admissions policy on October 8, 1963. Although many trustees were somewhat reluctant, only one member dissented from supporting Dr. Bonner and President John Plyler's decision, which favored desegregation on the basis that it was in Furman's best interests.³⁷ The Advisory Council overwhelmingly supported the decision, although one member, a southerner and former president of the American Bar Association, slammed his fists on the table and declared that the day that Furman admitted an African American student was the day that he ended all associations with the university.³⁸ Nevertheless, Furman University had achieved a momentous step in its history.³⁹

Days after the trustees' vote on the admissions policy, an editorial from a prominent white South Carolinian encouraged support for Furman and applauded its initiative. On October 11, 1963, Wayne Freeman, editor of *The Greenville News* and, more importantly, a member of State Senator Marion L. Gresette's Segregation Committee, the primary vehicle for massive resistance in the state, wrote "Wisdom Seen in Decision of Trustees." He saw Furman's voluntary acquiescence as a "smart move" designed "to meet a situation that is almost inevitable."⁴⁰ By accepting a policy of desegregation before it was forced upon them, he said, Furman administrators and the Board of Trustees took control of the situation and were thus able to desegregate according to their own timetable. Many white South Carolinians, especially those at Furman, respected its proactive, rather than reactive stance towards this inevitable occurrence.⁴¹

FURMAN AND THE SCBC: A YEAR OF CONTENTION

Upon hearing the news of the Board of Trustees' intentions, the SCBC was shocked and

troubled by Furman's abrupt display of independence. As a preventive measure, Alester G. Furman Jr. wrote to Dr. Horace Hammett, General Secretary-Treasurer of the SCBC, explaining the decision of the Board of Trustees was not based upon "liberalism" but a mission in line with orthodox Christianity. Furman encouraged Hammett to use his "great influence to undergird the great world missionary program by proper action as to our denominational colleges in the convention."⁴² Nevertheless, at their 1963 annual meeting in Charleston, the convention voted to ask board members to delay implementation for one year so the convention's General Board could study the issue.⁴³ Eager to move forward but reluctant to disturb relations with the convention further, Furman administrators acquiesced to the waiting period.

Furman students immediately and angrily reacted to the convention's delay tactics. In the October 26, 1963, issue of *The Paladin*, one article recounted the convention's reaction and another called on Furman students to "Support Our Trustees."⁴⁴ In this article, one Furman student wrote,

Judging from past action of the Convention, the Furman trustees' resolution will be raked over coals. The final result of the vote is about as unpredictable as the campus weather.... Furman's continuing progress in the academic world should not be curtailed for the sake of other Baptist institutions which don't have as much foresight as Furman.

Two weeks later, a student poll revealed that Furman students supported the admissions policy four to one. Showing a disregard for convention opposition, 214 of the 365 students polled answered that the policy should be implemented immediately.

Although tensions had long existed between Furman administrators and students and the SCBC, never before had they become as strong as they did during Furman's quest to maintain their racially non-discriminatory admissions policy. The *Paladin* articles reveal much about the growing tensions. The November 16, 1963, issue ran a front page headline, "S.C. Baptists Adopt Wait and See Policy; Mystical Bride is Practical Divorcee." This article, laden with heavy sarcasm, read,

In the three short days of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, that unquiet segment of the mystical bride of Christ succeeded in obtaining a Nevada-style divorce.... Some of the good messengers in Charleston seemed anxious to get the 'real' issue settled and to forget about such minor concerns as propagation of the gospel, overcoming the world and loving one's neighbor.... It was indeed inspiring to see such staunch dedication and such a clear vision in our leaders, the honored keepers of our storied religious heritage.

The article closes, "Piety and alarm are no excuses for ignorance, and the whole tone of the meetings was one of zealous piety and impassioned ignorance. The messengers were anxious to do what was 'right' for Furman; but somehow neglected to ask administrative officials of the University what was, in reality, best for the institution."⁴⁵ Another student wrote his opinion, "Once again the many messengers to the South Carolina Baptist Convention got the only 'kicks' of their usually drab lives by attacking Furman University and its policies with sadistic glee."

The student commented on the convention's closed minded approach: "All of Right and Truth have been crucified and are buried in a Cave, covered by a rock too big to be rolled aside

for a second coming.”⁴⁶ Throughout the fall of 1963 and the spring of 1964, student articles criticized the Baptist Convention and generated support for desegregation.

During this waiting period, Furman confronted the retirement of its president and increasing reasons that it must desegregate. On January 28, 1964, President Plyler announced his intentions to retire effective August 1964. Plyler wanted to pass the position to someone younger, but more importantly, someone equally as committed to aggressively pursuing growth and academic advancement.⁴⁷

As Furman’s board began to search for a suitable candidate, Vice President Bonner began to take over more and more duties from President Plyler, and among his first acts was the search for an appropriate African American student to admit. Bonner and Alumni President Claude Sapp Funderburk decided that, although they would still comply with the convention’s request for a delay, desegregation was an absolute necessity, and thus they began the search. Funderburk visited one of Greenville’s segregated high schools, Sterling High School, and hand-selected senior Joseph Allen Vaughn. Vaughn held a position on the school’s student government and membership in the National Honor Society. Vaughn excelled academically, ultimately graduated third in his class, and was a Baptist.⁴⁸

After Bonner met with Vaughn, Bonner and Funderburk arranged for him to spend one semester at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. Pending convention approval, Vaughn would transfer to Furman in the winter of 1965.⁴⁹ Although the university could not implement desegregation until the Baptist Convention’s annual meeting in November 1964, Funderburk and Bonner had become increasingly aware of the necessity of desegregation for the future success of the university.

* * *

In August 1964, the board of trustees filled the vacant presidency with a successful scholar and nationally respected administrator who, with his progressive ideals and high hopes for Furman, ushered in a new era for the school.⁵⁰ The board convinced Gordon W. Blackwell, Furman graduate and then President of Florida State University, to accept the presidency of his alma mater. Blackwell shared the Furman community’s hopes for growth and was willing to endorse practical advances. Throughout negotiations with the Board of Trustees, Blackwell maintained that integration was “a condition of my coming to Furman.” He admitted that initially, the trustees “gulped a little” in response to his non-negotiable demand, but eventually they agreed, although they knew that this promise might bind them to defy the Baptist Convention.⁵¹ Blackwell assured the trustees that, during his presidency, he would operate under the goal of “excellence by national standards.” As the motivation behind a financial campaign drive, the phrase initially appeared soon after Blackwell’s acceptance and continued for several years in his speeches and in Furman literature.⁵² Under Blackwell’s leadership, Furman aggressively sought measures to achieve this clearly articulated vision of the Furman of the future.⁵³

In the fall of 1964, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) issued a warning to administrators at southern educational institutions that encouraged immediate compliance with federal law and further contributed to the need for desegregation. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 required that institutions receiving any amount of federal aid must be in compliance with federal law. Furman’s drive towards excellence included increased reliance upon federal grants needed for faculty research and the improvement and building of new facilities on campus. Although a private institution, Furman was in the process of applying

for a federal grant for construction of a science and technology building under the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963.⁵⁴ It was also conducting a feasibility study to determine the establishment of a medical school, for which the federal government would contribute two-thirds of the cost. On November 23, 1964, A. W. Boldt of HEW's southern regional office met with educators from southern colleges and universities to discuss the possibility of discontinuing federal money to institutions that remained segregated. The threat of the loss of federal funding contributed to the urgency of desegregation at Furman and other private colleges and universities.

Furman's desire to grow had long provoked disagreement with the SCBC, and thus the argument that desegregation was a necessary component to growth took no priority over southern racism. At its annual meeting in Columbia on November 10-12, 1964, the convention's General Board proposed passage of a statement the Executive Committee had composed in May 1964.

Furman University has rendered a splendid service in training for the ministry and church related vocations. It is now faced with the tremendous task of trying to relate itself to a changing world and its ministry to the realities of a world in revolution. The question of admission has always been, and we feel must continue to be, a matter for the administration through its trustees to decide.... We feel sure these servants of the Lord will act with wisdom.⁵⁵

Leaders of the convention understood the negative implications that continued segregation would bring to its institutions. Members, however, allowed racial prejudices to thwart educational and social progress. Convention members rejected the Board's statement by only a slim margin, 943-915, due to hesitation by a significant number to reject their governing board's study and recommendation. Immediately after the vote, a minister called for another vote. The results were more indicative of social attitudes towards dismantling Jim Crow. In a simple yes-no vote on whether the convention favored integration in its institutions, it voted "no" 905-575.⁵⁶ In the final stages of Furman's grand plan, racist sentiment from white South Carolinians provided another obstacle to freedom of growth and observance of federal law. Furman students prayed that the image of the convention would change from a "Circus of Fools" to a Christian Convention dedicated to true Christian ideals."⁵⁷ Even as late as 1965, some white South Carolinians continued to resist any change to their segregated way of life.

Immediately, Furman administrators recognized the challenge before them. Gordon Blackwell was only months away from assuming the presidency with the expectation that Furman would soon desegregate. Administrators had to convince the trustees, all South Carolina Baptist appointees, to reinstate the previously passed admissions policy. Although it could not legally obstruct implementation of these policies once passed, the vote of the SCBC presented an enormous challenge to desegregation. Trustees were weary of acting against the organization that had placed them in these roles. Upon hearing that the board was wavering in its commitment, Blackwell wrote to J. Wilbert Wood, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, on November 17, 1964, stating that he was deeply troubled by recent developments and encouraged the trustees to implement a policy of desegregation immediately: "I accepted the Presidency with the understanding that the position of the Trustees on this aspect of admission had been determined and would not be revoked."⁵⁸ As the primary organizer of Furman's push to desegregate, Dr. Bonner stood before the board and, with forceful eloquence, urged them to support

desegregation.⁵⁹ On December 8, 1964, the trustees voted to reinstate the previously passed policy of racial non-discrimination. Joseph Vaughn would enter Furman at the beginning of the next semester.

Members of the SCBC immediately voiced their disapproval of Furman's defiance. The temporary chairman of the South Carolina Baptist Laymen's Association expressed his shock at Furman's decision and felt it "a tragedy.... If they integrate it, our objective will be to disintegrate it."⁶⁰ Members of the convention felt that Furman trustees did not have the authority to make such a decision in light of convention disapproval.⁶¹ In an attempt to calm the opposing sides, Wood wrote letters to Convention President Robert W. Major and to alumni explaining the "historical facts which make it improper for the convention to direct the trustees of Furman to take any specific action" and emphasizing the duty of the trustees to vote, above all else, in the best interests of the university. He wrote that Furman voted to desegregate because it was the "right" and "Christian" decision, and that further delay of the policy would be "gravely injurious." Continued segregation, he said, would endanger Furman's accreditation, hamper the university financially, and would negatively affect Furman's recruitment of talented professors and students.⁶² Segregation was simply antithetical to the university's aims

FURMAN DESEGREGATES

Furman's public defense of its decision to be proactive, not reactive, set the tone for acceptance of desegregation on campus. Furman students took pride in their university's decision and in Joe Vaughn.⁶³ On January 29, 1965, the Furman community welcomed Vaughn and Gordon Blackwell, each man a tangible representation of hope and progress for Furman.

Many factors, including the luxury of hand selecting a student to desegregate, contributed to Furman's successful desegregation. The premeditated act of selecting and grooming a student specifically to bear the momentous mantle of token desegregation offers an example that contrasts with the court-ordered desegregation of many southern state-supported institutions by the also highly qualified NAACP-supported plaintiffs. "Our being private allowed us to be selective," said Bonner. "Joe Vaughn had enough maturity and intelligence to be an excellent student regardless of color."⁶⁴ Vaughn's personality, talents, and tolerance quelled any racist sentiments that members of the Furman community may have harbored against him after his arrival and greatly contributed to the continued success of desegregation.⁶⁵ Vaughn made friends easily, involved himself in campus activities, such as cheerleading, BSU, and the Southern Students Organizing Committee (SSOC), and was academically motivated. Vaughn did not attempt to downplay his interest in African-American affairs: as vice-president for the first campus SSOC chapter in the state, Vaughn organized and led, in mid-February 1968, a rally in support of students at South Carolina State University soon after the Orangeburg Massacre. Several months later, he again organized and led a march to honor the recently assassinated Martin Luther King Jr.⁶⁶ Furman administrators felt that Vaughn easily surpassed the high expectations that the Furman community had of him.⁶⁷ In Vaughn's opinion, he and Furman were a match "made in heaven."⁶⁸ Privately, however, Vaughn experienced a great deal of pressure to perform academically and struggled to exhibit ease in public.

CONCLUSION

Between the late-1950s and mid-1960s, desegregation and progress became synonymous

on the Furman campus; Furman's desire to achieve "academic excellence by national standards"⁶⁹ prevailed over conservative southern racism. Its desire to avoid the threat of the loss of monetary support and academic prestige rallied support for desegregation at a time when many white South Carolinians wished to preserve the days of Jim Crow.

Desegregation at Furman University furthered the ideological gap between the university and the SCBC. The desegregation process forced administrators and others to address fundamental questions about the university's character and institutional goals. Increasingly in the decades before, during, and after the civil rights movement, differences in societal values became evident. The inerrancy movement, based upon the fundamentalist belief that the Scripture is inerrant and should be perceived in literal terms, had gained momentum within the Southern Baptist Convention, and Furman administrators and moderates within the SCBC became increasingly alarmed over Southern Baptist Convention statements regarding homosexuality, religious pluralism, and the role of the church in an academic environment. Fundamentalists assumed control of the board of the Southeastern Seminary, located in North Carolina, and subsequently voted to hire as faculty members only those who believed and taught the inerrancy of the scripture. In 1988, Furman officials became aware that

fundamentalists were working to gain seats on this and other boards connected with the convention. When six were named to Furman's 25-member board, the school was understandably concerned about eventual loss of academic independence to individuals whose primary allegiance is to a narrow religious agenda rather than to the university itself.⁷⁰

Thus, the university hired a legal team to research the relationship between the SCBC and Furman; it dispelled notions of the SCBC's perceived ownership of the university, and on October 15, 1990, Furman trustees, all SCBC appointees, voted to amend the charter to allow the board of trustees of Furman to become a self-perpetuating body, thus abolishing the SCBC's power to appoint trustees to the university.⁷¹ Aware of the fundamentalists' ambitions towards Furman and other Southern Baptist affiliated universities, Furman's trustees passed this preemptive measure. Moderate Baptists who constituted the majority of the board in 1990 decided to take measures to "preserve its values in a religious atmosphere that had become highly combative and increasingly restrictive."⁷²

The convention, of course, was extremely disturbed by the trustees' action. One month after the vote, the convention voted to enter into negotiations with the university and placed Furman's funding into an escrow account until the parties reached some sort of compromise. They soon reached an agreement that allowed for Baptist input but not complete control over the trustees' selection process. In November 1991, however, the convention was no longer content with the compromise, and voted to take legal action against the university. Almost immediately, thirty-four ministers and leaders within the convention signed a statement that called for a special meeting in hopes that the SCBC and Furman would sever all legal and financial ties. Furman President John E. Johns, the son of a southern Baptist preacher, desperately hoped for an end to almost a century of increasing conflict. After 166 years of cooperation, convention members voted to sever ties between Furman and the SCBC and to discontinue all financial support of the university.

As with Furman, obtaining complete control of institutional governance was the primary concern for other academically prominent SBC affiliated institutions. Furman thus successfully

distanced itself from denominational politics. It joined Wake Forest University, which disaffiliated from the North Carolina Baptist Convention in 1986 following a series of ideological conflicts that began in the 1920s.⁷³ Baylor University loosened its association with the Texas Baptist Convention in 1990.⁷⁴ Stetson University and the Florida Baptist Convention and Meredith College and the North Carolina Baptist Convention followed Furman and severed ties in 1995 and 1997, respectively. The University of Richmond experienced conflicts in the early decades of the twentieth century and began to slightly but significantly alter the relationship between the University of Richmond and its Southern Baptist Convention affiliate, the Baptist General Association of Virginia. In 1970, E. Claiborne Robins offered a fifty million dollar gift to the university with one stipulation: the university's charter must be amended so as to liberate the university from the Baptist General Association. While the charter did not entirely dissolve the relationship, it sufficiently altered the terms of this relationship. Continued discord resulted in a complete break between the university and the Baptist General Association in 1999. Across the South, conflicts including but not limited to the teaching of evolution, on-campus dancing, desegregation, and religious pluralism reflected the growing dissonance between these academic institutions and their southern Baptist affiliates.⁷⁵

Free from the restraints of the SCBC, Furman has flourished. The university has steadily risen in national rankings and is considered one of the top fifty liberal arts colleges in the nation. President David E. Shi's emphasis on engaged learning, a "problem-solving, project-oriented, experience-based approach to the liberal arts," has proven highly successful; in its undergraduate research category in 2002, U.S. News and World Report ranked Furman fourth among all institutions of higher education in the country.⁷⁶ Although the university has expended considerable effort, Furman has struggled to attract substantial numbers of African American students and thus remains engaged in the desegregation process.⁷⁷

Because its primary emphasis was on institutional growth, Furman University was able to overcome the southern racism that tainted implementation of desegregation at other southern institutions. Desegregation, in sum, was an obstacle to Furman's efforts towards progress. Those institutions that maintained elements of racial discrimination, such as Bob Jones University, delineated a course that differed greatly from institutions such as Furman.

Tensions between southern Baptist affiliated universities and their denomination were not limited to the desegregation debate. Over the next several decades, frustrations and resentment felt by Furman and other Southern Baptist universities resulted in the acceptance of the insurmountable nature of their conflicts with the Southern Baptist Convention. The social values of the Southern Baptist Convention had become fundamentally irreconcilable with those of academically prominent universities of the late twentieth century. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, these universities asserted their commitment to institutional growth, and ended their relationships with the denomination that conceived them.

¹ This article is a modified version of a chapter from the author's dissertation. "Courtney L. Tollison, "Moral Imperative and Financial Practicality: Desegregation of South Carolina's Denominationally-Affiliated Colleges and Universities" (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 2003).

² "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," The Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project at Stanford University. www.stanford.edu/group/King/.

³ Andrew M. Manis, *Southern Civil Religions in Conflict: Civil Rights and the Culture Wars* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2002), 131. Richard Furman, a South Carolina minister, was a well-known and well-respected leader on the national Baptist scene in the late 1700s and early 1800s who provided a biblically-based defense of slavery. Elected in 1814 and reelected in 1817, he served as the first president of the Baptist Triennial Convention, the first national gathering of Baptists in the United States, held in Philadelphia. In the early 1820s, Richard Furman

was instrumental in the establishment of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, and was elected its first president. Furman died in 1825; the next year, Furman University opened. Alfred Reid, *Furman University: Toward a New Identity, 1925-1975* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1976), 4-5; Colyer Meriwether, *History of Higher Education in South Carolina with a Sketch of the Free School System* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 93-94; Samuel Hill, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion in the South* (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1997), 783-84.

⁴ Denominationally-affiliated colleges and universities are defined as those institutions that maintained a formal relationship with the denomination that founded them. The state denominational bodies affiliated with these institutions appointed some or all of the institutions' trustees, and also contributed financially to these institutions. These denominationally-affiliated colleges and universities are distinguished from seminaries and institutions whose purpose is strictly to train its students for the ministry, priesthood, or order.

⁵ In January 1965, the federal government mailed an "Assurance of Compliance with Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Regulation Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964" form to most southern institutions of higher education. For private institutions, non-compliance with the Civil Rights Act rendered these institutions ineligible to receive any federal funding.

⁶ See, for instance, Charles Stephen Padgett's work on Spring Hill College in Alabama. Additionally, the first substantial desegregation of an institution of higher education in South Carolina was not, as is most frequently assumed, Clemson College, but the now defunct Our Lady of Mercy Junior College in Charleston. Charles Stephen Padgett, "Schooled in Invisibility: The Desegregation of Spring Hill College, 1945-1963" (Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 2000); Charles Padgett, "Without Hysteria or Unnecessary Disturbance': Desegregation at Spring Hill College, Mobile, Alabama, 1948-1954," *History of Education Quarterly* (summer 2001); C. Joseph Nuesse, "Segregation and Desegregation at The Catholic University of America," *Washington History* (spring/summer 1997); Tollison, "Moral Imperative and Financial Practicality."

⁷ Tollison, "Moral Imperative and Financial Practicality."

⁸ In South Carolina, conflicts that erupted over desegregation in a denomination's colleges and universities were directly proportional to the extent that power was diffused in the denomination. Mark Newman, *Getting Right With God: Southern Baptists and Desegregation, 1945-1995* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001).

⁹ For more on the Orangeburg Massacre, see Jack Bass, *The Orangeburg Massacre*, 2nd ed. (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ George C. McMillan, "Integration With Dignity: The Inside story of How South Carolina Kept the Peace," *Saturday Evening Post*, 16 March 1963. A reporter from New Jersey was overheard saying of Harvey Gantt's uneventful matriculation at Clemson College, "I expected blood, and all I got was cream puff."

¹¹ From 1965-1971, Bob Jones University's (BJU) tumultuous experience with the federal government resulted from its refusal to admit African American students. In 1971, it allowed Willie Thompson, a married, African American employee, to register for classes. After 1971, BJU unsuccessfully sued the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) when the IRS revoked its tax-exempt status as a result of BJU's formal prohibition of interracial dating and marriage. "Civil Rights Ruling Affirmation Asked," February 28, 1967. College/University Vertical Files, Box 2, University of South Carolina, South Caroliniana Library; Daniel L. Turner, *Standing Without Apology: The History of Bob Jones University* (Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 1997), 225; Mark Taylor Dalhouse, *An Island in the Lake of Fire: Bob Jones University, Fundamentalism, and the Separatist Movement* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 106; *Religious Freedom Imperiled: The IRS and BJU* (Bob Jones University, 1982), 41; *The Bomb and Its Fallout: Bob Jones University v. United States*, U.S. Supreme Court Decision, May 24, 1983 (Bob Jones University, 1983), 3.

¹² Gordon W. Blackwell, interview with Courtney Tollison, 12 April 2000; A.V. Huff, interview by Courtney Tollison, 8 March 2001, Greenville. Although Furman University administrators and trustees decided to push for growth and elevated academic standards in the late 1950s and early 1960s, this formal campaign was not articulated until President Gordon Blackwell assumed the post in August 1964. Blackwell coined the phrase "academic excellence by national standards."

¹³ Judith Bainbridge, *Academy and College: The History of the Women's College at Furman University* (Macon, Ga. Mercer University Press, 2001).

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- ¹⁴ Jeffrey S. Rogers, "Breaking Up is Hard to Do: Baptists and Furman," an unpublished speech given at Furman University, 16 April 2002, as part of Furman's 175th anniversary celebration.
- ¹⁵ A.V. Huff, *Greenville: The History of the City and County in the South Carolina Piedmont* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 327. For more on the Scopes Trial, see Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Between Science and Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).
- ¹⁶ Bainbridge, Academy and College.
- ¹⁷ John L. Plyler to Columbia University Press, requesting a copy of "Prevention of Discrimination in Private Educational Institutions;" John L. Plyler to The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching requesting, "The Colleges and the Courts, 1941-1945," Baptist Controversies, Race Relations (#1) file, Furman University Archives, James Buchanan Duke Library, Greenville. Hereafter cited as FUA.
- ¹⁸ Huff, interview
- ¹⁹ John L. Plyler from James Dombrowski of the Southern Conference Educational Fund; James A. Dombrowski from John L. Plyler, Baptist Controversies, Race Relations (#1) file, FUA.
- ²⁰ "Student Releases Articles from Seized FU Echo," *The Greenville News Piedmont*, 19 May 1955. "Newspaper Comment," and "'Echo' Editors Resign," *Southern School News*, 8 June 1955, p. 11.
- ²¹ "Student Releases Articles from Seized FU Echo," *The Greenville News Piedmont*, 19 May 1955.
- ²² *Ibid.* Frank Bonner, interview by Courtney Tollison, 16 February 1999, Greenville; B.R. Brazeal, "Some Problems in the Desegregation of Higher Education in the 'Hard Core' States," in *The Journal of Negro Education: Desegregation and the Negro College* (summer 1958), 371-72; Preston Valien, "Desegregation in Higher Education: A Critical Summary," in *The Journal of Negro Education: Desegregation and the Negro College* (summer 1958), 379. Valien identified Furman as one of four segregated universities in the South in which the students are "far ahead of the governing boards and administrators in their acceptance of desegregation."
- ²³ Reid, Furman University, 106-07.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ "State BSU Convention Meets in Greenville: Delegates Pass Resolutions on Integration," *The Paladin*, 8 December 1961, FUA; "News from the South Carolina Student Council on Human Relations," *South Carolina Student Council on Human Relations, 1960-62, Papers of the United States National Student Association, Box 30, The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change Library and Archives, Atlanta, Ga.*
- ²⁶ *News and Courier*, 3 December 1961; *Record*, 6 December 1961; Army McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth Century American South* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 336.
- ²⁷ "Faculty Vote Indicate Heavy Support of Issue," *The Paladin*, 15 December 1961.
- ²⁸ "Fight Goes On, But Candidly, is Finished," *The Paladin*, 19 May 1962.
- ²⁹ David Shi, *The Greenville News*, 10 February 2002.
- ³⁰ Stephen O'Neill, "Facing Facts: The 'Voluntary' Desegregation of Greenville, South Carolina," unpublished paper given at the Citadel Conference on the Civil Rights Movement in South Carolina, 5-8 March 2003.
- ³¹ Alester Furman Jr. from Judge Clement Haynsworth, 14 May 1962. Papers of Frank Bonner, Judge Haynsworth's opinion on relationship of Furman to the South Carolina Baptist Convention file, FUA.
- ³² The individual state southern Baptist Conventions were under the auspices of the Southern Baptist Convention. "Are Baptist Colleges Crying Wolf?" *The Furman University Magazine* (autumn 1963): 14; "Furman Trustees Adopt Policy on Applications," *Baptist Courier*, 17 October 1963, p. 5.
- ³³ Bynum Shaw, *The History of Wake Forest College, Vol. IV, 1943-1965*. Wake Forest University Archives, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest; Courtney Tollison, email communication with Julia Bradford, Special Collections Assistant, Wake Forest University, 8 June 2001.
- ³⁴ Courtney Tollison, email communication with Gail Grieb, Archivist, Stetson University, 19 June 2001.
- ³⁵ Alan, Scott Willis, "A Baptist Dilemma: Christianity, Discrimination, and the Desegregation of Mercer University," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* LXXIV (fall 1996): 595-15.
- ³⁶ Courtney Tollison, email communication with Arlette Copeland, Special Collections Assistant, Mercer University, 8 June 2001.
- ³⁷ "All Qualified Students May Apply at Furman University," *Greenville News*, 9 October 1963, Integration file, FUA.

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- ³⁸ Ernie Harrill, interview by Courtney Tollison, 15 February 1999, Greenville.
- ³⁹ Desegregated-Segregated Status of Institutions of Higher Learning in the Southern states, United States Commission on Civil Rights, 15 November 1963, Papers of Frank Bonner, FUA.
- ⁴⁰ "Wisdom Seen in Decision of Trustees," *The Furman University Magazine* (autumn 1963): 13. This was an editorial reprinted from the *Greenville News*.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid*; Maxie Myron Cox, "The Year of Decision: Integration in South Carolina Education in 1963" (Ph.D. diss., The University of South Carolina, 1996), 74; Harry Shucker, interview by Courtney Tollison, 13 April 2000.
- ⁴² Dr. Horace Hammett from Alester G. Furman, Jr.; 5 November 1963, F file, papers of Horace Greeley Hammett, Baptist Historical Collection, Furman University Special Collections, James Buchanan Duke Library, Greenville. Hereafter cited as BHC.
- ⁴³ Minutes of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, 1963 Convention Annual, 12-14 November 1963, Charleston. BHC; "Furman Trustees Adopt Policy on Applications," *Baptist Courier*, 17 October 1965, 5.
- ⁴⁴ "Baptist Board Challenges Trustee Integration Policy," *The Paladin*, 26 October 1963; "Support Our Trustees," *The Paladin*, 26 October 1963, FUA.
- ⁴⁵ "Mystical Bride is Practical Divorcee," *The Paladin*, 16 November 1963, FUA.
- ⁴⁶ "Group Attacks School Gleefully," *The Paladin*, 16 November 1963, FUA.
- ⁴⁷ Nowhere have I found any indication that Plyler retired due to the university community's support for desegregation. He appears to have been as committed to Furman's growth as any administrator. Two years earlier, President Plyler entertained notions of retiring, but the trustees dissuaded him. Plyler served as President for twenty-five years and was over seventy years old when he retired.
- ⁴⁸ Harrill, interview; Bonner, interview; Shucker, interview; Blackwell, interview; Lillian Brock Flemming, interview by Courtney Tollison, 16 February 1999; "Furman Enrolls First Negro Undergraduate," *Baptist Courier*, 11 February 1965, p. 18.
- ⁴⁹ Bonner, interview; "Racial Integration at Furman Twenty-One Years Later," Greenville, 16 April 1986, FUA; Frank Bonner Comments to the Furman University Board of Trustees, courtesy of Jim Stewart, in author's possession.
- ⁵⁰ Blackwell admits that he was somewhat of a "radical." Under Blackwell's leadership, the Greensboro Women's College and Florida State University desegregated. Blackwell, interview; "Dr. Blackwell: Man of Ideas," *The Furman University Magazine* (autumn 1964), FUA.
- ⁵¹ Blackwell, interview.
- ⁵² "Remarks to South Carolina Baptist Convention," given by Gordon W. Blackwell, President-elect of Furman University, 10 November 1964, *Baptist Courier*, 3 December 1964, 11; Blackwell, interview.
- ⁵³ Bonner, interview; Blackwell, interview; Reid, Furman University.
- ⁵⁴ Baptist Colleges and the Higher Education Facilities Act; Statement of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Furman University. Baptist Controversies, Furman University-Integration, Federal Aid, 1955 Echo Incident (#3) file, FUA.
- ⁵⁵ Statement issued by the (South Carolina Baptist Convention) Executive Committee of the General Board, Columbia, S.C., 4 May 1964, Integration file, FUA.
- ⁵⁶ *Baptist Courier*, 19 November 1964, p. 2; "Furman Trustees Maintain Stand," *Southern School News*, January 1965; Chairman of Furman Trustees Explains Action," *Baptist Courier*, 28 January 1965, pp.5-6
- ⁵⁷ Editorial, *The Paladin*, 20 November 1964, FUA.
- ⁵⁸ Reid, Furman University, 198.
- ⁵⁹ He emphasized the rightness of this act, both in principle and for the future of advancement of the school. Bonner reminded the Board of Trustees of its obligation to support incoming President Blackwell and of its commitment, as trustees, to vote, above all, in the best interests of Furman University. Unpublished remarks of Frank Bonner to the Furman University Board of Trustees, in author's possession.
- ⁶⁰ "Furman Trustees Maintain Stand," *Southern School News* (January 1965).
- ⁶¹ Harrill, interview. Members of the Baptist Convention threatened to discontinue funding for the schools, but Furman dismissed these threats. The Convention contributed only six percent of Furman's annual budget at the time. This potential loss was insubstantial compared to the threat of lost funding from the federal government.

⁶² “Chairman of Furman Trustees Explains Action,” *Baptist Courier*, 28 January 1965, pp.5-6; “Reaffirmation of the Admissions Policy: A Letter to Alumnu From J. Wilbert Wood, Chairman of the Board of Trustees,” *The Furman University Magazine XIV* (winter 1965), 4: 4-5.

⁶³ Bonner had also approved the admission of three African American graduate students to degree programs in education. They matriculated at the same time as Vaughn. Furman has always emphasized its role as and identified itself as an undergraduate institution, however, and the admission of the three graduate students is rarely mentioned and probably went somewhat unnoticed by the majority of the undergraduate students.

⁶⁴ Bonner, interview.

⁶⁵ Shucker, interview. Shucker remembered that “Vaughn probably had the ideal demeanor to be placed in this situation.”

⁶⁶ Gregg Laurence Michel, “‘We’ll Take Our Stand’: The Southern Student Organizing Committee and the Radicalization of White Southern Students, 1964-1969” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Virginia, 1999), 403, 407, 464, 478, 481, 489.

⁶⁷ Bonner, interview; Fleming, interview.

⁶⁸ “Furman Was Ready; Baptist Were Not,” *The State*, Columbia, 4 February 2000. The publicly expressed feelings of those students whose presence indicated token desegregation often differed from the reality of their experiences, especially among those who were hand-selected. Vaughn was under a great deal of pressure, not only as the first African American student at the university, but also because some friends believe he struggled with his sexual orientation. These pressures weighed on Vaughn; some friends intimate private and excessive alcohol use. Vaughn died in 1991.

⁶⁹ “Remarks to South Carolina Baptist Convention,” given by Gordon W. Blackwell, 10 November 1964, FUA.

⁷⁰ *The State* (Columbia, S.C.), 7 April 1992, p.6A.

⁷¹ *Ibid*; Mark Allan Taylor, “Religious Identity on a Slippery Slope: Furman University and Mercer University During the 1990’s” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 2000).

⁷² www.furman.edu/personnel/vpaa.htm.

⁷³ I thank Professor Edwin Hendricks of Wake Forest University for his comments. Bynum Shaw, *The History of Wake Forest College* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: Wake Forest University, 1988).

⁷⁴ Baylor’s Board of Trustees voted to amend the university’s charter to allow for self-perpetuation, effectively abolishing the Texas Baptist Convention’s authority to appoint trustees. Mark Allan Taylor, “Religious Identity on a Slippery Slope,” 6.

⁷⁵ For discussion on what many view as an impending break between the Georgia Baptist Convention and Mercer University, see Mark Allan Taylor, “Religious Identity on a Slippery Slope.” Harry C. Garwood, *Stetson University and the Florida Baptists: A Documentary History of Relations Between Stetson University and the Florida Baptist Convention* (Deland: Florida Baptist Historical society, 1962); Gilbert L. Lycan, *Stetson University: The First 100 Years* (Deland, Florida: Stetson University Press, 1983); Reuben E. Alley, *History of the University of Richmond, 1820-1971* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), 206-07, 240-59.

⁷⁶ “Engaged Learning at Furman University,” www.engagefurman.com/engaged/index.html; U.S. News and World Report, 23 September 2002, p. 104.

⁷⁷ In 2002-2003, the university received a record number of applications from minorities for admittance into the Class of 2007; minorities comprise eleven percent of the Class of 2007. African American students comprise 6.25 percent of the university’s student body for the 2003-2004 academic year. Courtney Tollison, email communication with Idella Glenn, Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, Furman University, 15 May 2003; Inside Furman Online (May 2003), www.furman.edu/if/may03/class.htm.