



**BAPTIST PRESS**  
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January 4, 1971

**SBC President Given Room Key  
Of Hotel Where He Found Christ**

**NEW ORLEANS (BP)**--The president of the Southern Baptist Convention returned to the spot where he made a dramatic decision 36 years ago to accept Christ, and received a plaque giving him mementos of the occasion.

In 1934, Carl E. Bates, just out of high school in Liberty, Miss., came to New Orleans seeking his fortune. During that post depression era, he was unable to find a job.

Hungry and depressed, he went to the back entrance of the old De Soto Hotel on Baronne Street asking for any kind of work they might offer.

He got a job washing dishes, providing his room and board. Later on, he worked in the hotel's print shop, served as a bellhop and a night clerk.

In deep spiritual need-- even to the point of considering suicide as the only way out--Bates began to read a Gideon Bible one night in his hotel room. He fell on his knees in prayer, and committed his life to God. He went back home, made his full commitment to Christ and accepted a call to the ministry.

Today Bates, 56, is president of the nation's largest Protestant denomination, and is pastor of the First Baptist Church of Charlotte, N.C.

During a recent visit to New Orleans to speak at the annual Brotherhood missions dinner at First Baptist Church here, Bates was surprised by the presentation of a wall plaque displaying unique mementos of his experience 34 years earlier.

J. D. Grey, pastor of the church and himself a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, made the presentation.

The plaque, made from a piece of the wooden door from Room 244 of the DeSoto Hotel where Bates made his dramatic decision, featured the brass numerals, "244," and the key to the room, which had been gold-plated along with its identification tag.

An inscription on the plaque read: "Presented to Dr. Carl E. Bates, president, Southern Baptist Convention, by First Baptist Church, New Orleans, Dr. J. D. Grey, pastor, Dec. 15, 1970. From the door to the room in the DeSoto Hotel where Dr. Bates found the Lord, Aug. 28, 1934."

Grey explained that the DeSoto Hotel is presently undergoing complete renovation and will be reopened as a \$5 million luxury hotel to be renamed LePavillon.

The associate pastor of the church, Ernest R. Wells, contacted the building superintendent in charge of the work at the building, and was able to obtain the door to the room, the key, and the numerals. A deacon in the church, Thomas E. Smith, made the plaque from the wooden door.

Grey, in making the presentation, said that the plaque served not only as an expression of appreciation "to our great Baptist leader, but as a tribute to the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Woman Claims She is Jesus;  
Three Baptists As Disciples

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Janie E. McKinney claims she is not insane--she really is Jesus Christ. And she's filed a suit in federal court seeking to prove it.

She has named as defendents three prominent Baptists--Evangelist Billy Graham, and Oklahoma City pastors Herschel H. Hobbs of First Baptist Church here and Hugh R. Bumpas of Capitol Hill Baptist Church.

In the suit, she claims that Graham is Luke; that Bumpas is Peter; that Hobbs is Paul; and that "I am the Christ."

According to a report in the Oklahoma Journal based on court records, the suit apparently seeks that she be declared sane on the basis that she is Jesus Christ--"the head of the church," and is thereby protected by the freedom of religious clause of the Bill of Rights."

Efforts to contact the woman were in vain, since the address listed on the court records turned out to be a vacated service station.

Bumpas, who knows the woman and says she is a former member of his congregation, was taking the suit lightly.

Several years ago, she asked Bumpas to appear at a sanity hearing and testify that she is Jesus Christ, he said.

"I told here that I couldn't do that--that I wouldn't even swear my own mother was Jesus Christ," Bumpas said.

She responded by saying, "Of course not, pastor. You couldn't say that because I am Jesus Christ," Bumpas related.

He added that she has claimed to be Jesus for many years, and that she had on occasions interrupted church services by screaming various accusations.

Asked to comment on being a defendent, Bumpas said that she had been committed to Central State Hospital three times. She claimed that her constitutional rights were violated in court action January, 1968, when she was committed the third time.

She gave no explanation of why the three Baptist ministers were named as defendents, and given Biblical names. The defendents, apparently, don't know why either.

Als named as defendents in the suit were two deputy sheriffs in Oklahoma City, two associate district judges, a records clerk, and the pastor of St. Luke's United Methodist Church here--J. Chess Lovern.

None of the other defendents, however, was given a biblical name.

-30-

Arkansas Editor Commends  
Death Sentence Commutation

1/4/71

LITTLE ROCK, (BP)--The editor of the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine has editorially commended outgoing Arkansas Gov. Winthrop Rockefeller for commuting the death sentences of 15 Arkansas prisoners and, has urged other state governors to do likewise.

In the editorial, Erwin L. McDonald pointed out that the practice of capital punishment cut squarely across the earthly life of Jesus Christ, who taught his disciples to love their enemies and set an example of "commuting the eternal death sentence for the penitent thief being crucified with him, giving to this man the gift of eternal life."

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McDonald quoted Gov. Rockefeller, a Baptist, extensively in the editorial and commended the governor for reducing the death sentence to life imprisonment for the 11 blacks and four whites on Arkansas' "death row."

"I cannot and will not turn my back on life-long Christian teachings and beliefs, merely to let history run out its course on a fallible and failing theory of punitive justice," McDonald quoted Rockefeller as saying.

The governor fought back emotion as he announced his decision just two weeks before giving up the office, the Baptist editor reported.

"What earthly mortal has the omnipotence to say who among us shall live and who shall die," Rockefeller said. "I do not."

Saying he knew there would be negative reactions to his decision, Rockefeller said that the law grants him that authority, and that "failing to take this action while it is in my power, I could not live with myself."

Rockefeller had in April, 1968, declared a moratorium on executions pending the outcome of a Supreme Court ruling on capital punishment. The court has not yet ruled on the case. There have been no executions in the nation since June 2, 1967.



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