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May 16, 1972

**Bates Observes Controversy
Inevitable Among Baptists**

By Toby Druin
Associate Editor, Biblical Recorder

CHARLOTTE (BP)--Carl E. Bates, who for two years has worn the mantle of peacemaker among Southern Baptists, said here that controversy and conflict are inevitable for the denomination.

"The sad thing is that we keep going over the same ground again," the Southern Baptist Convention president said in reflecting on his two years in the denomination's top elected office.

Bates, pastor of the First Baptist Church here since 1959, yields the presidential gavel in Philadelphia next month. He was elected president of the nation's largest Protestant denomination in Denver in 1970 and re-elected last June in St. Louis.

Both the Denver and St. Louis conventions were marked by controversy, among other things, over the Broadman Bible Commentary. A group of conservatives has served notice that they will again resurrect the commentary issue, asking this time that the entire 12-volume series be withdrawn from sale by the Sunday School Board.

Referring to the commentary question, though not mentioning it specifically, Bates urged every Southern Baptist pastor and layman to read, *Not A Silent People* (a history of controversy among Southern Baptists), written by Carson-Newman College Professor Walter B. Shurden.

"I wish every Southern Baptist could read it," he said of the book. "Pastors need to read it to understand our history and laymen need to read it to stand firm against those who would lead us over the same ground again.

"Controversy and conflict are inevitable," he said. "The sad thing is that we go over the same ground again and again.

"Of course, not all of this is bad," he added. "It makes us get down to basics. We are forced to reacquaint ourselves with our doctrines and history."

He praised the democratic structure of the convention, but noted that though a messenger can have his say, he does not always get his way.

"This is perhaps the only place in Christendom where every man can have his say," Bates said of the annual convention. "But it is also where every man does not always prevail and where he doesn't justify his position by blaming the establishment."

Bates said he had logged more than a quarter of a million miles at the SBC helm, including a trip to Tokyo for the Baptist World Alliance in 1970. He has visited every area of the country, speaking at most state conventions or evangelism conferences at least once during his tenure in office.

"But the major responsibility of this office," he said, "is correspondence--reams and reams of it.

"Anybody in the Southern Baptist Convention who has a complaint feels that the president can solve it.

"I have tried to answer all of them personally, except the Boy Scouts who wrote about God and Country Awards. I developed a form letter for them."

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The two years have convinced him that the presidency should be limited to a single one-year term of office.

"Two years is too much for a man or church to give," he said. "We should elect a man for one year and at the same time make the first vice-president the president-elect. Southern Baptists could very wisely move to this position."

Nevertheless, Bates said that his church has not suffered during his terms of office. He gave credit to his associate Joe Burnette, and to "the strongest young laymen in the Southern Baptist Convention" for seeing the church through the period. During the two years, the church has broken ground and almost completed a \$1 million-plus plant to which it will move on July 1.

He praised Southern Baptists for their stewardship in the past year that saw a new surge in Cooperative Program giving. But he said he was distressed about the continuing decline in church organizations and offered a solution.

"All we need to do is rediscover Arthur Flake's book, Building a Standard Sunday School," he said. "If Southern Baptists ever get back to that book, we will remedy the decline."

Bates said that in his travels he could detect no great differences among Southern Baptists, regardless of their geographical areas.

"Baptists in the older areas of the convention are least likely to push the panic button over changes," he observed. "I attribute this to maturity."

"The various sections of the convention do work under different procedures, but at heart they are all individuals who love their freedom in Christ as Baptists," he observed.

The SBC president said, however, that his travels had pointed out to him a need for indoctrination in Baptist beliefs.

"I am distressed at the lack of doctrinal understanding on the part of many Southern Baptists," he said. "It would be a stronger fellowship if our people understood more thoroughly the doctrines of grace."

"But we have finally gotten back to the New Testament pattern of witnessing--people-to-people, house-to-house and day-by-day. I think if we can really tie in to the new WIN (Witnessing Involvement Now) program we could double our church memberships to 25 million in the 1970's. I think Southern Baptists are on the threshold of one of their greatest eras."

Bates said he had no plans after yielding the presidency except "trying to become pastor of First Baptist Church, Charlotte, again."

"I am looking forward to resuming my old habits of study, counseling and visitation and above all simply preaching in the joy of shared discovery," he commented.

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BP PHOTO mailed to Baptist state papers.

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Herschel Hobbs Plans
Retirement Next Year

5/16/72

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Herschel H. Hobbs, president of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1961-63, announced his plans to retire as pastor of the First Baptist Church here effective Jan. 1, 1973.

Announcement of his retirement plans came just one week after Hobbs observed his 23rd anniversary as pastor of the church.

Hobbs, who will be 65 on Oct. 24, told the congregation he was retiring from the pastorate, but not from the ministry.

"If God permits, it is my hope to continue writing, preaching on The Baptist Hour as long as it seems wise to do so, holding Bible conferences and revivals on occasion, and doing whatever else the Lord wills in the life of our beloved denomination, as my health and strength will permit," Hobbs said.

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His physician had advised him to retire at the first of next year. Last May, Hobbs suffered a heart attack and blood clot, and was hospitalized again in the summer with a flu virus. He returned to the pulpit in September after five months of recuperation. He said his health is now good.

Hobbs joins two other Southern Baptist Convention former presidents who recently announced plans to retire. J. D. Grey, president of the convention from 1951-53, is retiring as pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans; and Ramsey Pollard, president of the SBC from 1959-61 preceding Hobbs, will retire as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis.

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Baptist School Elects
Woman Vice President

5/16/72

WACO, Tex. (BP)--Mrs. Donna M. Denton, senior internal auditor for Baylor University here, has been named the first woman vice president in the Texas Baptist school's history.

Mrs. Denton, who will serve as vice president of business and financial affairs at Baylor, is also believed to be the first woman vice president of any Texas Baptist school.

Before joining Baylor in 1962, Mrs. Denton had worked as a certified public accountant and taught accounting at the University of Houston.

The Kansas native has also served in the Baylor administration as assistant controller, budget director and assistant to the vice president.

She received business administration degree from Baylor in 1948 and has done graduate work in economics and accounting at the University of Tulsa and the University of Houston. She also attended law school at the University of Houston.

Mrs. Denton is married to a physical education professor at Baylor, Robert Denton. They have two children.

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Religious Heritage Cites
Stevens for Radio-TV Work

5/16/72

WASHINGTON (BP)--Paul M. Stevens, executive director of the Southern Baptist Radio-Television Commission in Fort Worth, has been named to receive a special award from Religious Heritage of America here.

The national interfaith religious organization dedicated to preserving America's Judeo-Christian heritage cited Stevens "for his outstanding achievements since 1953 in building the SBC Radio-Television Commission into the forefront of religious broadcasting in America."

Stevens will be among several others in the mass media honored at the Faith and Freedoms Awards breakfast here June 23 during the Religious Heritage of America's 22nd annual national awards program.

Other award winners include George Dugan of the New York Times and H. Elliott Wright of Religious News Service; Edward E. Plowman, associate editor of Christianity Today in Washington; and Charles W. McPheeters, a former drug user cited "for his powerful witness to the youth of America on the dangers of drug use."

Dugan and Wright were cited for "superior work in covering, interpreting and examining religious news and issues," and Plowman was recognized for "his perceptive coverage and analysis of the Jesus Movement in America."

Wallace E. Johnson of Memphis, vice chairman of the board for Holiday Inns of America, announced the award winners and citations. Johnson is chairman of Religious Heritage of America.

The SBC Radio-TV Commission produces the television series, "The Human Dimension," and "Jot," a children's animated cartoon, as well as special programs in cooperation with the three major television networks. The television programs are carried by 217 stations in the country.

Major radio programs produced by the commission include The Baptist Hour, MasterControl*, Country Crossroads, and PowerLine. They are heard on more than 1,846 radio stations across the country.

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