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White House Reality
Distorted by "Warp"

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Second of a series by Wallace Henley
For Baptist Press

"Everytime I leave this place, I feel like taking a bath." The remark miffed me. The man was sitting in my office at the White House. He had been coming to the place for 15 years, and I felt he should have known better. Now I understand: He did know. He had discovered what is most difficult to see when one is on the White House staff--he know about the "White House warp."

I had to leave the staff before I was aware of it. Basically, the White House warp means that reality comes into the White House as through a prism. It is colored, distorted, so that one seeking to deal with that reality from within the White House doesn't always have a fix on things as they are, but as they appear. The warp is a major component of the atmosphere of the White House, and is caused by the very nature of the presidency itself.

"The fact remains," wrote George Reedy, "that the (White House) provides camouflage for all that is petty and nasty in human beings, and enables a clown or a knave to pose as Galahad and be treated with deference."

The warp thus affects people as well as issues. The most mediocre of people, the louisiest scoundrels, develop self-images of grandeur and honor, which they foist off on whomever will be gullible enough to take them. But again, the White House warp affects public perceptions, so that there is a willingness to accept Barabbas as Galahad, simply because he occupies a desk in the White House.

The warp, of course, was not limited to the Nixon White House. The Watergate and attendant travesties must be seen as tragically logical--though extreme--outcomes of attitudes and values characterizing and White House too long. Reedy was Lyndon Johnson's press secretary. And, he once described to an aide of Franklin D. Roosevelt his feelings about the life, he, Reedy, was observing in the White House. "Don't worry," shot back the Roosevelt aide, "That's the way it always has been and that's the way it always will be!"

Hopefully, however, Watergate was the shock, the bucket of cold water that will awake Washington to the need of reforming the White House system, and, better, of seeing men reformed. That happens, of course, only through an encounter with Christ"

The warp was probably the chief philosophical and psychological culprit behind the infamous "Enemies' List." I had never heard of such a list until John W. Dean III disclosed its existence during the Watergate hearings; but I wasn't surprised to hear one did exist.

Obviously, every president--every leader--has opponents, some of them drastic enough to be classed as "enemies." But because of the White House warp, the seriousness, potency and nature of the "enemies" are thrown into distortion, and seen out of balance.

One of the first impressions engulfing me as I plunged deeper into the White House waters was the feeling that we perceived of ourselves as surrounded by forces ready to attack at the drop of a syllable.

The extremes of political polarization in Washington, between conservatives and liberals, Democrats and Republicans, members of the Legislative Branch and of the Executive, disturbed me greatly. It seemed no issue could be dealt with for the good of the nation without attempts to use the issue as a political lever for somebody's advantage. From the perspective of the warp, however, most of the fault seemed always to be with the other side. No solution, compromise, could be achieved with such attitudes in the foreground.

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The most valid answer to that problem I saw was not through legislative or diplomatic skill, but through prayer. For a quarter century, prayer groups have been organized in the House and Senate.

A group of us decided to spark one among the White House staff. Occasionally, we met with representatives from the other groups, including, of course, political "enemies." In the context of prayer, we could feel the presence of God in a way that transcended the issues which divided us. Men like Chuck Colson and Harold Hughes realized they were brothers in Christ. A new basis of communication was found.

But the feeling of being surrounded by "enemies" was compounded through the warp, as it convinced White House aides that the bureaucracy of the Executive Branch was loaded with "enemies."

There had been a seething resentment among Republicans in Washington that President Eisenhower had not taken advantage of his two terms to place more Republicans in key Federal jobs. Holdovers from the Roosevelt and Truman eras had been joined by Kennedy and Johnson appointees. From the perspective of the White House, this was sin--and danger--of the first order. No doubt this spurred some of the attempts by some White House aides to manipulate the Federal agencies.

Hardly anything infuriated President Nixon more, as the Watergate tape transcripts showed. In one of them, he is heard telling George Shultz, "We have no discipline in the bureaucracy."

Adding to the White House warp, and being fed by it in return was the fact that one-third of the staff during the first Nixon term was 30 years of age or younger.

But at the root of the White House warp, is a spiritual problem. One of the hoaxes peddled to us in the age of "secular religion" is that if we raise an institution with worthy goals, the goodness of men will somehow be amplified as they are gathered under the roofs of such institutions. That, quite simply, is wrong. Institutions provide opportunities for the corruption of power. They do not expand human goodness.

Washington needs desperately to hear Paul say, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God..." The attitude which exalts a man far beyond what he deserves simply because he sits where he sits, is rampant throughout the city. Washington is a place where liberals tout the perfectibility of man, and conservatives try to deify the Founding Fathers. And it is a place incredibly blind to the limitations of man caused by sin.

Congress can legislate until there are no more books to contain the laws. But until human beings sitting in high places open their lives to spiritual reform, the "cleaning up" of government will only be a sweeping of the surface, and human beings will continue to be warped by the distortions of power. (BP)

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Inflation Affects Buying
Power of CP Budget

9/20/74

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists' gifts to the Cooperative Program (unified budget) have continued to exceed the rate of inflation, Robert Bingham, Home Mission Board program services section director, said at a conference here to discuss ways of promoting the convention's \$150 million Cooperative Program goal for the 1975-76 financial year.

However, conferees also heard evidence that the projected goal will actually have only \$87 million in real buying power.

John H. Williams, assistant to the treasurer and director of financial planning of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee, said the projection of \$150 million for 1976 would represent an increase of 48.9 per cent in the Cooperative Program budget, increasing 12 per cent in 1974, 14 per cent in 1975 and 16.7 per cent in 1976.

But the purchasing power would be only \$87,584,522, for a decrease of 71.2 per cent, using the 1967 Consumer Price Index (CPI) as a base, Williams said.

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He explained that by setting the CPI in 1967 at 100, by December of this year the index was projected to be 152.4, and by December 1976 to be 171.3. This is based on 10 per cent inflation during 1974, with continued, but smaller increases, continuing until 1976.

The goal of \$150 million dollars has been set to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Cooperative Program in 1975. Rudy Fagan, executive director-treasurer of the Stewardship Commission, told conferees that Rope of Sand, the commission's film commemorating the 50th anniversary will be released during Baptist state conventions this fall.

Stewardship Commission personnel, who co-sponsored the conference with the Executive Committee, which met in semi-annual session here have said they hope to obtain three million signatures on a "Declaration of Cooperation" being solicited by state conventions, which will be another major part of the convention's observance of the 50th anniversary of the Cooperative Program.

Purpose of the declaration is to challenge individual Baptists to a deeper commitment to the Cooperative Program as a primary challenge of world mission support.

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W.A. Criswell to Observe
30 Years as Dallas Pastor

9/20/74

DALLAS (BP)--In October, W.A. Criswell will observe his 30th anniversary as pastor of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) largest church. His ministry at the First Baptist Church here has produced an impressive 9,398 baptisms, 25,139 additions by letter and statement, an increase in budget of over \$3.5 million, and contributions totaling \$50.6 million.

During Criswell's ministry, the church plant has grown from two buildings to 10 buildings, with property valued in excess of \$17 million. Church membership has increased from 8,253 to 17,867.

Although the former SBC president (1969-70) will celebrate his 65th birthday in December, the leadership of the church is trying to convince him to remain in the pastorate at least another five years. They have declared the anniversary date as "the beginning of Dr. Criswell's 31st year as pastor."

His public response is limited to: "It is in God's hands."

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Missions Study

9/20/74

'Crisis Communities
May Lose 500 Churches'

ATLANTA (BP)--A study of churches in crisis communities, conducted by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (HMB), has concluded nearly 500 of the denomination's churches will not exist in 10 years if present trends continue.

A community in crisis is one making significant changes in racial or ethnic, housing, industrial or commercial characteristics.

The study of nearly 1,000 churches assumed that the average Southern Baptist church designs its programs toward the white, middle class of America.

Therefore, if a community is changing to one of the defined crisis criteria, it will become something other than a middle class, white community.

The survey was a comprehensive questionnaire sent to 217 directors of missions in metropolitan associations to select the churches and compile data.

A 75 per cent response (average response for mail-out questionnaires is 25-30 per

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cent) showed that almost 18 per cent of the metropolitan association churches are in communities in crisis--989 churches out of a possible 5,543.

Don Mabry of the board's department of survey and special studies carried out the survey for a project committee of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) coordinating committee.

He reports more than 50 per cent of the churches lost membership during the five year study (1969-73), with 44 per cent of these losing 50 or more persons. Seventy-two per cent had a net loss in average Sunday School attendance. (However, home Bible fellowships are not usually counted). About 52 per cent of the churches have less than 150 in Sunday School.

"The data indicate the bulk of churches facing crisis communities are slowly dwindling down until they will cease to exist," says Mabry.

The project committee, headed by Warren Rust, also of the HMB, requested the survey to determine trends heretofore only suspected.

"The survey results will be shared with all program leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention so we can begin to act collectively to bring responses to bear on the problem," says Rust. "No single agency can handle it."

Sixty-five per cent of the churches have less than 200 in average attendance and one-third have less than 100 in attendance. "This indicates churches facing community crisis are the smaller churches which would have less leadership, buildings and money with which to meet the ministry needs in a community facing crisis," according to Mabry.

More than half the churches have total receipts of less than \$50,000 and 30 per cent have less than \$25,000.

"Many are moving toward a time when they cannot afford a full time pastor living on the field and serving the church," says Mabry.

Size and location of churches did not exempt them from the crisis; even debt plays no significant role. More than two-thirds of the 989 had little or no indebtedness at all in 1973.

Also the evangelical thrust of the churches seemed to have no bearing on the losses. Only 15 of the churches reported no mission gifts in 1973. Twenty per cent gave \$2,000-3,000 last year. More than 30 per cent gave \$5,000-25,000 and 15 per cent gave \$25,000 or more in total mission gifts outside the individual churches.

In baptisms more than 10 per cent had 50 or more average for the 1969-73 study. The average number of baptisms SBC-wide is 12 per year.

Statistics were nearly the same for additions by letter.

"This shows a strong evangelical thrust," says Mabry, "but the net gain is small since the mobility of most of these communities is extremely high. These churches are increasing their memberships significantly, but having small net increases because members move out of the communities almost as fast as new members join."

The study indicated that apparently people are willing to travel back to their old neighborhoods for church in any but a racially changing situation. The racial situations were where the largest losses were reported. Smaller losses were in neighborhoods changing to lower class white, industrial, commercial or multi-family housing.

"Since 17.6 per cent of the churches in the responding associations are in crisis communities, if this same percentage were applied to the 11,000 churches, there would be 1,936 churches located in crisis communities," adds Mabry.

"The dimensions of this problem suggest it is significantly large enough to warrant some diligent searching for solutions."

CLC's Hollis Protests NBC's
Showing of 'The Godfather'

By James Lee Young

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) called on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) to cancel its announced showing of the Academy Award winning film, "The Godfather," set for viewing in November.

And an NBC spokesman refuted charges that the network is irresponsible and morally negligent in showing the film, said by some to be "excessively violent."

The network has been successful, rather, "in taking movies that couldn't be shown on TV," and making them suitable for "mature adult programming," said M.S. "Bud" Rukseyer Jr., vice president of public information for NBC, New York.

In a guest editorial written for the 33 news magazines and papers of Southern Baptist state conventions, Harry N. Hollis, director of family and special moral concerns for the Christian Life Commission, SBC, called NBC's decision to run "The Godfather" on prime time television an "outrageous example of upside down values. . ."

". . .NBC should announce that it is going to cancel 'The Godfather' and review all of its other shows to remove excessive violence. The other networks should clean house also," Hollis said, but didn't name the "other networks."

Hollis decried what he termed the "shoddy exploitation of sex and violence" in the new television season and said, "'The Godfather' is the essence of unhealthy violence. . ." It "elicits sympathy for some underworld people who make violence a way of life. This is what is most harmful about the movie," Hollis said.

Rukseyer, although he had not read CLC's editorial, said in a Baptist Press interview that the network "puts nothing on the air that we think will offend the majority or even a substantial minority of viewers.

"It is impossible to do mature adult programming and not offend some," he said.

The issue, Rukseyer continued, "goes well beyond 'The Godfather.' Subjects such as the 'Case of Rape' shown last year, and others, will bring strong negative response before the material is actually seen."

NBC isn't concerned with just high ratings or huge profits by showing movies such as "The Godfather."

Rather, he said, the network presents materials of special interest to viewers that it considers suitable for viewing. He added that the network believes controversial issues ought to be discussed via the mass communications media of television.

Rukseyer said NBC tries to see that "what we put on the air isn't sensationalized. We don't take our responsibility lightly."

He echoed a previous statement by NBC's chief censor Herminto Traviesas, who called NBC's edited version of "Godfather," an "anti-violence show." Traviesas, said Rukseyer, is a Presbyterian elder and scrutinizes everything to meet responsible programming standards for NBC. Treviasas feels few changes will have to be made to the film, Rukseyer said.

He cited clipping of frontal nudity in the film and also portions of a bloody horsehead scene.

Hollis told Baptist Press that what NBC told him was going to be left was, in his opinion, "still too violent for television."

Rukseyer recommended that persons desiring to protest the film do so after viewing the edited version on television. That would make more sense, he indicated.

As to who should view the film as it is to be shown on NBC stations, Rukseyer said that would be a matter of individual judgment.

He said that programs such as "Wonderful World of Disney," and "Lucas Tanner," among others were evidence that more "mature" programs weren't the only fare considered and shown by NBC.

Rukseyer said he was opposed to prior censorship, but noted, ironically, that NBC has been accused by some writers and critics as itself being guilty of that act. "There are as many views as there are people," he noted.

One concern of NBC officials has been how much they can actually cut from the film without destroying it. Cost of the film to NBC has been reported at \$10 million. "The Godfather" is said to be the top money making film in history.

Hollis called on Baptists and other viewers to write NBC President Bob Howard and Richard E. Wiley, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, in Washington, D.C., to protest the showing of "Godfather."

He also advised individuals to call their local NBC-affiliated television stations to urge that the film not be shown, that viewers write to sponsors of NBC's Saturday and Monday Night at the Movies to protest the sponsorship of the film.

"When we stop buying the products from sponsors of exploitative violence, programs will rapidly change," Hollis said. He said also, "Offer Christian love and justice as the best hope to diminish the violence that is so widespread in our society."

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Hultgren Succeeds
Robinson as Chairman

9/20/74

NASHVILLE (BP)--Warren C. Hultgren, pastor of First Baptist Church of Tulsa, Okla., has been named chairman of the Southern Baptist Committee on Mission Challenge. He succeeds R.J. (Jack) Robinson of Augusta, Ga., who resigned as chairman for health reasons.

Hultgren is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Tex., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth and is a member of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee.

The Southern Baptist Committee on Mission Challenge is a special 21-person committee approved by the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas last June to study the overall mission challenge. The committee will report at Norfolk in 1976.

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