

**Colson Tells of  
Prison Ministry**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Charles W. Colson, formerly President Nixon's special counsel and "hatchetman" has a new story to tell.

Colson has told the country about his conversion to Jesus Christ in the melee and confusion of Watergate. The story of his conversion originally broke not because Colson told it-- of his conversion--but because a reporter wanted to know why he showed up at a White House prayer breakfast.

The ex-Marine Corps officer served seven months in prison for obstruction of justice in the Daniel Ellsberg break-in probe, and his Christian experience and firsthand discoveries of the reality of prison has led him to become involved in a ministry to inmates.

His new story is less of Charles Colson's experience and more of what is happening through a ministry that is "discipling" inmates to teach others about Jesus Christ.

Colson is involved with Fellowship Foundation, a group of Christians, in Washington, D.C., who, among other projects, actually bring men and women out of prison in mid-sentence to do them in-depth Bible study and training. He says it works.

The inmates live at the Good News Mission in Arlington, Va., during their brief sojourn in the outside world. Classes are held in Fellowship House, about a 10-minute drive from the White House.

"They come out of prison with still quite a bit of time to do--most of them," Colson told Baptist Book Store managers at their annual awards luncheon here recently. The Book Stores chain is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

He was in Nashville to promote his new book, "Born Again," which tells of his climb up the political ladder to become special counsel to President Nixon, then the plummet from power, Colson's conversion experience, prison and his continued Christian experience.

Colson said the program, to which he devotes time when he isn't speaking around the country, has produced some "really beautiful results. We have trained 26 prisoners who have gone back in. A few of them have been released. The Lord decided he could use them better outside of prison."

In one prison--a federal youth institution and one of the "better physical facilities"-- Colson said the chaplain had literally "run dry spiritually," and "there was nothing in the way of a spiritual life." The center was populated by young people, with a heavy percentage of blacks, and there "was a lot of violence."

The Fellowship Foundation brought out two young men--one white, the other black--who spent the two weeks at Good News Mission and went back to the prison.

"There's now in that prison a Bible study fellowship on Monday nights of 35 inmates... groups that meet and pray together in each dormitory. The chaplain freely admits he has had a conversion experience..., and the warden recently wrote a letter and said, 'The center of life in this prison today is the chapel.'"

There have been other stories, Colson added, "where it just hasn't worked that way, but in this one it has...and in many of the other prisons we've seen miracles performed and lives changed.

"The inmates are selected by brothers in the Fellowship," Colson said. "People ask me, 'How do you choose them?' And we say that we ask God to choose them, and he does. We pray about it. We have the men going in and out of the prisons. They visit, talk with the inmates and eat with them. We try to find two really committed believers inside that prison."

In the program, the inmates have "Bible study and fellowship," and they "really find out what the love of Jesus Christ is," Colson said.

The mission is run by Southern Baptist minister Bill Simmer, assisted by Paul Kramer, a former inmate, and other Fellowship members. Inmates go up to Capitol Hill to meet some of the congressmen and senators who are "believers in Christ and part of the Fellowship work in Washington." They also meet with the head of the Bureau of Prisons, among other leaders, said Colson.

It has been a "tremendously enriching experience for those who meet with them as well as for the inmates. And then they go back into the prisons and work with their fellow inmates one-to-one in discipleship--not trying to convert the whole prison.

"Nothing like it had ever been done before," Colson said of the inmates program. The head of the Bureau of Prisons in Washington "had no reason to approve what Sen. Harold Hughes (a Fellowship member) and I asked him to do, and subjected himself to a lot of criticism in doing it." But the Fellowship members prayed and "God opened the doors.

"One of the beautiful things...is that those men and women who have come out of the prisons have ministered to the people on the outside," Colson said.

One U.S. senator and his wife "made commitments" to Christ after spending an hour with some of the Fellowship's inmate trainees, Colson cited.

"He was a man we had worked on for a long time."

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(BP) Photo to be mailed to Baptist state papers.

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President of India Visits  
Bangalore Baptist Hospital

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BANGALORE, India (BP)--The president of India, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, visiting the Bangalore Baptist Hospital here, commended the hospital's service to humanity.

The president was in Bangalore on other business for four days when William C. Mason, Southern Baptist missionary and hospital administrator, extended the invitation.

Along with the ministers of labor and education, the president arrived at the hospital in late afternoon. After welcomes were extended and introductions made, the president toured the facilities.

A large model of the proposed hospital complex gave Ahmed a glimpse of future goals, according to Dr. Rebekah A. Naylor, Southern Baptist missionary physician. The president also visited the surgery suite and intensive care unit. He spoke to the patients, giving fruit to some of them. His tour also included one adult ward, one pediatric ward, the outpatient facilities, laboratories, X-ray department and pharmacy.

In the hospital canteen a display prepared by the community health team showed a model village and each aspect of the community health program. Nutrition feeding programs were explained, and several posters described the leprosy program being started, the leukoderma research project currently underway and several proposed future projects. Leukoderma is a skin disease which results in the social exclusion of its victim.

During the informal tea, the president was asked for advice or suggestions. His main advice, according to Dr. Naylor, was to expand the mobile rural ministry of the hospital. Beside his signature in the guest book he commented, "I am happy to learn of the good work done here in the service of humanity."

Mason presented Ahmed a leather-bound Bible in Hindu. The president is Muslim.

"Indeed this was a high honor given to our hospital," said Dr. Naylor, "but most important it was a tremendous opportunity to show the president and the nation all aspects of the ministry of this Christian hospital."

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Senate Tables Amendment  
Prohibiting All Abortions

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Senate, in a 47-40 vote, rejected consideration of a proposed constitutional amendment that would forbid abortion under all circumstances.

The rejected proposal was one advocated by Sen. Jesse Helms (R.-N.C.). It provided that a fetus "shall be deemed, from the moment of fertilization, to be a person and entitled to the right to life." Such a definition by the U. S. Constitution would prohibit legal abortions under any and all circumstances.

The Senate vote to reject consideration of the proposed constitutional anti-abortion amendment in effect sustained a decision last year by the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments not to recommend any anti-abortion amendment.

Sen. Birch Bayh (D.-Ind.), chairman of the subcommittee, held hearings and worked over a period of two years to consider all viewpoints on all proposed anti-abortion constitutional amendments. The hearings were triggered by efforts of anti-abortionists to overthrow the 1973 Supreme Court decision on abortion.

The action of the subcommittee last year and the current decision of the Senate effectively kills any chance for consideration of any constitutional amendment on abortion by the Senate in the 94th Congress. The process in the House of Representatives is still in the hearing stage, which probably means that no action will take place there on abortion amendments this year.

In seeking to circumvent the committee process, Sen. Helms moved that his proposed constitutional amendment be taken up immediately. He explained to the Senate that his purpose was to force a vote on abortion by Senators who wished to avoid voting on such a "hot issue."

Sen. Bayh, who is personally opposed to abortion, explained why he is opposed to a constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion. "The matter of amending the Constitution supercedes the opinion of individual Senators on the appropriateness of abortion," he said.

"At stake in all of the proposed constitutional amendments is the broader question of whether the Constitution is the means by which the moral views of certain of our citizens should be imposed on those who hold different views," Bayh said. "It was the judgment of the constitutional amendments subcommittee, which studied this issue through a hearing record of more than 3,000 pages, that it was not appropriate to amend the Constitution in regards to abortion," he concluded.

The Senate's rejection of consideration of proposed anti-abortion constitutional amendments is in harmony with positions taken by a number of Baptist bodies, including the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

The Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution at its 1971 meeting in St. Louis urging enactment of legislation "that will allow the possibility of abortion under such conditions as rape, incest, clear evidence of severe fetal deformity, and carefully ascertained evidence of the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother."

That position was reaffirmed in 1974 at the convention's annual meeting in Dallas.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, at its October 1973 meeting on the subject of anti-abortion constitutional amendments, voted to "go on record as opposed to the Buckley-Hatfield Amendment and any like or similar constitutional amendments, and that the staff be authorized to take all available action to oppose them."

The committee felt that a controversial moral issue such as abortion should not be the subject of a constitutional amendment. In addition, the committee felt that civil and religious liberties would be restricted by such proposed amendments to the Constitution.

The American Baptist Churches in the U. S. A. went on record at its annual meeting in Boston in 1968 as recognizing "that abortion should be a matter of responsible personal decision."

The resolution stated further that legislation should be enacted to provide abortion services when the physical or mental health of the woman is endangered, when the fetus has been documented to have physical or mental defect, and when pregnancy results from rape, incest, "or other felonious acts."

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Bicentennial Feature

John Hart--Baptist  
Patriot Retires

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HOPEWELL, N. J., Dec. 1778 (BP)--Baptist John Hart, the farmer and legislator who signed the Declaration of Independence, retired from public life here due to ill health.

A champion of religious freedom and individual rights, Hart signed the Declaration knowing it might cost his life and fortune. But he could not foresee the price he would pay for patriotism.

Before the war Hart owned a valuable farm and interest in a number of mills. His property was in the path of the armies, and during the fighting his crops were consumed, his stock driven away and his farm and mills laid waste.

Hart's large family was scattered and the legislator was hunted as a traitor by royal troops. For weeks during the war he was a fugitive in the Sourland Mountains, hunted from house to house, spending the nights wherever he could find shelter, and even sleeping with farm animals.

His wife's health broke under the strain of war and Hart was forced to flee to escape capture. She died during his absence.

Hart had earlier given the land on which the Hopewell Baptist Church was built and he and his family worshipped there regularly.

He served in the New Jersey Assembly 10 years where he militantly defended popular rights. Hart opposed the Stamp Act, favored an address to the king which declared that the right to tax resided with the colonies, and led the opposition against providing for royal troops.

He was elected to the Continental Congress on June 22, 1776, and at age 65 signed the Declaration of Independence on Aug. 2, 1776. That same year he was elected vice-president of the New Jersey Congress and was unanimously selected as speaker of the first assembly under the new constitution of New Jersey.

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CORRECTION:

In the BP story of 4/28/76 on R. G. Lee, the headline and first line of the story should list his age as 89 instead of 88.

Thanks

Baptist Press