



**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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John J. Hurt--30 Years of  
Upsetting Baptist Applecarts

By Jennifer Bryon

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--After 30 years of attending Southern Baptist Conventions (SBC) and upsetting Baptist applecarts, John J. Hurt reflected on his last SBC here as a Baptist state paper editor:

"Things were different when I came on the scene, said Hurt, 68, retiring editor of the Baptist Standard, Dallas. "We've changed and, for the most part, it's for the better."

"When I came on the scene," the "dean" of Baptist state paper editors recalled, "a half dozen men largely charted the course for the SBC and its Executive Committee. If they agreed on something it would go through."

But a few areas haven't changed, Hurt noted. For example, he is tired of every speaker calling the convention "great." There have been no new jokes and few new illustrations, he added.

One of the great moments Hurt has seen at SBC meetings was in 1954 when J. B. Weatherspoon, then chairman of the SBC's Christian Life Commission, brought a report to the convention to endorse the Supreme Court ruling on civil rights. The report stated that the New Testament demanded that much and more. After debate, the SBC passed the report.

"That may seem like a small thing, but you never move a democracy with great strides," Hurt pointed out. "You must keep the tension on over a period of years. We get there more slowly but more effectively."

The convention now has a much larger body, which is better educated, better informed, and is a body which has ideas, Hurt said.

The SBC's size is one of its greatest problems, believes Hurt. Only seven or eight thousand people attended the convention when Hurt became editor of The Christian Index, Atlanta, in 1947. He feels such large groups as the ones now respond more to emotion than to logic.

"Our committees have gotten so large that they are a congregation instead of a deliberative body trying to make decisions," he said.

The SBC has always been preacher-oriented and will be, he believes, as long as it opens on Tuesday and closes on Thursday.

"My editorial of convention week said it was a convention of preachers and denominational staff, not the people. I'd like to see the convention sessions extend over the weekend so more laymen and women could attend."

"Most of the SBC presidents have not dealt with anything he has had to get after them about," Hurt said.

"Each president has filled the role in his own way. Sullivan was one of our best leaders. By his background and experience he was an able spokesman in the year when Baptists have been attracting national attention."

One of Hurt's most memorable conventions was the time the president, R. G. Lee, had to leave the president's chair to make an appeal to the convention to keep from splitting over a motion that had been presented to the body.

"That's the only time I recall such a thing having to be done, but Lee put his reputation on the line and appealed to the convention for peace. The motion was defeated," recalled Hurt.

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Hurt said the SBC has had some "duds" for presidents, but because of the convention's democracy, it has survived.

"However, the overall level of our presidents has been exceptionally high."

It's time that a democracy the size of the SBC recognize that most presidents it elects are more than "merely available."

"There is nothing wrong with a man wanting an office of influence if his motives are for Christian leadership," said Hurt. "I'm skeptical of these nominating speeches which insist God has inspired the nomination."

Three decades of conventions have taught Hurt that anything can happen at an SBC business session.

"I've been at every convention for 30 years but not at all the sessions," he confessed. "But I'm always at the business sessions. A good journalist does not miss those."

He feels the SBC is primarily a time for fellowship and inspiration.

"We fight our battles, forget them, and go home with a greater determination for missions."

Missions is what comes to Hurt's mind when he thinks of Southern Baptists and the word frequently appears in his conversations about them.

"It started with Missions Advance under Therow Rankin, former executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Board," said Hurt. "Now we have it through Bold Mission Thrust."

Hurt attributes his love for missions to a personal relationship with Rankin and to having traveled in many of the countries where missionaries are located. He has great respect for Southern Baptist missionaries.

"It's much deeper than that," says Jack Harwell, editor of The Christian Index who served as associate editor under Hurt. "He has a soft spot for missions. It's his concept of the gospel. He believes the call to be a Christian is a call to world missions. Hurt believes foreign missions holds Baptists together."

"Southern Baptists have never been reluctant to make decisions and get involved if they are informed," said Hurt. "We must get them mobilized for Bold Missions."

He has taken upon himself to keep Southern Baptists informed over the years. He has prodded agencies and boards and attacked issues to get the facts for the people.

Because of this, Hurt, often called the dean of Southern Baptist journalists, has been labeled crusty, stubborn and outspoken. He agrees.

He doesn't think an editor has any business being popular. And it really doesn't bother him that he has the reputation for being crusty.

"I don't care. An editor gets called crusty by writing the facts and saying what needs to be said. The hierarchy doesn't like it, but the people do."

But Hurt's reputation as crusty may be only that. According to Harwell, Hurt is this way because he thinks that is the way a journalist is supposed to be.

Although Hurt has definite convictions, he will change if he finds he is wrong.

"I have confidence in myself to produce a newspaper although I've never produced the perfect one yet," said Hurt. "And I've made a lot of small mistakes through the years. There have been a few big ones. I wonder if I did all I could in the racial crisis in Georgia. Maybe I should have been more progressive."

"I was dead wrong in a crusade to keep John Kennedy from getting elected," confessed Hurt. "I was afraid he wouldn't be independent from the Catholic church. But he was more devoted to church-state separation than any president until now. It's too early to judge Carter on this point yet."

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Supreme Court Acts On  
Religious Freedom Cases

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WASHINGTON (BP)--In separate actions announced here, the U. S. Supreme Court declined to schedule for argument two cases involving freedom of religion for workers.

The high court let stand the ruling of a federal court of appeals declaring that the City of Albuquerque, N. M., made reasonable efforts to accommodate the religious needs of a Seventh Day Adventist fireman who refused to work from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday in observance of the Sabbath.

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The fireman claimed that federal law required the city to bear the burden of meeting his religious needs. The city argued successfully, however, that the fireman had declined to trade shifts with other workers of the same grade.

An amendment to the Civil Rights Act passed 1972 and now enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) requires employer's to prove that "undue hardship" would result by accommodating the needs of Sabbath-observing workers.

The high court's action has the practical effect of letting stand the lower court's view that the City of Albuquerque proved that such hardship would result.

In another case also involving the Civil Rights Act, the high court let stand a Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that a Texas man cannot be forced to pay union dues contrary to religious convictions.

When Howard T. Hopkins refused to pay the required dues at the "agency shop" where he was employed, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers brought suit against him.

But the court of appeals held that Hopkins' right to the free exercise of religion takes precedence over so-called "union security."

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States May Exclude Women  
As Guards in Some Prisons

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By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court ruled here that Women cannot be denied jobs as prison guards solely on the basis of sex. At the same time, however, the court held that prison conditions in Alabama are so bad that the state may deny such positions to women.

The unusual ruling, in which the high court leveled a blast at Alabama's prison conditions, means that Dianne Rawlinson, a college graduate with a major in correctional psychology, may be refused employment solely on the basis of being female.

Rawlinson had objected primarily to a weight and height requirement for prison guards in Alabama. The state requires that they be no shorter than 5'2" and weigh no less than 120 pounds. Rawlinson did not meet the weight requirement.

The high court ruled that the height and weight requirements violate federal anti-discrimination law but held also that due to "the environment in Alabama's penitentiaries," the state may refuse to hire women as "contact" prison guards.

Such guards are those who have actual, continual physical proximity to inmates.

Quoting a federal district court finding that Alabama's prisons are characterized by "rampant violence" and "jungle atmosphere," the high court noted that the environment in the prisons "is a peculiarly inhospitable one for human beings of whatever sex."

"In a prison system where violence is the order of the day," the ruling continued, "there are few visible deterrents to inmate assaults on women custodians."

The result is that "the employee's very womanhood would thus directly undermine her capacity to provide the security that is the essence of a correctional counselor's responsibility," the court held.

In making its ruling, the high court acknowledged that while denying women jobs as prison guards across the board violates the 1972 amendment to the Civil Rights Act forbidding sex discrimination in hiring, the law does provide for "extremely narrow exception(s)" such as the situation in Alabama.

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Justice Thurgood Marshall, joined by Justice William J. Brennan Jr., dissented, saying that other states allow women to serve as prison guards in male prisons without encountering serious problems. Two states, California and Washington, filed friend-of-the-court briefs in the case against the Alabama practice.

Marshall said that to justify "what would otherwise be considered unlawful discrimination against women" because of Alabama's "barbaric and inhumane" prison conditions is "like saying two wrongs make a right."

Marshall also attacked the majority's reasoning that women prison guards might cause sexual attacks against them. He argued that "this rationale regrettably perpetuates one of the most insidious of the old myths about women--that, women, wittingly or not, are seductive sexual objects."

The high court's action will have the effect of outlawing such employment criteria as height and weight restrictions against women, but will also allow states to eliminate women as "contact" prison guards where prisons are considered to be particularly dangerous to women.

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'Super Church Not My  
Term;' Bailey Smith

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DEL CITY, Okla. (BP)--Bailey Smith, new president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' conference, said here he did not use the term "super church" in reference to leaders of churches who have served as presidents of the group over the last four years.

Rather, the pastor of First Southern Baptist Church here, said the term was used in a question to him during an interview between sessions of the Pastors' Conference in Kansas City, Mo., as to whether pastors of smaller churches could be elected president of the organization.

Smith said he concurred in answering the question that it would be difficult for pastors of churches, that run, for example, 150 in Sunday School to be elected president. But he did not originate and would not have used the term "super church" himself, he added.

The original article reported, and Smith repeated, he does not believe pastors of bigger churches deserve the recognition of the Pastors' Conference presidency any more than pastors of smaller churches.

The problem, Smith had said, is that the small church pastor "just hasn't had the exposure we've had . . . not that we deserved to have it."

Smith said he believes all churches are "super churches" that are doing God's will.

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High Court Strikes Down  
Death Penalty for Rape

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By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Supreme Court ruled here that states may not impose the death penalty for the crime of rape.

In its 7-2 decision, the high court also hinted broadly that no crimes other than first degree murder are sufficiently heinous to demand capital punishment.

The new ruling follows by one year a decision upholding the death penalty for first degree murder by an identical 7-2 margin.

In light of that decision, some 35 states have made premeditated murder a capital offense, while only three still have rape so listed. They are Georgia, Florida, and Mississippi. The latter two rape statutes provide for the death penalty only when the victim is a child and the rapist an adult.

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The new decision spares the life of Ehrlich Anthony Coker, a convicted murderer, rapist, and kidnapper who escaped from the Ware Correctional Institution near Waycross, Ga., nearly three years ago while serving several life sentences.

On the night of his escape, Coker broke into the home of Allen and Elnita Carver, robbed them, and raped Mrs. Carver, a 16-year-old woman. He then took the couple's car and kidnapped Mrs. Carver. She was later released and Coker was arrested.

After being convicted of escape, armed robbery, motor vehicle theft, kidnapping, and rape, Coker was sentenced to death in a separate jury proceeding, as required by Georgia law.

Justice Byron R. White, who wrote the court's opinion, declared that "we have concluded that a sentence of death is grossly disproportionate and excessive punishment for the crime of rape and is therefore forbidden by the eighth amendment as cruel and unusual punishment."

The court, while declaring that "short of homicide, (rape) is the 'ultimate violation of self,'" went on to say that "we have the abiding conviction that the death penalty, which is 'unique in its severity and revocability,' is an excessive penalty for the rapist who, as such, does not take human life."

Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, joined by Justice William H. Rehnquist, disagreed. In a strongly-worded dissenting opinion, they accused the majority of overstepping "the bounds of proper constitutional adjudication by substituting its policy judgment for that of the state legislature."

Burger said that members of the high court do not have "license to engraft their conceptions of proper public policy onto the considered legislative judgments of the states."

He also warned that the new decision has the "clear implication" of forbidding death penalty laws against such crimes as airplane hijacking, kidnapping, and mass terrorism.

Justice Lewis F. Powell, who agreed with the majority in striking down the death sentence in Coker's case, also felt the decision was too far-ranging. He argued that in some circumstances, rape ought to be punished with death.

Justice William J. Brennan Jr. and Thurgood Marshall, the only two who voted a year ago to declare unconstitutional the death penalty for first degree murder, reiterated once more their conviction that the sentence of death always constitutes "cruel and unusual punishment."

Southern Baptist Schools  
Get Good 'Report Card'

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Baptist Press  
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By Jack U. Harwell

MOBILE, Ala. (BP)--One of the most encouraging "report cards" ever issued to Southern Baptist colleges and universities was presented here by one of the nation's leading evaluators of educational effectiveness.

"Southern Baptist institutions, though like all colleges and universities today confronted with educational and financial problems, are as a group in sound condition," Earl J. McGrath, director of the Program in Liberal Studies at the University of Arizona, told the annual meeting of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools (ASBCS) here.

McGrath and his associates were given \$100,000 last year by the Lilly Endowment of Indianapolis, Ind., to make a major study of Southern Baptist educational institutions.

That study, using data gleaned from Baptist faculty, staff, trustees and students, grew out of the National Colloquium on Christian Education in Williamsburg, Va., in June of 1976, under the direction of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Education Commission.

"These SBC institutions are in remarkably good shape, comparing them with other private institutions around the country. No other denomination, as a whole, can compare with Southern Baptists, as a group," McGrath told the ASBCS.

"It would be hard to find a group of schools, especially a church group, where the esprit in the educational family is so uniformly high as that we found in these 49 SBC school studied," said McGrath, a long-time educator and former U. S. Commissioner of Education.

"In my judgment this institutional esprit de corps is a remarkable asset," he said. "It is worth a lot of money to a school in a day when so many educators are whining and griping and protesting."

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McGrath's exhaustive study of 49 of the 53 Southern Baptist schools surveyed such topics as statements of purpose, clarity of goals, long-range planning, financial stability, faculty freedom, student opinion, trustee relationships, denominational involvement, service to the community, shared decision-making, openness to innovation and other such educational criteria.

More than 132 different items were used to describe and analyze each of the 49 schools individually and all of them collectively. Included in the study were 12 comprehensive universities, 28 liberal arts colleges and nine junior colleges.

Trustees of Lilly Endowment have been so impressed with findings of the McGrath study team that they have allocated another \$50,000 for McGrath and his associates to visit various campuses and confer with administrators about detailed analyses of their particular school.

One of the study team's strongest statements came in the section related to church-college relationships. One finding stated:

"To use a biblical metaphor, those colleges that blow either hot or cold stand the best chance of meeting the hard days ahead. Their lukewarm sister institutions are already experiencing profound academic travails that threaten their survival."

McGrath elaborated: "In the past 10 years, private institutions have increased their enrollments about 10 percent, on the average. Several denominations have actually lost enrollment. But Southern Baptist institutions have increased their total enrollment by 31 percent in the past 10 years. There must be reasons for this growth."

He said: "Our year-long studies clearly indicate that one major factor in this growth among Southern Baptist schools is directly related to the clarity of their purpose and mission."

The study findings reported: "While the distinctive purposes of Southern Baptist colleges may persuade them that their educational mission lies outside the 'mainstream' of American higher education, these same purposes, programs and experiences are becoming increasingly attractive to many thoughtful citizens across the nation who are dismayed by the moral confusion that is often reflected in our national policies.

"While many Southern Baptist colleges continue to serve local and regional needs of their constituencies...it seems reasonable to suppose that their Christian purposes, if advertised broadly, could have drawing power far beyond their denomination, state or region," the report added.

"One of the major current issues confronting Southern Baptist churches may well be the degree to which they wish to utilize their colleges and universities as national and international resources for evangelical mission."

McGrath explained: "Our nation is hungry for moral, ethical, spiritual moorings. Our educational institutions have been criticized by the general public for not giving the people more help in solving these dilemmas. They want the kind of education--the kind that stresses values as well as knowledge--which your Baptist schools are clearly giving," the report continued.

And, he added with emotion, "It is not honest to claim to be a religious institution and not do anything to be distinctively and aggressively religious. Many other denominational schools have failed in this most fundamental loyalty, but the 49 Southern Baptist schools we studied have not failed.

"As a group, they have maintained the strongest church and denominational ties of any body of schools in the nation. This has to be a major factor in their general good health in the educational sphere."

The report of McGrath's study group did cite some changes of emphasis in the financing of SBC educational institutions.

One was a growing dependence on government tax funds for financial support.

The financial analyses were made by John Minter Associates of Boulder, Colo., one of the best-known institutional financial analysts in the nation.

Minter's team pointed out, among other things, that in the average SBC school about 16 percent of its assets are debts, compared to the national average of 22 percent for independent schools of all types.

He also said assets of Baptist schools have been growing at the rate of seven percent for the past two years, compared to the national average of five percent per year for private institutions.

He did warn that "current liabilities" are increasing rapidly, "but not at a rate as high as the national sample." This would be short-term physical plant debt, in the main, he said.

The report cited a trend that in 1974 Baptist schools got eight percent of their total income from government tax sources. By 1976 that percentage had grown to nine percent. Some Baptist schools accept no direct government financial aid.

Minter's report conceded: "Favorable progress made by all the Baptist colleges and universities as a group must not conceal the fact that a few institutions are experiencing financial stress. Some may even be in serious financial difficulty."

McGrath said that Southern Baptist schools appeared to earn low grade marks in two extremely touchy areas of educational evaluation--academic freedom and institutional innovation--but that "to me, what might appear to be low marks are actually compliments to the Baptist schools.

"There is a wide variation of freedoms in 49 Baptist schools," McGrath continued. "Most of them rated slightly below the national average for all types of institutions of higher education in limits of freedom.

"Freedom is interpreted to cover such areas as openness to new ideas, inviting controversial speakers on campus, completely free student newspapers, dress codes, hair lengths, new programs, etc.," he said.

McGrath interpreted: "This apparent curtailing of individual freedoms is exactly in line with what amounts to the strongest feature of Baptist schools; e.g., they stand for a special Christian distinctive, they are true to their sponsoring bodies and they insist on the teaching of moral values.

"You can't do these essential things without appearing to be a little bit narrow or strict. But, in the final analysis, this is one of the finest compliments to pay to a church-related school, so long as reasonableness and tolerance are kept in balance."

He did concede: "I think administration, faculty, trustees and students need to have long and open discussions about campus freedoms, so that no one fails to understand what the limits are. But, once those limits are agreed upon, they should be observed. Otherwise, a so-called Christian school loses its reason to be."

Turning to innovation--"willingness to hear and consider new ideas and programs"--McGrath's group reported: "When Southern Baptist institutions are compared with each other and with other colleges and universities on the innovation scale, a number are perceived to be quite experimental. They not only stand above their sister institutions, but compare very favorably with the nation's sample."

One area in which SBC schools rated low in the McGrath team's study was in "concern for advancing knowledge"--specifically, basic research and writing for scholarly publications.

The report said that in recent years the academic thesis of "publish or perish" has lost its popularity and there is a swing away from extensive research and writing in smaller schools.

"Actually, this low score is another compliment to Baptist institutions. It means that administrators and trustees are requiring faculty and students to stick to the school's basic functions, and that small private Baptist schools are not trying to compete with huge, tax-supported, research-publication-oriented universities in areas where Baptist schools can't hope to compete," McGrath said.

"In short, this means that your teachers are open to their students in the classroom and on campus, and not tied down to the laboratory or library," he said.

Another area drawing strong praise in the McGrath team study was "meeting local needs," or ongoing adult education and cultural programs serving businessmen, industry and others in continuing education.

"I expected this feature of SBC schools to be rather low," McGrath said, "but it is relatively high. We found considerable involvement of Baptist schools in every conceivable type of program to serve particular publics in or near their locations."

The report continued: "The position of Southern Baptist colleges is noteworthy because many are located in relatively small towns in which the number of prospective adult students might be expected to be limited by population and by absence of industry. These institutions deserve commendation for their consciousness of the need for continuing education in their constituencies and for attempting to meet it."

Some of the warmest praise for Baptist schools as a group came in the section of the report dealing with esprit, or school pride: "As a group, these Southern Baptist colleges are perceived by their membership to be enjoying high morale."

Acknowledging pockets of low morale and some cases of wide variance between trustees, administrators, faculty and students on campus esprit, the report observed:

"Professional and lay members of the Southern Baptist Convention, which is enjoying such vigorous growth, will want to consider steps that can be taken to engender in all their institutions the same level of high morale and commitment now exhibited in some of them."

McGrath made a few concluding personal observations: "My associates and I have had long experience in examining institutions of higher learning. This group of Southern Baptist institutions is in about the best condition of any denominational group we have examined.

"There is nothing in our report that I would find really damaging--and that's most unusual for a study of this type. It is a most encouraging report to Baptists from an outsider," said McGrath, a layman of the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

"I would hope that some of the positive practices so clearly exhibited by these testing scales would be retained and strengthened.

"The commitment of Southern Baptist academic communities to their churches, and to our kind of Judeo-Christian society--especially to the transmitting of moral values--should be confirmed by this year-long study and report.

"We hope our study leads to all kinds of reaction groups on individual campuses and in collectiv educational councils of the Southern Baptist family.

"This study will be of value to individual institutions only to the extent that they apply the findings seriously in planning their future development.

"The most glaring need revealed by the study is the urgent necessity for trustee s, administration and faculty--and in some cases students--to fully understand the institution's basic purposes and for all to come to a meeting of the minds as to how to meet those purposes.