



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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F. G. Schwall Jr. Named  
To SBC Annuity Board Post

DALLAS (BP)--Frank G. Schwall Jr. of Richmond, Va., has been named assistant to the president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Annuity Board, effective July 1.

The appointment of Schwall, 39, was announced at the board's headquarter's here by President Darold H. Morgan.

Schwall is presently serving as annuity secretary for three Baptist state conventions --Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.

Morgan said Schwall will coordinate insurance and retirement programs for students at the six SBC seminaries, and will also handle special assignments as directed by the board president from time-to-time, particularly in the area of retirement guidance.

"We need to reach more effectively the seminary students. We can enlist them in the retirement and insurance protection benefits of the board while they have time to build adequate retirement income and before health conditions restrict their insurability," Morgan said.

The Annuity Board provides for retirement and insurance plans for pastors and for other church-related vocational workers in SBC churches and agencies.

A native of Staten Island, New York, N. Y., Schwall is a graduate of the University of Richmond, a Baptist school, and of Southeastern Seminary, Wake Forest, N. C.

Before becoming annuity secretary in Richmond in 1973, he was pastor of College Avenue Baptist Church, Bluefield, W. Va. He is a former vice president of the Baptist General Association of Virginia. He is married and has two sons.

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BWA International Commission  
To Study Christian Ethics

WASHINGTON (BP)--A new international Study Commission on Christian Ethics has been appointed by the Baptist World Alliance. Robert S. Denny, BWA general secretary, announced here.

Named chairman was Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, Tenn., Denny said.

Co-chairman of the 30-plus member commission is Edith F. Robinson, who works with Christian education in Haiti for the American Baptist Churches in the USA. Secretary is R. Fred Bullen, general secretary of the Baptist Federation of Canada.

The new commission will continue a study of public morality, begun by a previous commission, and will be a forum for discussion of Christian insights on issues such as abortion, euthanasia, "mind-expanding" drugs, and ethics in investments.

Commission members will conduct their studies via correspondence and annual meetings and will prepare study papers, Denny said.

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Missionaries' Journey Home  
Full of Trials, Triumphs

By Ruth Fowler

RICHMOND (BP)--The Finlay M. Grahams left behind a victory in Baptist work, traveled through a "no man's land" others feared to enter, and finally arrived in the United States to tell of life during Lebanon's civil war of more than one year.

The victory was the graduation of their one senior student from Beirut's Arab Baptist Theological Seminary. About 70 people from the seminary community saw the young Moroccan graduate. The seminary had remained open, not missing even one day of classes, throughout the war-torn, school year.

In a telephone interview, Graham said the fighting had gotten closer to the seminary within the last weeks, with some rockets landing on the seminary grounds. But the work continued and the students will return for the fall term, he said.

As the Grahams prepared to leave Beirut for a short trip to the U. S., increased fighting made their exodus difficult. The journey to the airport had to be made through an area of Beirut called "no man's land" which divided the two fighting factions. Radio reports were not good. No one was advised to enter.

The Grahams said they prayed about it and felt certain they should go ahead with their trip to the U. S.

They went to a friend's house to pick up mail and packages to bring to the states. From there they called the James K. Raglands, Southern Baptist missionaries, whose home would be their next stop. The Raglands, living near the Beirut Baptist School, said the fighting was still going on and the trip was not advisable.

The Grahams again prayed and "had a certainty" they should continue. At a checkpoint dividing the two sectors, armed soldiers advised them to turn back, warning them of snipers reportedly in "no man's land." Mrs. Graham told her husband the decision was his. They went on.

There was not one car, not one person to be seen in the area. The slow half-mile journey through the heart of Beirut seemed much longer than it was, Graham recalled. All around was the evidence of a raging civil war--massive hotels gutted by fighting, looted stores and homes. There was no sound. The normal city noises were replaced by an eerie deserted feeling, he said.

By what the Grahams call a "miracle of God," they were allowed to pass and reached the other side safely. The Raglands were surprised and pleased to see them. They had not really expected the Grahams to come through.

Next came the trip to the airport. The driver for the Beirut Baptist School was hesitant. He was, according to his identification papers, a Christian. The trip would be through the heart of Muslim territory. Yet, he wanted to drive the Grahams, because he said they had done so much for him he would do anything for them.

The last leg of the journey went safely. Before their plane left, they called the Raglands and learned the driver was back safely. With the knowledge that everyone involved in their exodus was alright, they caught their plane out of Beirut.

Behind them, still carrying on Baptist work, are three missionary couples and two single missionary women.

Much of the work has been hampered, some stopped by the war, but the Beirut Baptist school has continued for much of the time and missionaries remain to teach. No Baptists have been hurt, although several have lost family members, according to reports. Three churches have been damaged, but services continue in all but one.

One new church is being born in the midst of the war, Graham added. This preaching point is composed of people stranded in the seminary area, unable to attend their regular places of worship. When organized it will have 25-30 charter members with seven or eight already awaiting baptism, he said.

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Relief work has continued as missionaries seek to help families, most of whom are Baptist, to stay alive economically. An appropriated \$21,000 has aided 250 people, including 65 Baptist families. Unemployment is critical in Beirut, because industry and business are at a standstill, Graham said. Of the funds, made available by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, \$6,000 was appropriated to repair churches, but repairs will not begin until the fighting ends, a board spokesman said.

Wide-spread relief efforts will have to begin as soon as the war ends. There have been more than 30 cease-fires in the over one year of fighting, and the war continues. Graham feels it will take 10 years to rebuild, even with massive aid from surrounding governments.

"Baptist work will continue," Graham said. "Baptist folks in Lebanon have a wonderful spirit. They are just waiting for the opportunity to get out and witness again. Of course, they aren't sitting at home doing nothing. There have been some wonderful experiences of people coming to know the Lord."

The Grahams plan their return to Beirut in September when seminary classes begin again. They would like to return to a peaceful city in the midst of rebuilding. They will return though, even to continued war, Graham said.

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Pastor Sends 15,000 Letters  
Urging SBC Abortion Action

Baptist Press  
5/21/76

HALLETTSVILLE, Tex. (BP)--Robert Holbrook, a pastor here, is so determined that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) will go on record opposing abortion that he is sending 15,000 letters to SBC pastors and laymen, the Houston Chronicle reported.

The letter calls on Baptists to help launch a massive effort to get the upcoming annual session in Norfolk, June 15-17, to adopt a resolution opposing abortion, according to a report by Louis A. Moore, the Chronicle's religion editor.

Holbrook, who coordinates a group called "Baptists for Life, Inc.," told Moore the mailout is costing \$1,700 and that numerous Baptists have contributed funds for the project.

The three-page letter charges that "certain of the news media and abortion advocates" have interpreted past SBC actions as supporting abortion, the Chronicle said.

"It is very serious to assert that the largest evangelical denomination, which is usually identified as conservative and Bible-believing, is associated on the abortion question with some of the most radical and liberal of social and theological groups in their support of the infamous Supreme Court decision of 1973, but that is the case," Holbrook's letter said.

"We need to adopt a new resolution on abortion at the upcoming convention in Norfolk," he says.

"When abortion is mentioned to certain convention leaders, they retreat behind the 'hard cases' and insist we be on record as supporting these 'tragic exceptions,' all the while ignoring that over 99 percent of the abortions are done simply because women do not want the baby," Holbrook's letter said.

"This gives liberals a perfect opportunity to paint Southern Baptists as being in support of a legal situation which will permit any kind of abortions," it continued.

Holbrook has written a resolution to accompany the letter, which he says is not as strong as he would like, but is as strong as the Norfolk convention is likely to accept.

He told Moore that he has backed away from a statement made last year (after his third unsuccessful attempt to get through a motion on abortion) that he would not present another one.

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"I made that statement out of keen disappointment and frustration because the resolutions committee would not allow messengers to vote on the issue" because they said the SBC had already spoken on it, he elaborated to Baptist Press.

He feels the SBC resolution passed in 1971 and reaffirmed in 1974 is too ambiguous and "wide open."

In two "whereases," that resolution notes that "some advocate no abortion legislation, thus making the decision a purely private matter between a woman and her doctor" and "others advocate no legal abortion, or would permit abortion only if the life of the mother is threatened."

Then the 1971 resolution resolves "that this convention express the belief that society has a responsibility to affirm through the laws of the state a high view of the sanctity of human life, including fetal life, in order to protect those who cannot protect themselves . . ."

It continues by calling on "Southern Baptists to work for 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."

He told Baptist Press that the situation has changed and that it is time for the SBC to rethink its position.

His proposed resolution, which he has already submitted to the SBC resolutions committee, says:

"Whereas Southern Baptists have historically held a high biblical view of the sanctity of human life, and

"Whereas, according to United States government figures, 99 percent of the abortions performed in America are for convenience and do not fall into the so-called 'hard case' category, and

"Whereas, the 1971 Southern Baptist Convention resolution rejected the concept of abortion being a purely private decision between a woman and her doctor, and

"Whereas, the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention has warned the churches that 'a society that relies on abortion as a primary means of birth control is likely to discover a decrease in the reverence for life and the appreciation of children' and 'the Christian's concern for the value of the defenseless fetus is not likely to advocate the removal of all legal protection surrounding the fetus' right to life,'

"Therefore, be it resolved that the SBC affirms that while we recognize that distress and unusual circumstances surrounding rape, incest and certain other pregnancies do exist for some Southern Baptists, we abhor the widespread practice of abortion, its commercialization and exploitation by irresponsible abortion advocates and that we further affirm that the Supreme Court decision of 1973 as stated and implemented is contrary to both biblical and traditional Christian views of the sanctity of life."

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Atkinson To Join  
Mississippi College

Baptist Press  
5/21/76

CLINTON, Miss. (BP)--Ralph C. Atkinson Jr., who has served as dean of the school of religious education at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, since 1973, will join the administration of Mississippi College here, Aug. 1.

Atkinson, 41, will become vice president for institutional advancement, according to Lewis Nobles, president of the Baptist school. He will be responsible for long-range planning and financial development and will coordinate public relations and alumni activities.

A former administrative assistant at Mississippi College, his alma mater, Atkinson has been academic dean at Ottawa University in Kansas and Dallas Baptist College.

The Yazoo City, Miss., native holds a doctor of philosophy degree from the University of Michigan and a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, besides a bachelor of arts from Mississippi College.

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