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76-127

Lebanon--Fighting Christians
Not Necessarily 'Believers'

By Oscar Hoffmeyer Jr.

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)--Throughout history Christians have been at war against sin and human injustice.

Now Christians in Lebanon are fighting Moslems. But all those wearing the Christian label are not necessarily "born-again believers," say two missionaries assigned to Lebanon.

Bill Trimble and his wife Vivian, both Louisiana natives who have served as Southern Baptist missionaries in that area of the world since 1961, said the current civil war there is sectarian, but religious groups are similar to American political parties.

He said the term Christian is directly related to citizens whose ancestors lived in New Testament times. "When the Crusaders were traveling through that part of the world they were met by Christians who lived in the hills among the cedars of Lebanon."

But the term Christian today should be distinguished from "believers," Trimble said:

"Christian is used in the general sense in Lebanon today rather than in the sense of a person practicing religion."

Lebanese carry the identification of their fathers. "When a person is born an identification card is issued on which is listed date and place of birth, father's name and with what religion the father is identified. A child becomes a Christian or Moslem or whatever because of the father's identification," Trimble explained.

The civil war that began about two years ago between two religious groups, the Christians and Moslems, has disrupted Southern Baptist work. In addition to churches, Baptists are operating a school and seminary in Beirut, a city of nearly a million people. Baptist missionaries remaining in Beirut elected not to evacuate with other Americans on July 27.

"The school was to have been self-supporting this year, but the war has changed that," Trimble said. At last report the Baptist school was still operating and four missionaries were in Beirut, the James K. Raglands, Mable Summers and Emma Cooke, all associated with the school.

"When we returned to Lebanon from furlough in 1972 the work was growing rapidly and showing great promise," the Louisiana native said. At that time a total of 32 missionaries, including journeymen and volunteers, were on the field and a goal of 100 baptisms by 1974 had been set.

"This was a tremendous goal, but realistic," he said, "and we had plans for the school to be operating without subsidy from the (Southern Baptist) Foreign Mission Board (except for missionary salaries) by 1976."

The veteran missionary couple who arrived in the United States the latter part of July for a year's furlough said the war with its many political and ideological implications has disrupted church life and brought danger to missionary personnel as well as nationals.

Disruptions have included: restricted night services because it has been dangerous for persons to be out on the streets after dark; nationals are unable to work regularly and do not have funds to contribute to the support of the churches and school; property has been damaged from bombs and bullets.

In Rahbe, the church building, constructed with Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions funds, was completely destroyed. The pastor lost all of his personal possessions and library, and villagers were driven from their homes. In Rayak (pronounced Reek) where there was a strong work, pastor Fuad Sharoush, now in Jordan, said as far as he knows only two members of the church are left in the village.

A missionary home was recently destroyed that contained furniture of Wilson and Cheryl Tatum who are now working in Yemen until their furlough a year from now. Tatum is the son of Scott

Tatum, former pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, now on the faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

In early July the home of the William O. Hern family received three direct hits destroying most of their furniture. The HERNs were not in Lebanon. Heavy fighting close to the Arab Baptist Seminary caused two direct hits on the roof of the main building and several hits on the seminary grounds. Blasts broke most of the window panes in the main building and damaged contents of two rooms.

Trimble said moving from one section of the city to another is very dangerous because of the fighting. One section of the city may be controlled by Christians, he said, and another section controlled by Moslems. To enter a section without proper identification can be dangerous.

Traveling across town to attend church is almost impossible. Danger is faced not only from warring factions but from misguided rockets that may fall on buildings and homes and from the criminal element, he noted.

Mrs. Trimble said, "Several months before we left we could walk in a radius of 25 blocks of our home because we were known. But the last night we were there we slept in the hall because it was protected. We had to wear earplugs to keep out noise of the rockets so we could sleep." Many homes were without water or electricity, she said.

When the Trimbles left Lebanon early this summer for furlough they were fortunate to be able to travel to the airport, now reported closed, inside the same section. But even then they passed through several roadblocks and were constantly checked.

Trimble said the situation is as intense as news reports indicate. The FMB will not order missionaries out of a country because the decision is left to the missionary following the leadership of the Holy Spirit, he said. Missionaries have been staying as long as possible in order to support a cluster of Baptist believers who can't leave.

Presbyterians are the largest evangelical group in Lebanon and have started many churches and schools there in the past 100 years. Southern Baptists sent missionaries in 1948 to work with a small group of Baptists living there.



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Deaconess Suppression Partly Cultural, Historian Says

By James Lee Young

RIDGECREST, N. C. (BP)--A trend toward defining deacon duties as an "administrative and officiating ministry," combined with the large-scale American tendency to place men in management positions, has helped to suppress the role and status of deaconesses in this country, a Southern Baptist historian said here.

Acknowledging the factor of biblical interpretation, Charles W. Deweese, assistant director of editorial and research services for the Nashville-based Southern Baptist Historical Commission, said a decline in Baptist deaconesses occurred after 1800. Among other reasons he cited was more and more administrative, business and management categories--generally assigned to men--given precedence over the "more caring and supporting ministries."

The issue of deaconesses is gaining new attention among Baptists, Deweese said during a Baptist Heritage Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center. "The general interest in women's rights in American life has affected church life and the current focus on deaconesses has a direct connection with this interest."

Deweese said he was not endorsing or condemning deaconesses but was merely relating the findings of historical study assigned in connection with the heritage conference. Based on his research and varying opinions among Baptists concerning deaconesses, he stated:

1. Although deaconesses have existed in every century of Baptist life, they have never been and are still not widespread;
2. Deaconesses have been few in number because of varying views of available biblical data, the strong identification of the diaconate with management functions, the American proclivity to keep participation of women in management positions at a minimum, and the resultant absence of bringing up the deaconess issue;
3. Two more-flourishing periods for deaconesses have been the latter 1700s and the present. "Basic thrusts toward liberation in American life lay behind and within both periods;"
4. Deaconesses appear to have flourished best in times when the diaconate has been interpreted more in terms of supporting and caring ministries rather than narrowly in terms of church management and business administration;
5. Baptist churches with deaconesses have had various practices regarding them. Some have ordained them. Some have given them equal responsibility with deacons, while others have not. Some have designated women as "deaconesses," while other Baptist churches have given them the title of "women deacons."

No statistical information is available on the number of deaconesses in churches of the 12.7 million-member Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) but churches in a number of states are known to have them.

Although it's difficult to trace any influence regarding deaconesses by the earliest English Baptists on Baptists in America, "It's at least beneficial to note that the former set some precedents concerning the acceptability of deaconesses," Deweese said.

Deweese, who accepts the English Separatist theory of Baptist origins, said "obvious evidence" of the transfer of the deaconess idea from the English Separatists to early Baptists existed in the person of Separatist pastor John Smyth in Gainsborough, England, as far back as 1607.

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Another English Separatist, Thomas Helwys, who became leader of the first Baptist church in England in 1611-12, prepared a confession in 1611 stating that deaconesses, along with other church officers, were to be elected and approved by their church with fasting, prayer and laying on of hands. Helwys' confession later served as the first English Baptist confession, Deweese said. However, he cautioned, "The statements by Smyth and Helwys don't describe actual English Baptist deaconesses," but "approve the concept and appropriateness."

Deweese said he found no references to deaconesses in writings of 17th Century Baptists in America, and deaconesses in the 18th Century U. S. were confined largely to the Separate Baptists. Further, he said, Morgan Edwards, earliest historian of Baptists in America appears to be one of few, if any other, authors to discuss deaconesses of the era. His writings on the subject appeared by 1770-74.

Edwards mentioned deaconesses in nine Separate Baptist churches in Virginia, three in North Carolina and one in South Carolina, Deweese said. And although most Particular Baptist churches named by Edwards did not have deaconesses, he did write that a few in South Carolina had them, also a few Tunker (German Baptist) Churches in Pennsylvania.

Deweese said Edwards, who favored the concept of deaconesses, cited Rom. 16:1 and I Tim. 3:11 as biblical bases. However, the 18th Century historian said he could offer no account of the ordination of a deaconess because such an ordination had never fallen under his notice. He wrote, however, that they were to nurse the sick, tend to the poor and confine themselves "chiefly . . . to those things wherefor men are less fit."

"Regardless of how churches approach the deaconess issue, it's imperative they base decisions on a sound study of biblical teachings, historical precedents and contemporary needs, rather than on sociological traditions and cultural biases which have no relationship to the Bible, Baptist history and spiritual practicality," Deweese said.

-30-

Pastors Can Minister
To Each Other

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By Sharon Roberts

GLORIETA, N. M. (BP)--Pastoral support groups, in which pastors can share the fears and joys of the pastorate, are not only possible but necessary to meet what may be one of the greatest needs of Southern Baptist pastors today.

Travis Hart, Okeene, Okla., pastor and resource leader at a Bible-Preaching Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center, presented a model of pastoral support that has worked for him.

Hart's work in establishing a pastoral support group in Oklahoma was met with excitement by pastors at the conference. It also has caught the attention of concerned church administration leaders at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

"Pastors cannot give without receiving," noted Bob Dale, supervisor of the board's career guidance section. "Because some Southern Baptist pastors do get discouraged and sometimes drop out, there is an obvious need for personal encouragement and professional growth.

"We view Hart's work as a possible model for mutual pastoral support. Its basic, down-to-earth approach can function to help pastors minister more effectively."

What now serves professional and personal needs of Hart and four other Oklahoma pastors began as an outgrowth of a graduate study research project. The support group concept emerged from Hart's original intention to investigate the pastor's role as a professional in handling conflicts. Believing that while ministers are in a giving profession they still need to receive affirmation, Hart put into practice his conviction that pastors can minister to each other effectively.

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Martin Edwards of Watonga, Travis Hanna of Hennessey, and David Flick and Calvin Jones of Canton participated with Hart each third Monday of the month, continuing long after the research requirements were fulfilled. They set aside the afternoon immediately following the monthly associational executive board meeting and luncheon in Kingfisher to discuss academic and theological trends, denominational issues, practical approaches to church work and personal concern.

"The group is only as successful as members are equally supportive," Hart emphasized. "I had to take the initiative in sharing some areas of personal concern; the others followed suit."

Some months the two and one-half hour time period was devoted to discussion of denominational issues and doctrine, including the charismatic movement, the role of women in the ministry and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

"We also discussed practical needs of ministry, such as curriculum usage, promotion of church programs and organization. Primarily, we shared plans that had worked for us," Hart added.

"There always was a time to share personal concern. I remember being surprised that other pastors had similar problems. Confidentiality was of such a nature that even our wives did not know what went on."

The pastors Hart shared his concept with during Bible-Preaching Week expressed excitement about its potential. Pastoral care and support are "issues that are ripe today" was one response. Another pastor viewed Hart's venture as meeting "the greatest need among Southern Baptist pastors today."

At a time in Southern Baptist lives when the needs and skills of pastors are being closely examined, Dale sees "the simple structure of Hart's support group as oneway for pastors, particularly those in rural or small-church settings, to encourage each other and to grow.

"Pastoral support is an idea whose time is now," Dale concluded.

-30-

Ohio Baptists Vote
Staff Positions, Budget

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SENECAVILLE, Ohio (BP)--The executive board of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio accepted a proposal for a \$1.5 million budget and filled two directorships in its meeting at Seneca Lake Baptist Assembly here.

The board named Orville H. Griffin, 44, currently area director of missions for the Greater Dayton Baptist Association, as director of evangelism and stewardship and Virgil D. Barnett, 41, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, Parma, Ohio, as director of property management and operations.

The staff appointments filled the last of five director-level vacancies open since Feb. 1. The convention has 10 director-level posts. Earlier, the board elected Theo Sommerkamp as editor of the Ohio Baptist Messenger and director of public relations, Helen Allan as Woman's Missionary Union director, and Rondel T. Martin as Brotherhood director.

Griffin, one of the early arrivals among Southern Baptist leadership in Ohio, came to the state in 1954 as a pastor. The Kentucky native has served as area director of missions for the Greater Cincinnati and Southern Hills Baptist Associations and is a former state convention president. Barnett is a former electrical engineer.

The proposed 1977 Cooperative Program unified budget, which amounts to \$1,529,455, must be approved by the convention's annual meeting, Nov. 3-5, Fairborn, Ohio.

-30-

CORRECTION

In line 1, paragraph 2 of Baptist Press story mailed 8-2-76, entitled "Choral Work Honors Arthur B. Rutledge," change the title of the choral work to "Go Then and be a Witness" (rather than "Go In...").

Thanks,
Baptist Press