

BAPTIST FEATURES

PRODUCED BY BAPTIST PRESS
NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION
127 NINTH AVE., N., NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE AL 4-1631
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July 14, 1963

Editor's Note: J. W. Storer, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Foundation, is the eighth person featured in this Baptist Press series on Convention leaders.

Storer Finds Company
Among Book Friends

By Albert McClellan
For Baptist Press

"I can't remember when I couldn't read," J. W. Storer says, reflecting on his long life of intense interest in books.

"I don't think we have ever appreciated the power of the printed word--both for good and bad." From the day "Tip Lewis and His Lamp," a story about a boy and his Bible, came into his hands, books have been his constant companions.

By the time he left his last pastorate, the First Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla., he had accumulated about 5,000 books, most of which he gave to the Oklahoma Baptist University library.

Some of his books were so much a part of him that he could not give them away. Not all of them were especially noteworthy, but in strange ways they had gripped him to shape his many sided but completely whole personality.

Conklin's "Vest Pocket Writing Desk Book" (1905) has gone through many bindings, as has Michall Fairless' "The Roadmender" and Wright's "The Fisherman, Tackle and Bait," a manual on soul-winning.

Other books that have influenced him are "Systematic Theology," "The Great Poets and Their Theology," "The American Poets and Their Theology"--all by Augustus Strong; "The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression" by Mullins; the works of Shakespeare, which he says, "gripped me early"; "Moby Dick" by Melville; and "Les Miserables" by Hugo, which he used to read through once a year and whose characters he still intimately knows.

Storer is still a collector of books, and in his seven years in Nashville as executive secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Foundation he has bought and read more books than most men read in their lifetime. His shelves are filled with all the important titles having to do with the War Between the States and with Nazi Germany and World War II.

He has an interesting collection of Nazi military insignia and a military document autographed by Adolf Hitler.

Books have stimulated his interests in many directions and have made him an avid collector. He now has a complete set of original letters of American presidents from George Washington to John F. Kennedy, an almost complete set of "Confederate Veteran, 1893-1932," and several important War Between the States items, including an autographed photograph of Robert E. Lee.

One of his best collections, a series of autographed, handwritten poems by early American poets, he presented to Oklahoma Baptist University on the dedication of its library. Another collection, memorabilia related to War Between the States generals west of the Mississippi, he sold a few years ago.

For many years Storer was a successful grower of roses, and collected a great number of rare specimens.

But his central and dominating interest is the preaching of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even here he has demonstrated a remarkable many-sidedness. One close pastoral friend once wrote of him: "When he writes, we wonder why he is not a religious journalist; when he preaches, we are sure he was built for the pulpit."

Writer, preacher, administrator, leader, prophet, seer, humorist--he can answer to the call of all of these--but, as his friend continued, "There are those...who would say that his human touch, his brotherliness, and his sympathetic insight gave them an unforgettable exhibition of the Christian ministry at its best. The people can trust him and he will not fail."

Many people have trusted him, from the day his pastor in Baker, Ore., said, "Wilson, have you ever thought about preaching?" until this very hour when Southern Baptists trust him with the investment of approximately \$6 million of foundation funds.

He has served seven churches in four states as pastor. The last one, First Baptist Church, Tulsa, was \$375,000 in debt--12 times the annual budget. This was a lot of money in the depression year of 1931.

His friends advised him not to go to Tulsa--all except the late George W. Truett, Dallas pastor, who said, "Go, young man, and stay." Storer did go, and stayed for 25 years. When he left, the church was nearly three times as large, and the annual budget exceeded by \$100,000 the \$375,000 debt of 1931.

Three times he has been honored with doctor's degrees. He served his own state convention as president during the weary war years. He was the first person to serve as chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee and president of the SBC at the same time. His tenure as SBC president--1952-54--took him into all parts of the world.

Storer has a high boiling point, but he can become very angry with sham, pretense or untruth. He especially dislikes the kind of preaching that "hears tears falling on the rug."

He denies being an optimist. "No," he says, "I am a hopist. You know, like 'hope thou in God.'" He regards himself as an extremely fortunate man, and though he has had to work hard and "dig for everything I know," he has not thought of himself as an underdog.

Most men with a personal history such as his would develop a mixture of self-pity and extreme pride, but not J. W. Storer. His mother died when he was six. Until he was 15, he lived with his rancher father and went through the eighth grade. He left home with a cattle driver, and at the end of the trail he was converted in a Baptist mission in Baker, Ore.

He started to Bucknell University in Pennsylvania with \$65 and a railroad ticket, but in Kansas City he took the advice of a Harvey House waitress and investigated William Jewell College near there. He stayed for six years to become valedictorian of the Missouri Baptist school, but couldn't serve because he had failed his senior math course.

It was in this moment of extreme agony that he had one of the great experiences of his life. Faced with summer school, he was extremely disheartened.

He was walking with the librarian, Miss Nora Wilbanks, in whom he was very much interested. He was grumbling, "It's not fair. I'm not going on. I am through." There was a long, long silence. The young lady said, "Well, Mr. Storer, if you are through with them, then I am through with you."

Storer said, "Right there I learned what has to be done has to be done, so I went on and did it." Ever since, the compulsion to get immediately to work on his hardest tasks has been Storer's mainspring.

He finished the course, got the degree, and the following December married the librarian, who has been by his side as his constant inspiration for more than 50 years.

What is his philosophy of life?

If he had one, it might be this: "There are a few simple things that have become part of me and by these I am going to travel. I am not suspicious; nobody is trying to knife me. I have a good forgetter and do not hold grudges. Sense of duty is one of my driving forces.

"I shall never forget the words of Robert E. Lee to a widow who was about to give up her only son to the army: 'Woman, teach your son the meaning of duty.' Above all, I believe the Book. The Bible is the way of life for me."

In many ways the man is the boy and J. W. Storer is Tip Lewis doing his best to live by his lamp. A fruitful life for God began long ago when a young mother pressed her newborn son to her heart and prayed for God to make him a minister.

The boy became a man and the man became a pastor before he learned from an aunt of his mother's solemn dedication. He knew then the explanation of the strange providence that had guided him all his life. It is no wonder that the picture of his mother is always on his desk.

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Cutline to Storer Photo

(7-14-63)

INDIAN PIPE--The pipe and pipe holder (lying on desk) are part of the collection of Indian relics possessed by J. W. Storer, former Oklahoma pastor now executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Foundation in Nashville. (BP) Photo

July 14, 1963

Tribble Explains Why Trustees Want Change

RALEIGH (BP)--President Harold W. Tribble of Wake Forest College has explained to the general board of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina why the school wants to have non-Baptist and out-of-state trustees.

The Baptist school in Winston-Salem, N. C., has asked that 16 of its 36 trustees be permitted to come from outside the present circle of North Carolina Baptists.

Tribble said the state convention several years ago approved the college's moving toward university status. To achieve this, the college needs large foundation gifts, bigger money than he believes Baptists in the state can supply.

"It would be unrealistic to ask Baptists for \$75 to \$100 million," Tribble told the general board.

The school's trustees think by widening membership on the trustees, the school can better attract the big gifts needed to move to university stature.

"We would like to prove to America that an excellent university can be operated in close relationship with a state (denominational body). This has not been done in other schools," Tribble added.

"This plan could be accomplished without taking the college away from the convention," he claimed. "Our trustees don't want separation from the state convention."

The proposal for non-Baptist and out-of-state trustees is headed for a decision at the annual Baptist State Convention meeting in Wilmington, N. C., in November. The general board was not asked to act on it; President Tribble appeared only to explain the proposal.

The November convention is also expected to vote on the convention's new general secretary, succeeding the late Douglas M. Branch.

The nominating committee indicated it will have a name to present to the next meeting of the general board Oct. 14-15. In North Carolina, the secretary must be elected both by general board and the convention.

Chairman R. Knolan Benfield of Morganton, N. C., said the nominating committee has narrowed its list of potential secretaries down from 85 names to "a much smaller list." Yet, he emphasized, it is "not a closed list."

General Board also approved a \$900,000 joint loan to North Carolina Baptist Hospital and Bowman-Gray School of Medicine. Bowman-Gray is a part of Wake Forest College. The hospital and medical school have buildings linked together in Winston-Salem.

The \$900,000 would be used in the early stages of a \$15 million development campaign. The loan would be repaid from campaign receipts.

Though it was not stated where the money would be borrowed, it was said to be unlikely it would come from the government.

Baptists Build City's
Only 20th Century Site

MADISON, N. J. (BP)--Dedication of a \$140,000 building for the Madison Baptist Church gave this city its first new church building since 1897.

The building houses the 250-member church, which had been meeting in a school building. The Madison congregation is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist Convention of Maryland.

Before its organization in May, 1960, the church was a chapel of Manhattan Baptist Church in New York City. Now the Madison Church itself sponsors two chapels, Raritan Valley and Roxbury.

Pastor Howard Hovde presided at dedication services, during which greetings were brought to the young church from a number of religious leaders.

Included in those bringing greetings was a representative of the First Baptist Church of Madison (Negro). A member of the Negro church recently left a legacy of \$3,200 for the Madison Baptist Church.

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Book Pays Tribute
To Annie Armstrong

(7-14-63)

BALTIMORE (BP)--A service of tribute to Miss Annie Armstrong and an autograph party were held here following publication of a biography of the pioneer Woman's Missionary Union leader, for whom a present-day home missions offering is named.

Mrs. Joshua Levering Evans of Richmond, Va., author of the book, was one of the speakers. She later autographed copies for hundreds of people, using the desk that Miss Armstrong used when she was the union's recording secretary in Baltimore.

Historic Eutaw Place Baptist Church, of which Miss Armstrong was a member, was the setting for the occasion. The book, "Annie Armstrong," was published by Woman's Missionary Union, Auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention

Miss Alma Hunt, Birmingham, executive secretary of the organization was the main speaker. She said of her predecessor, "I have been thrilled as I read her life to see how she forgot her problems and followed her ideals.

"How grateful I am to see in the audience tonight Negro and Chinese people whom Miss Armstrong loved. Tonight I am realizing a dream of my own and a dream of others for 25 years to give to this generation and to those who will follow this life of Miss Annie Armstrong."

Mrs. Evans, who wrote the biography, is the wife of the pastor of Weatherford Memorial Baptist Church, Richmond. Concerning Miss Armstrong she told the Baltimore audience, "She did not agitate for political and social changes, yet she sought to make restitution to Indians for the loss of their lands. She aided the Negro. She established a mission to welcome the foreign born who passed through the port of Baltimore when it was one of the two principal gateway cities for immigrants.

"She made trips to the Western Territory. She sought to make the United States a base large enough to win the world to Christ. She had faith. She said, 'Our task is great, but our Master is greater.'"

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Atlantan Moves West

(7-14-63)

O. Norman Shands of Atlanta was called as pastor of the Calvary Baptist church, Kansas City. Ralph H. Elliott, dismissed seminary professor, had served as interim pastor for 14 months after Conrad R. Willard resigned to accept a Florida pastorate. (BP)

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Kansas City Churches
Build Senior Housing

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--A \$1.7 million apartment building that is to be used exclusively for persons over 62 years of age is being built here by the Blue River Baptist association, a group of Southern Baptist churches in the Kansas City area.

H. M. Hunt, pastor of the First Baptist church of nearby Independence, and chairman of the Blue River Baptist Senior Housing committee, said, "It is not a nursing home, not a charity home, not an old folks home. This will be more than an apartment where no one knows anyone else. It will emphasize group life."

He said a recreation room and a patio will be furnished.

"Special programs and parties will also be scheduled," he added. "Older people need community interests and we hope to give them a chance to have a good time together." Although not a direct ministry, he said it would be operated under Christian ideals and fellowship. No medical care will be provided, however.

A 120-unit, 10-story building, it is expected to be completed by Feb. 1 and will be completely air conditioned. Each room will have a refrigerator, stove and garbage disposal. A garage will be provided inside the building as well as parking space outside.

The minimum age limit is 62, although persons whose spouses are younger than 62 may live in the apartment.

The Baptist association, which is comprised of 42 churches, obtained ownership and control of the project from a construction company this summer. The name of the apartment building will probably be changed to the Baptist Towers, Hunt said.