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Biography Volumes Being Considered

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention is considering producing three volumes of biographical studies, including a "Who's Who of Southern Baptist Leaders."

The first of the three, according to Executive Secretary Davis C. Woolley of Nashville, would be a biographical dictionary covering the years 1639-1900. The modern Baptist denomination, say historians, began in the early 1600s.

The second would be a biographical encyclopedia covering persons who lived from 1900 to 1960. No persons alive at the time of its writing would be included in this volume, only dead persons.

The third edition would be the "Who's Who" type publication. It would include the living persons filling important places in Baptist life.

Woolley said the projected venture would take at least five years to complete.

It was presented to the Historical Commission by a special committee at its 1963 meeting here for consideration as a future project, and was approved.

The commission also is considering issuing a "distinctive organ" to publish scholarly papers on church history topics.

Commissioners also approved a study leave plan for the executive secretary and research director, the top two full-time officers of the commission. Time not to exceed five months would be granted each of them, after four years employment. After one study leave, the officer would have to work at least three more years before obtaining more leave.

The Historical Commission would pay full salaries during the leave and would also take care of some expenses if the study leave were used to visit distant libraries and historical collections.

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Louisville Seminary Sets 1963-64 Budget

(7-20-63)

LOUISVILLE (BP)-- A \$1,430,940 budget for the 1963-64 fiscal year was approved for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary by its executive committee.

The budget is an increase of \$90,535 over the current operating fund. Most of the increased expenditure will go to the schools of religious education and church music and for library purchases.

Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program funds provide \$596,200 for the budget. The remaining amount comes from endowment income, gifts to the seminary, student fees and auxiliary enterprises, seminary officials said.

Jay Wilkey, a 28-year old soloist, pianist, oboist and composer, was elected assistant professor of church music.

The new faculty member has a master of music degree from the University of Iowa and has completed residence work on a doctor of philosophy degree at the University of Indiana.

As a part of implementing the Carver School of Missions and Social Work, three part-time church social work faculty members were approved by the trustees.

Lowell Lawson, director of the Boyce and Portland Baptist Centers in Louisville for the SBC Home Mission Board, was named an instructor to supervise phases of social

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work field instruction. A Louisville psychiatrist, Dr. Robert J. Lehman, who is also examining psychiatrist for SBC Foreign Mission Board candidates was named adjunct professor of psychopathology.

A third part-time faculty member will be named from the Kent School of Social Work in Louisville.

Approximately 20 entering students at Southern have indicated an interest in taking social work courses. Twelve second-year students will take the courses, said Allen W. Graves, dean of the school of religious education.

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Seminary Scholarship
Called Making Progress

(7-20-63)

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists are making progress in the general area of seminary scholarship, the vice-president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary told the denomination's historians here.

H. I. Hester of Kansas City, Mo., also said, "Today in all six of our seminaries, to varying degrees, the historical-critical approach is not only accepted but is practiced." Despite liberal shifts, Hester indicated Southern Baptists still are theologically conservative.

Midwestern seminary has been in the center of a controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention over how to use the historical-critical approach to analyze and study Scripture. Ralph H. Elliott was dismissed as professor of Old Testament and Hebrew there for not agreeing to withdraw from a second printing of his book, "The Message of Genesis," whose content and method of studying the Bible was attacked by many.

Hester was one of four panelists who spoke at the 1963 meeting of the Southern Baptist Historical Society. They discussed future trends in SBC life in light of past history of the Convention.

Other panelists were C. Emanuel Carlson, Washington, D.C., J. W. Storer, Nashville, and Mrs. Ollin J. Owens, Greenville, S.C.

Hester said Baptist pioneer area missionaries "are extremely conservative and also very loyal" in theology. This, he claimed, stems from the fact they "are not the most highly educated of our ministers." They work in a lonely atmosphere, feel the need of sticking close together on this account and hold to conservative theology. Pioneer areas are those where SBC work is newest.

Hester said the denomination also is making progress in race relations, in having a more moderate outlook on Christians of other denominations, and in developing better programs of higher education in Baptist colleges.

Carlson, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and a leading Baptist spokesman on religious liberty, said the "genius of our Baptist movement has been its emphasis on personal religion."

This has enabled Baptists to live in and adapt to all types of cultures--plantation economy as well as the industrial age.

Yet, Carlson said, it is both a genius and a problem. "We made an adjustment to the cultures, and also gave them our blessing, "mixing culture with religious faith, he continued.

"We made our peace with cultures of the past. Do we now have the mechanics to make our peace with cultures of the present? he asked. "We used to be able to adjust to changes by growing a new generation, but now things are changing so fast, we can not wait a generation. Can we adjust or will we be torn apart?"

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He presented these trends in Baptist life:

--"We must give more emphasis to content in our movement. It's not enough to have converts, but converts to what? We must find more meaning in our Christian commitment," he declared.

--"I see in the making a trend in the direction of a national adjustment rather than a regional cultural adjustment.

--"With the increasing corporateness of life, how can freedom of the individual be preserved?" he queried. Baptists, who by their emphasis on the person "have divorced ourselves from a role in making public policy," are "going to have to relate ourselves to public policy."

Carlson added, "Corporateness in the denomination and civic life does not erode the individual." It gives the person a chance to express himself as a social being."

Storer said Southern Baptists, with the current trend to take surveys of many facets of denominational life, may have "forgotten to survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died."

No survey, he said, should only confirm Baptist strong points. Surveys should make Baptists both satisfied and dissatisfied, he alleged. "With the surveys we make, we should give more attention to quality rather than quantity of what we put out."

Storer is executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Foundation, an SBC agency.

Mrs. Owens, a pastor's wife and well-known Baptist writer, enumerated "signs of revolt against the method-program merry-go-round." These included (1) objections to the amount of time required for church activities, (2) questioning of the results of church-centered religious education, (3) "brave" statements by some Baptist leaders for a climate in which to try new ideas and (4) "a general groundswell of discontent."

Responses, she said, show trends away from the method study course to study courses on Bible books and on topics such as communism. They show a "change in the way we view denominational material.

"We now use them (denominational periodicals) as the framework and go after related material," rather than relying solely on them, she added.

Another response is the moving to more formal, and less promotion-centered worship services. Still another is the greater tolerance with creative ideas and experiments with programs.

In answer to a question on the seminary student's exposure to different doctrinal views, Hester said some people "think of our students as 12-year-olds when in reality they are in their early 30s, married and experienced, pretty well able to take care of themselves.

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Owen Begins 7th Term
As Society President

NASHVILLE (BP)--Richard N. Owen, Tennessee Baptist editor, has been reelected to his seventh successive term as president of the Southern Baptist Historical Society. Owen edits Baptist and Reflector, published here.

Mrs. Ollin J. Owens, "Minnie Belle" to her readers in the leadership magazine, Baptist Program, is the society's new vice-president. She is the wife of a Greenville, S. C., pastor.

H. I. Hester, vice-president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., continues as the group's recording secretary. Davis C. Woolley of Nashville, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention Historical Commission, is its treasurer.

The society is an affiliate of the commission.

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Bill Lawson Says Bias
Needs Spiritual Remedy

BEIRUT, LEBANON (BP)-- An American Negro minister, William A. Lawson of Houston, Tex., told the Baptist Youth World Conference here that spiritual solutions must be found for human prejudice.

Lawson, pastor of the Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church of Houston, addressed group discussions at the Baptist meeting which has drawn delegates from 52 countries.

"We are forced by modern developments to recognize the world as an organic unity rather than as a necklace of separate societies," he said. "Shrinkage of the world from isolation to forced proximity has forced contact of group with group."

Pride is the source of prejudice, the young minister said. "Human prejudice is the other side of human self-love. I am not so much 'anti-you' as I am 'pro-me.' When I favor 'mine' I seem to be bent on rejecting 'yours.' As a matter of fact, my real sin is not rejection of you so much as an unhealthy preoccupation with myself."

Lawson said education has been tried and has failed in human efforts "to bring the golden age of which we dream." It failed, he said, because education does not make men compassionate. "If man is to transcend inter-personal conflict, it must be in some dimension which transcends human weakness and ingenuity."

And he continued, "Our very presence here in Beirut suggests that we no longer consider pragmatic solutions worth attempting. We have come here to affirm that the evils in man can only be erased by the grace of God through the love-act of Jesus Christ."

He challenged Christians of the world "to come together with a creative obsession for the miracle of the redemption of society through the ethic of Jesus Christ" and to "live out whatever Godly men agreed is nearest to the realization of that ethic in our day."

Lawson pointed repeatedly to the spiritual kinship of all people. "In a world of persons living with persons, our true unity proceeds from our common parentage--we are the children of the Father."

Looking to current events, the Texan said "the young of the world are attempting to offset social inertia by inducing crisis. They are the wise ones," he said. "Only their resources are open to question."

"Our task is not to discourage the young, to tell them that since their resources are questionable their quest is wrong. Our task is to direct them to the (spiritual) resource that history has proven radical and right. We must counsel them, lest they find themselves 'playing God' and in the end find only the disappointment of a world which is not changed because we did not invoke a World-Changer."

"My cry is crisis -- but crisis through Christ," Lawson said. "Otherwise the cry of time will be chaos, and the overlord and the underdog will share the same hell."

Lawson is also Baptist Student Union director at Texas Southern University (Negro).

A prominent speaker for Baptist student groups, Lawson toured Indonesia with Dan Pratt of Dallas in 1959 as a Baptist Student Union summer missionary, and was guest speaker for a 15-voice Texas Baptist student "Project Understanding" Choir which toured the Orient during the summer of 1961.

Lawson was also a major speaker in the Japan Baptist New Life Movement this spring.

Historians Hope New
Biography To Sell Well

By Theo Sommerkamp

NASHVILLE (BP)--Baptist biographies don't pay for themselves in book store sales. People don't seem to be interested in reading them, Southern Baptist historians and book store managers both lament.

Now comes a historian to tell at least part of the reasons why they may not. And this same historian, along with several colleagues, pays high tribute to a newcomer in the biography ranks which they hope will break the existing pattern.

Claude L. Howe, assistant professor of church history at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, reported on a survey he made of Baptist biographies dating well back into the 19th Century.

He told the 1963 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention Historical Commission "most biography writers magnify unduly the accomplishments and influences of their subjects.

"Some wrote without any consistent purpose," Howe continued.

"The biographies failed to relate persons to the times in a broad way." They were written too soon after the subject died and not enough time had elapsed to see the person in "clear historical perspective."

Not a single one, Howe found, showed any disagreement between the author and his subject on a major issue. The writers picked subjects from their family tree or close associates--and sometimes themselves as autobiographies.

They didn't answer these pertinent questions, according to Howe: What caused the subject to act as he did at a decisive turn in his life? How did he arrive at his set of values in life? On what hinged his success or failure?

Biographies seldom portrayed laymen. They did not "wrestle with the theological heritage inherited or bequeathed by the subject."

Despite these shortcomings, biographies can not be taken too lightly by historians, Howe cautioned. "Contemporary historians may still use them with profit," he asserted.

"Biography must be better, must be informative and must be interesting to attract wider readership in Baptist circles," he said.

The book Howe and other historians and librarians here are hoping will make a good seller is "Bill Wallace of China" by Jesse C. Fletcher.

The biography deals with a Southern Baptist medical missionary to China from 1935 to 1951. Dr. William L. Wallace was arrested by Chinese Communist officials and accused of heading a spy ring. In February, 1951 he died in a Communist prison from severe beatings.

Fletcher, the author, is associate secretary for missionary personnel for the SBC Foreign Mission Board, and lives in Richmond.

Miss Mary Christian, missions book editor for Broadman Press, has already forecast the book would be that press' "outstanding book of the year." The press is an arm of the SBC Sunday School Board in Nashville.

Outgoing Historical Commission Chairman W. Fred Kendall of Nashville said the book on Wallace would "speak to the hearts of young people and lead them to follow the same train, to see that the God who called Bill Wallace calls them."

Perhaps the impromptu remark of a Baptist library assistant reviewed it best: "I don't usually read books like this. But I couldn't put this one on Bill Wallace down till I finished it. It really gets with you."