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# JAMES L. BOYER: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

HERMAN A. HOYT

I met him for the first time more than fifty years ago. Late in May of 1928 my family and I had moved to Ashland, Ohio, where I expected to attend Ashland College in preparation for the ministry. My father dispatched me to buy bread for the family one evening at the Kroger Grocery Store which was located at the foot of Claremont Avenue in the very center of town. Those were the days when clerks assembled all the items of purchase for the customer.

As I recall, there was just one clerk in the store at the time, a young man whom I judged to be about 17 or 18. He was slight of stature but with an attractive countenance, and with dark eyes almost clamoring for business. He waited on me with promptness and I was on my way. Little did I dream at the time that within a few short months he would be a classmate of mine, enrolled as a freshman at Ashland College. Nor did I ever dream that our paths were to join and continue in a ministry for the Lord through more than five decades of time. In September of 1928 I learned to know him as James L. Boyer, a resident of Ashland County from birth and a lad who had grown up on a farm just south of town.

He was born on July 3, 1911. At the age of 10 he accepted Christ as his Savior in a revival service held at the United Brethren Church in the city of Ashland. He attended the local schools and graduated from Ashland High School in June of 1928.

In the normal course of events in those opening weeks at Ashland College we were thrown into some of the typical relationships that students experience. On one of those occasions I invited him to join me in a Gospel Team service which was held weekly on the campus of the College. The gospel team was made up of young men who were interested in the ministry or in Christian testimony, and this incident provided the occasion for a change in James Boyer's outlook and ambitions. Up to that time he aspired to a lifetime of pursuit in natural science, and more particularly, in the field of chemistry. From that point on the Lord led him gradually in the direction of Christian service.

It was not until the sophomore year that men in pursuit of the ministry were allowed to matriculate in the study of Greek. Both of us signed up for Beginning Greek, which turned out to be Classical Greek. We both majored in this area throughout the remainder of our college career, graduating in June of 1932.

An event in the spring of 1930 gave further direction to the life of James Boyer. The Board of Trustees of Ashland College decided to open a graduate school of theology in the fall of that year, with Dr. Alva J. McClain serving as its first dean. In the good providence of God this new school was to shape his theological thinking and direct him toward a biblically-sound ministry, and later a teaching ministry in Grace College and Grace Theological Seminary.

On July 3, 1931, James Boyer took to himself a wife, Velma M. Leedy. To this union were born three children, all of whom live in Northern Indiana: Leo of Winona Lake, Janet of Kokomo, and Donald of Warsaw. Eight grandchildren call James and Velma "grandpa" and "grandma."

In addition to his schooling in the local schools of Ashland County and City, he has attended five schools of higher education. He attended Ashland College during the years of 1928-1932, graduating with the A.B. degree in 1932. From 1932-1934 he attended Ashland Theological Seminary, but transferred to Bonebrake Theological Seminary, located in Dayton, Ohio, for his final year, graduating from that school with the B.D. degree in 1935. He felt it proper to finish his theological training in the school of his own denomination. While serving a pastorate in Mansfield, Ohio, he attended Oberlin School of Theology during the years of 1937-1940, and graduated with the S.T.M. degree in 1940. After ten years in the pastorate, he decided to move to Winona Lake, Indiana, and pursue a course of study leading to the Doctor of Theology degree at Grace Theological Seminary. This he embarked upon in the fall of 1950 and finished in 1952, writing a dissertation entitled "A Manual of Greek Forms."

His educational experiences are also embellished with other accomplishments. In the summer of 1958 he participated in the Asbury Theological Seminary Bible Lands Tour. During the same summer it was his privilege to benefit from the New York University Workshop in Israel. Then in the spring and summer of 1966 he served as the Annual Director of The Near East School of Archeological Studies in Jerusalem.

Dr. Boyer preached his first sermon in January, 1930, and from that day his preaching ministry covers a period of more than 50 years. Sixteen years as full-time pastor were given to the United Brethren Church. In 1934-1935 he served the United Brethren Church in

Verona, Ohio; from 1935-1946 he was full-time pastor of the United Brethren Church in Mansfield, Ohio; then from 1946-1950 he pastored the United Brethren Church in Warren, Ohio.

As interim pastor he has served five congregations. He was student pastor of the United Presbyterian Church in Hayesville, Ohio, from 1932-1933. Upon two different occasions he filled the pulpit of the Winona Lake Grace Brethren Church: from July, 1956, to April, 1957; and January, 1962, to October, 1962. From July, 1957 to June, 1958 he pastored the Brethren Church in Sidney, Indiana; and the Kokomo Brethren Church from January, 1964 to June, 1964. Then, more recently, while spending the winter in Florida, he served the Evangelical Free Church of Englewood, Florida, from January to May, the spring of both 1980 and 1981.

Dr. Boyer has distinguished himself as a scholar. While in College he was elected to the Scribes Honorary Literary Society. His technical skills led to his appointment as Financial Secretary of Grace Schools, a position he held for a number of years even after beginning his teaching career. For 30 years he has served as professor of Greek and New Testament in Grace College and Grace Theological Seminary. Even though he has retired as a full-time professor, he has been retained as a part-time instructor, giving the fall semester each year to this ministry.

Among his literary productions, in addition to his unpublished dissertation, "A Manual of Greek Forms," he has also published a New Testament Chronological Chart, a chart of The Period Between the Testaments, and a chart of The Chronology of the Crucifixion of the Last Week, which are widely used in college and seminary classrooms. He has written the book, *Prophecy: Things to Come*, and an exposition of First Corinthians entitled *For a World Like Ours*. In recent years much of his time has been devoted to assisting in the creation of Project Gramcord, a computer-based research tool for the grammatical analysis of the Greek New Testament. The fruits of his investigations using this tool have begun to appear in a series of articles.

Besides his election to the Scribes Honorary Literary Society while in college, other honors have been conferred upon him. He was the first recipient of the Alva J. McClain Award for Excellence in Teaching at Grace College in 1967. Later he was elected as Grace Theological Seminary's 1977 Distinguished Alumnus of the Year. In 1973 his book *Prophecy: Things to Come* was selected as the book of the year by the Brethren Missionary Herald Company.

His skills are not confined to the classroom. Upon moving to Winona Lake, he bought and remodeled a home and has since built two homes, serving as his own architect, contractor, and builder. In

addition, he has aided his children in constructing and remodeling their homes. He is a superb craftsman.

In recent years it has appeared that he might be losing his eyesight. But upon further investigation, it was discovered that cataracts were developing. These have been removed and he is now able to use his eyes in the area where his deepest love lies: the study of Scriptures. Though he is now in the region of three score years and ten, the Lord willing, his ministry will continue, and we may yet expect to see other outstanding productions from his hand. I thank God for this choice servant of our Lord Jesus Christ.