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May 16, 1989

89-79

Sunday School Board
pays tribute to Hobbs

Frank Wm. White
~~By Jim Lowry~~

F - SSB

NASHVILLE (BP) -- Herschel H. Hobbs is a man of many words.

The 11,088 pages of Bible study commentary he has written in more than two decades attest to that.

Hobbs has completed 84 quarterly issues with 1,092 lessons as writer of Studying Adult Life and Work Lessons, a quarterly Sunday school lesson commentary in the Life and Work Series published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday school division.

That work alone makes him perhaps the most widely published writer of Sunday School Board material. But the well-known Southern Baptist statesman also has written more than 124 books and other materials.

The board will pay tribute to Hobbs with the July-August-September issue of Studying Adult Life and Work Lessons..

That issue completes 21 consecutive years of the commentary with Hobbs as its only writer.

The board also is noting Hobbs' 60 years as a minister and his 82nd birthday.

In addition to the commemorative issue of Hobbs' commentary, the story of the June issue of Adult Leadership magazine is a tribute to Hobbs by Editor Richard Dodge.

In a separate tribute, retired Sunday School Board President James L. Sullivan recounts how he selected his former seminary classmate to begin writing the commentary.

As pastor of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, Hobbs already had been preparing mimeographed materials for his own Sunday school teachers. Many people from other churches were requesting copies of the material.

Hobbs said he thought perhaps 25 to 50 churches would want copies of his commentary. "It wound up we were mailing the notes out to about 250 churches every week," he said.

The Sunday School Board publication of the commentary began with the October-November-December 1968 edition. Sales now are approaching 100,000 copies per quarter.

Hobbs is "an unselfish pastor who gave up his own idea so he could have a larger ministry" through the Sunday School Board, said President Lloyd Elder.

In the Adult Leadership feature, Hobbs says Southern Baptists must "get back to those rockribbed basics. They work."

He cited as an example the "Million More in '54" Sunday school enrollment campaign.

That campaign resulted in more than 500,000 people enrolled in Sunday school and an all-time high in baptisms the following year, Hobbs noted.

Hobbs told Dodge he never has been pessimistic about the Southern Baptist Convention. Commenting on the 10-year controversy in the SBC, Hobbs said, "We're going to come out of this thing better than we were when w went in."

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Hobbs, who chaired the committee that wrote the Baptist Faith and Message statement adopted by the SBC in 1963, also was a member of the SBC Peace Committee that reviewed the convention controversy.

Hobbs has no plans to retire from the ministry and has speaking engagements scheduled through 1990, Dodge reported.

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BP photo mailed separately to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Brentham works out
for mission support

By Jim Burton

F-CO
(B'hood)

Baptist Press
5/16/89

BELTON, Texas (BP)--In the training rooms and fitness centers of America, entrepreneur Jerry Brentham has made his presence known.

From linebackers to housewives, he has a message for anyone who needs a good workout -- the more you do with what you have, the more God will give you to do with.

It sounds so much like Scripture that some people who have bought his hydraulic exercise equipment have complained. But it's not Holy Scripture. It's just the "gospel according to Jerry."

The gospel this Baptist layman preaches is simple -- people can't out-give God. It's a gospel he learned once he discovered his spiritual gift during a lay renewal weekend.

"As a result of the Lord dealing with our lives that weekend," said Brentham, "we have come to realize our gift. That gift is giving."

Brentham was a high school football coach who wanted to reduce injuries that occur during training and to create a more efficient workout. He began experimenting with hydraulics, designing machines that build strength through resistance.

He left coaching when he found a manufacturer for his equipment. But the business arrangement failed.

That failure created bitterness in Brentham. He was music director at First Baptist Church of McGregor, Texas, when he met Bob Dixon, director of the Texas Baptist Men's organization, and learned about church renewal.

During the weekend, Brentham shared his bitterness concerning the business venture. The manufacturer was producing and selling the equipment but not paying him a royalty.

"An old gentleman, about 76-years-old, shared with me that maybe God wanted that company to manufacture and sell it, and wanted me to give up that machine," recalled Brentham.

Once Brentham confessed his bitterness, he wanted to study the Bible.

"I got into the Bible and I began to study," said Brentham. "I experienced a renewal in my life that I had never experienced before. That was that God could use me as a layman, and I didn't have to go out and preach. I could be used on a day-to-day basis right where I was."

Several years later, Brentham and his wife, Donnie, started the business again. With the formation of their business, they made a commitment to God.

"We realized that God wanted us to start the business all over again," said Brentham. "We committed 5 percent of our gross sales to the Lord, as a stewardship means."

Today, that commitment has meant giving up to \$350,000 per year above their tithe to support missions.

People have asked if he regrets making that commitment, now that the sum is so large Brethem said, noting the answer always is, "No."

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"The commitment I made wasn't \$350,000. The commitment I made was 5 percent of nothing," he said.

The Brenthams have supported numerous missions causes and youth ministries. They also have designated funds for special projects at their home church, First Baptist of Belton, Texas. But Brentham's ministry goes beyond giving.

"When we first started our business, we wanted this to be God's business," he said. "We wanted it to be run the way he'd want us to run it."

Because of his commitment to marketplace ministry, Brentham schedules a devotion each Thursday, normally led by his pastor, Andy Davis.

"The employees are not required to come to that Bible study, but it is there and available to them if they want to come," said Brentham.

Through business contacts, both domestic and international, Brentham has shared his faith in God.

"We were dealing with the Chinese, selling equipment there initially," recalled Brentham. "We had the opportunity to share with them in some very subtle ways, but mainly sharing with them that God is real."

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(BP) photo mailed separately to state Baptist newspapers by the Brotherhood Commission.

Campus ministers
to look forward

N-CO

Baptist Press
5/16/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Southern Baptist campus ministers will look to the future when they convene in Las Vegas, Nev., June 11-12.

"Going, Weeping, Sowing, Reaping -- Looking Toward 2000" will be the theme for the Association of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers annual meeting at First Southern Baptist Church. The meeting is one of more than a dozen conferences scheduled in connection with the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, also in Las Vegas, June 13-15.

"We are seeking to set up a motivation for our campus ministers in the area of personal concerns on campus, as well as expanding our vision for world evangelism," said Hal C. Burke, president of the association. "We've got to begin somewhere, so we really want to encourage our group to deepen that personal commitment."

The association will hear from Lloyd Elder, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, who will speak on "The Future of Student Ministry," said Burke, director of Baptist campus ministry at Florida State University. "We invited Dr. Elder, to see where we fit in the larger picture.

"I remember hearing Kenneth Chafin (pastor of Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky.) say, 'It's time we quit doing everything for everybody and start doing something for somebody.' Therefore, my desire is that we help ourselves as individual campus ministers and hopefully for that to ripple out to other campus ministers -- this burden for the lost people, particularly in our area.

"We can't take on the whole world, but our mission fields are our campuses."

The conference will feature "professional pilgrimages" told by campus ministers from across the country, Burke said.

In addition to Elder, keynote speakers will be Glenn Saul, ethics professor at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., who will address "Ethical Issues for the '90s," and Al Stagg, pastor of First Baptist Church of Portales, N.M., who will portray German pastor/martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer looking at "Life in the Church Today."

Worship leader will be Scott Walker, pastor of First Baptist Church of Charleston, S.C.

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A banquet will feature Tommy Starkes, pastor of Tropicana Baptist Fellowship in Las Vegas, and other local Christian entertainers.

The conference also will include small-group seminars on loneliness, human sexuality/homosexuality, a theological update, "stages of faith" and an orientation for new campus ministers.

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CORRECTION: The name of the president of the Baptist Evangelical Union of Italy -- who was mentioned in the 5/10/89 Baptist Press article titled "Italian Baptists protest bid for Belgian school" -- was spelled incorrectly. The correct spelling is Paolo Spanu, not Paolo Spano, as was reported.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Southwestern Seminary graduates
426 during spring commencement

N-CO
(SWBTS)

Baptist Press
5/16/89

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptist pastor Franklin Pollard told graduates at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary May 12 they could have no greater credentials than a calling from God.

"What a beautiful thing that you go out knowing that God sent you," said Pollard, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jackson, Miss.

Southwestern President Russell Dilday conferred 426 degrees on the class. Graduates represented 30 states and eight foreign countries.

"To every cry for help from the people of God, God's answer is his people," Pollard told the graduates. He cited biblical heroes Moses, Joshua and Gideon as examples of men God called to deliver his people from trouble and despair.

"And this is still God's call to you and me today," Pollard said. "God is calling us and telling us, 'As my people, you are the answer.'"

Ministers should be active in meeting the physical and spiritual needs of God's people, Pollard said, adding the greatest need is "to fulfill the lostness of people's souls."

Christianity has been hurt in recent years by a lack of integrity among ministers, he said: "Too many ministers today are doing just what Aaron did at the foot of Mount Sinai." They are telling people what they want to hear and giving them a God they can live with."

Instead, ministers need to present a biblical picture of God as they respond to the cries of God's people, he noted.

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Southwestern Seminary student
reaches children 'by the book'

By Pam Alewine

F-CO
(SWBTS)

Baptist Press
5/16/89

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Writing books for people who can't read might sound a like a short career to most people. But Gail Linam has been doing it for 17 years.

Linam, a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, is one of the most prolific writers of childrens' books in the Southern Baptist Convention. And even though she writes for thousands of children, her ministry of childhood education never is far from home.

The desire of her heart remains ministering to her own family, she explained.

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Her first book "Teaching Preschoolers," was written while her oldest daughter was in the hospital. "My plan had been to be a wife and mother," she said. But God began using her in an equipping role when she became minister of childhood education at Calvary Baptist Church in Waco, Texas.

"It was a ministry of love at first sight," she said. That ministry continued for 17 years.

Through raising and discipling her own children and developing a family ministry in her church, Linam gained insight to family needs. That's when she started writing.

"My ministry of writing really came through involvement in my staff position in a local church," she said. "The writing just seemed the natural, next step that God led me to."

Linam's ministry is based on helping families build biblical foundations.

"Children learn more in their first year of life than a college student does in five years," Linam said. "If you miss any of those teachable times -- substituting babysitting for Bible teaching -- you've missed a year you'll never gain again."

Although Linam received her training from Baylor University, reading to her own three children helped.

"I didn't just rock them as my babies," she said. "I felt so strongly that God had enormous purpose for their lives."

Teaching children about spiritual things can't begin too soon," he insisted. Even when her children were babies, she showed them pictures and read them Bible stories.

"If you talk to your children and love them and listen to them when they are small, then they'll talk to you and listen to you when they're older," she said.

Her books, "Celebrate Christmas" and "Celebrate Easter" are her favorites because they focus on building family traditions and give parents ideas to help them teach the Bible stories.

"Look at every day as a divine gift from the Lord for your child," Linam advised.

Being at seminary is helping her to sharpen her own focus, she said: "I plan on growing, a lot. The moment you stop being hungry, you stop being what God wants you to be."

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(BP) photo mailed separately to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary.