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*Herschel Harold Hobbs:
Pastoral and Denominational
Expositor–Theologian¹*

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Herschel Hobbs has been identified as a “thoroughgoing biblicist,” first by Mark Coppenger,² then by David S. Dockery;³ as a “progressive conservative” by Dockery;⁴ and as a “populist theologian” by Jerry L. Faught.⁵ Both *Baptist Theologians*⁶ and *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*⁷ have chapters devoted to the theology of Hobbs, and the present speaker (author) has treated Hobbs’s theology as that of one of the two most influential Southern Baptist pastor-theologians of the twentieth century.⁸ Most of Hobbs’s early books were expositions of the New Testament or books of sermons growing out of his preaching-pastoral ministry in Oklahoma City. Although his books published by Baker, Zondervan, Word, and Harper and Row undoubtedly were read by numerous non-Baptist pastors, Hobbs wrote primarily for the Southern Baptist context. Hence, this author proposes to consider Hobbs as a pastoral and denominational expositor-theologian.

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²Mark Coppenger, “Herschel Hobbs,” in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 440.

³David S. Dockery, “Herschel H. Hobbs,” in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 230.

⁴Ibid. Hobbs applied these words to himself. “The Inerrancy Controversy,” in *The Fibers of Our Faith*, vol. 1, ed. Dick Allen Rader (Franklin, TN: Providence House, 1995), 124.

⁵Jerry L. Faught, “The Biblical Theology of Herschel H. Hobbs: An Exposition of the Southern Baptist Roots via Media,” Gaskin Lecture no. 1, Oklahoma Baptist University, 2000, typescript copy, 1.

⁶Coppenger, “Herschel Hobbs,” 434–49.

⁷Dockery, “Herschel H. Hobbs,” 216–32.

⁸James Leo Garrett Jr., *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 468–73; cf. 481–86.

I

An examination of Hobbs's writings and of his Southern Baptist context leads to the identification of certain basic characteristics of his work as expositor-theologian. This author would identify four. First, Hobbs was a bridge-building theologian who sought to connect the Baptist grassroots with academia, and academia with the Baptist grassroots. In his 1962 Southern Baptist Convention presidential address, Hobbs called Southern Baptists "a 'grass-roots' people," whose "success is due largely to the response given by the 'grass roots' to the Gospel as Southern Baptists preach it."⁹ Methodologically, the bridge-building role was probably best demonstrated in his mediatorial role between Ralph H. Elliott (1925–) and the trustees of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and in his leadership role as chairman of the 1962–63 SBC Baptist Faith and Message Committee. By his own testimony, Hobbs recalled that he attempted to persuade Elliott that, for a "bridge" to be built over "the chasm," "it must rest on both banks," and "hence you must give us something to rest it on your side."¹⁰ Of course, that bridge was not fully constructed. Additionally, Hobbs's participation in the original proposal that SBC seminary presidents be included in the membership of the 1962–63 Baptist Faith and Message Committee—a proposal rejected by the SBC¹¹—can be seen as an expression of his respect for seminary leadership. But a more tangible indication of that can be seen in the fact that the committee consulted with, and sought input from, professors in the six SBC seminaries and from the editorial personnel of the Sunday School Board (SBC).¹² Hobbs's respect, however, for Southern Baptist seminary and university professors was not an unlimited trajectory. "Hobbs lamented that Baptist seminary students in the 1960's and 1970's knew more about German theologians than they knew about [E.Y.] Mullins (1860–1928) and [W.T.] Conner (1877–1952)."¹³ Coppenger's comment that Hobbs "took the

⁹"Crisis and Conquest" (Presidential Address), SBC, *Annual* (1962), 89; Herschel H. Hobbs, *My Faith and Message: An Autobiography* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 231.

¹⁰Herschel H. Hobbs to James Leo Garrett Jr., 30 May 1989, Hobbs Folder, Archives, Roberts Library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; also Hobbs, "The Elliott Controversy," in *The Fibers of Our Faith*, ed. Rader, 212.

¹¹Jesse C. Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention: A Sesquicentennial History* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 208; Herschel H. Hobbs, "The Baptist Faith and Message—Anchored but Free," *Baptist History and Heritage* 13.3 (July 1978): 34; idem, "The Baptist Faith and Message," in *The Fibers of Our Faith*, ed. Rader, 68–69.

¹²Almer J. Smith, *The Making of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 4–5, 116–34. Additionally, the Mercer University faculty was involved in the consultative process. *Ibid.*, 123–24, 131–34. Also Hobbs, "Baptist Faith and Message—Anchored but Free," 37; idem, "The Baptist Faith and Message," 71–72.

¹³David S. Dockery, "The Life and Legacy of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907–1995)," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7.1 (Spring 2003): 78n78. See also Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 250.

theology of the ‘giants’ and made it accessible to people in the pews”¹⁴ must be coupled with the fact that in his books Hobbs was more prone to cite, quote, or list in his bibliography the writings of biblical commentators and the published sermons of pastors than the writings of systematic theologians, with the exception of Mullins.¹⁵ Moreover, one can argue that Hobbs’s less-than-successful role as “mediator” on the SBC Peace Committee (1985–88) made evident the limits of his bridge-building.¹⁶

Second, Hobbs took the mantle of and can be identified as a “middle-of-the road” conservative expositor-theologian. “Middle of the road” for Hobbs did not mean equidistant between liberalism and conservatism but in the middle of conservatism. In his 1962 SBC presidential address, he declared that, despite detours, Southern Baptists had been “a middle of the road people.”¹⁷ In his 1993 autobiography, he wrote: “When I was president of the [Southern Baptist] Convention, I estimated that 90 percent were in the middle of the road, with 10 percent equally divided to the right or left of center.”¹⁸ Faught has recently emphasized this middle-of-the-road character of Hobbs’s theology.¹⁹ In 1990, Nancy Tatom Ammerman identified five Southern Baptist sub-groups: “self-identified fundamentalists” (11%), “fundamentalist conservatives” (22%), “conservatives” (50%), “moderate conservatives” (8%), and “self-identified moderates” (9%). The second and third groups would constitute 72%.²⁰ Similarly, in 1993, Richard D. Land identified theologically and politically five groups in the SBC: fundamentalists, course-correction conservatives, theological conservatives who are political moderates, true moderates, and true liberals, with groups two and three combined constituting about 75 percent of those voting at national conventions.²¹ Hobbs was confident that the middle represented the overwhelming majority of Southern Baptists and that he represented that middle. His middle-of-the-road stance, however, has not always been acknowledged by others, especially since his death in 1995. Neo-Calvinists have found him to be too Arminian.²² Dispensationalists and historical premillennialists object to his amillennialism.²³ Inerrantists have found him to be less than consistent

¹⁴Coppenger, “Herschel Hobbs,” 437.

¹⁵Hobbs did not, for example, cite or quote from other Southern Baptist theologians such as John Leadley Dagg, James Petigru Boyce, or W.T. Conner, or from leading contemporary Protestant theologians.

¹⁶Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 254–67.

¹⁷Hobbs, “Crisis and Conquest,” 86.

¹⁸Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 251–52.

¹⁹Faught, “The Biblical Theology of Herschel H. Hobbs,” 1, 8, 15.

²⁰Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 73–80.

²¹Richard D. Land, “The Southern Baptist Convention, 1979–1993: What Happened and Why?” *Baptist History and Heritage* 28.4 (October 1993): 10–11.

²²Thomas J. Nettles, “The Rise & Demise of Calvinism among Southern Baptists,” *Founders Journal* 19/20 (Winter/Spring 1995): 19–20; Coppenger, “Herschel Hobbs,” 444–45.

²³Coppenger, “Herschel Hobbs,” 445.

in applying inerrancy.²⁴ Confessionalists reckon his anti-creedalism as being less than adequate.²⁵

Third, Hobbs was an exegetical theologian following the lexical-grammatical-historical hermeneutic, with its focus on the Greek New Testament, practiced by Archibald Thomas Robertson (1863–1934) and William Hersey Davis (1887–1950) at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1890 to 1945. Hobbs was a student in Robertson's class the day in 1934 that Robertson had his fatal stroke, and Davis was Hobbs's doctoral mentor. This hermeneutical tradition had been inaugurated by Robertson's father-in-law, John Albert Broadus (1827–1895), one of the four founding professors of Southern Seminary.²⁶ This method emphasized word meanings, grammar, syntax, historical background, and comparable biblical texts.²⁷ Faught has offered a threefold critique of Hobbs's use of this method: (1) it put too much stress on etymology to the neglect of "context, style, [and] genre"; (2) it "at times" imposed "a modern world-view upon ancient texts"; and (3) it resulted in a harmonization of difficult biblical texts according to Hobbs's own "particular system of thought."²⁸ But important is the fact that, whereas for Broadus, Robertson, and Davis, this hermeneutic had not led to coordinated biblical theology or to systematic theology,²⁹ it was by Hobbs supplemented to the extent that he undertook systematic writings.³⁰ For Hobbs, all good theology must be based on adequate biblical exegesis, but the properly interpreted texts pertaining to a subject must be brought together as biblical theology seeks to do.

Fourth, Hobbs was theologically shaped by and committed to the theology of Edgar Young Mullins, the fourth president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the leading Southern Baptist theologian during

²⁴Dockery, "Herschel H. Hobbs," 223, 388–89n30.

²⁵Ibid., 221–22; Dockery, "Life and Legacy of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907–1995)," 66; James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 2007), 3.

²⁶Dockery, "Life and Legacy of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907–1995)," 63; idem, "Mighty in the Scriptures: John A. Broadus and His Influence on A.T. Robertson and Southern Baptist Life," in *John A. Broadus: A Living Legacy*, ed. David S. Dockery and Roger D. Duke (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 21–22, 42–44; James Patterson, "Broadus's Living Legacy," in *John A. Broadus*, ed. Dockery and Duke, 242–44; William A. Mueller, *A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* (Nashville: Broadman, 1959), 74.

²⁷William B. Tolar, "The Grammatical-Historical Method," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, ed. Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 217–34.

²⁸Faught, "The Biblical Theology of Herschel H. Hobbs," 15.

²⁹Edgar V. McKnight, "A.T. Robertson's Contribution to the New Testament" (Th.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1960), 372; David S. Dockery, "The Broadus-Robertson Tradition," in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, ed. George and Dockery, 111.

³⁰Herschel H. Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith* (Nashville: Broadman, 1960); idem, *What Baptists Believe* (Nashville: Broadman, 1964); idem, *The Holy Spirit: Believer's Guide* (Nashville: Broadman, 1967); idem, *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1971); idem (with E.Y. Mullins), *The Axioms of Religion* (Nashville: Broadman, 1978); idem, *You Are Chosen: The Priesthood of All Believers* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990).

the first one-third of the twentieth century.³¹ Mullins was not Hobbs's teacher in the classroom, for Mullins died in 1928, and Hobbs entered Southern Seminary in 1932.³² Hobbs, however, acknowledged his dependence on and agreement with Mullins. "I have lived with his books to the point that I feel that I did know him."³³ Mullins's *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression*³⁴ was Hobbs's textbook in systematic theology at Southern Seminary, and he memorized its subsections for examinations.³⁵ As a Southern Baptist theologian, Hobbs placed Walter Thomas Conner second to Mullins,³⁶ but Hobbs did not cite the writings of Conner or the writings of earlier Baptist theologians, such as John Leadley Dagg (1796–1884), James Petigru Boyce (1827–1888), or Augustus Hopkins Strong (1836–1921). The influence of Mullins on Hobbs was especially manifested in his appropriation of Mullins's idea of soul competency, which was Mullins's concept for identifying "the historical significance" of the Baptists.³⁷ For Mullins soul competency was an alternative to Landmark successionism³⁸ and a countervailing to the Roman Catholic incompetency of the soul, shared to an extent by pedobaptist Protestantism.³⁹

II

How were these four characteristics so identified actually manifested in the expositional and theological writings and the actions of Herschel Hobbs?

First is the bridge-building posture. The 1963 Baptist Faith and Message, whose committee Hobbs chaired, following the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message, declared that the Bible has "truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter,"⁴⁰ while concurrently the Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's trustees, with whom Hobbs worked closely as SBC president

³¹For writings about the life and work of Mullins, see Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 416n2.

³²Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 61, 74, 63.

³³*Ibid.*, 61. The dedication to Hobbs's revision of Mullins's *Axioms of Religion*, 5, reads as follows: "Dedicated to Edgar Young Mullins whom I never knew personally but who through his books has been my teacher through the years."

³⁴E.Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1917).

³⁵Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 74. A major influence of this book by Mullins was in respect to Christian experience.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷E.Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion* (Philadelphia: Griffith & Rowland, 1908), 44, 53; Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 7–10.

³⁸E. Glenn Hinson, "In Search of Our Identity," in James Leo Garrett Jr., E. Glenn Hinson, and James E. Tull, *Are Southern Baptists "Evangelicals"?* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 133–38.

³⁹Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*, 59–65. Louisville was still a predominantly Roman Catholic city when Mullins first enunciated soul competency and the axioms before the Baptist World Alliance in 1905.

⁴⁰SBC, *Annual* (1963), 270; William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1969), 393; Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 11.

during the Elliott Controversy, was affirming that the historical-critical method was an acceptable biblical hermeneutic when properly utilized.⁴¹ As chairman of that same committee, the Oklahoma pastor worked closely with the members of the committee, all of whom were members by virtue of having been elected president of a Baptist state convention and the great majority of whom were pastors, while at the same time leading the committee to seek the counsel and input of professors in the six SBC seminaries and the editorial staff of the SBC's Sunday School Board.⁴² As a nonaligned member of the SBC Peace Committee during the Inerrancy Controversy, Hobbs was unsuccessful in building a bridge between conservatives and moderates through the implementation of the committee's report.⁴³ In a different vein, in dealing with Genesis and creation, Hobbs would seem to be building bridges toward the scientific community when he acknowledged that the universe could be "billions of years old," suggested that the pre-Abrahamic era could be reckoned not in "years but vast uncharted periods of time," and conceded that the "six days" of creation may have been "indefinite periods of time, perhaps of varying lengths."⁴⁴

Second, how did Hobbs's middle-of-the-road posture manifest itself? With respect to theories of the mode of biblical inspiration, he did not decisively commit himself to one theory. In the late nineteenth century, Southern Baptist Basil Manly Jr. had clearly advocated the plenary theory,⁴⁵ whereas liberal Baptist William Newton Clarke had embraced the illumination theory, whereby primarily biblical writers, not biblical writings, were inspired in a manner not "radically different" from that by which the Holy Spirit inspired all Christians.⁴⁶ Between these positions was the stance of Mullins⁴⁷ and of Conner,⁴⁸ namely, that commitment to a single theory was

⁴¹SBC, *Annual* (1963), 68; Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 460–61, based on Salvador T. Martinez, "Southern Baptist Views of the Scriptures in Light of the Elliott Controversy" (Th.M. thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1966), 36–37, 41–42; Hobbs, "The Elliott Controversy," 210–13. Ralph H. Elliott, *The "Genesis" Controversy and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos: A Eulogy for a Great Tradition* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1992), 43, 53, 98, 103, 105, 107–08, 116–17, has never acknowledged any bridge-building efforts by Hobbs and, amid considerable lack of bitterness, has most always interpreted Hobbs's role in the controversy in negative terms.

⁴²Hobbs, "The Baptist Faith and Message," 69–70, 71–72; idem, *My Faith and Message*, 242–43; Smith, *The Making of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message*, 116–34.

⁴³Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 375; Hobbs, "The Inerrancy Controversy," 125–36.

⁴⁴Hobbs, *The Origin of All Things: Studies in Genesis* (Waco, TX: Word, 1975), 12, 11, 19.

⁴⁵Basil Manly Jr., *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration Explained and Vindicated* (New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1888), 59–60; (reprint: Harrisonburg, VA: Gano Books, 1985), 53.

⁴⁶William Newton Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1899), 40, 42.

⁴⁷Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression*, 142–44.

⁴⁸W.T. Conner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), 108–10; idem, *Revelation and God: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: Broadman, 1936), 84.

unnecessary. Hobbs essentially adopted this via media. Although in 1971, acknowledging that most Southern Baptists held either to the “dictation” theory or the “dynamic” theory,⁴⁹ Hobbs tilted toward the dynamic theory, in a posthumously published essay (1997), he committed neither to the plenary nor the dynamic theory.⁵⁰

Hobbs’s middle-of-the-road stance can again be seen in his careful balance of the full deity and the full humanity of Jesus Christ. Although this position was essentially Chalcedonian, Hobbs would insist that he derived it from his New Testament studies.⁵¹ Likewise, the Oklahoma pastor found a via media regarding the Holy Spirit. Those of the credal and sacramental traditions had magnified the person of the Spirit vis-à-vis the Trinity to the neglect of the work of the Spirit.⁵² Twentieth-century Pentecostal and Charismatic movements were magnifying the gifts of the Spirit, claiming that all the gifts mentioned in the New Testament are still given and exercised today.⁵³ Hobbs stressed the multifaceted work of the Holy Spirit,⁵⁴ but, by adopting a cessationist view, concluded that the extraordinary gifts (tongues, interpretation of tongues, healing, and prophecy) have been limited to the apostolic era.⁵⁵

Furthermore, although no confirming statistical studies exist, it can be assumed that Hobbs’s one-point Dortian Calvinist posture (perseverance) and four-point Arminian posture (the other four disputed issues) were in agreement with the views of the great majority of Southern Baptist pastors during Hobbs’s active ministry.⁵⁶ Here again, Hobbs was in the middle. Hobbs’s amillennialism, to which he shifted after an earlier and somewhat undefined premillennialism, was framed after the nineteenth-century hegemony of an optimistic postmillennialism among Baptists in America and just as historical premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism were rising to ascendancy among Southern Baptists.⁵⁷ Based on an interpretation of the message of the book of Revelation in which God “signified” (1:1, HCSB) it to John so that the term “sign” is taken as the book’s key word and so that the book is to have a symbolic rather than literal interpretation, Hobbs then

⁴⁹Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 21–22.

⁵⁰Herschel H. Hobbs, “People of the Book: The Baptist Doctrine of the Holy Scripture,” in *Baptist Why and Why Not Revisited*, ed. Timothy George and Richard D. Land (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 15–16; see also Dockery, “Herschel H. Hobbs,” 222–23.

⁵¹Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith*, 38–50; idem, *What Baptists Believe*, 31–39; idem, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 39–41; idem, *A Layman’s Handbook of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: Broadman, 1974), 90–92.

⁵²James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 2001), 147–53, 184, 207–08.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 180–84, 224.

⁵⁴Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith*, 55–63; idem, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 45–47.

⁵⁵Hobbs, *What Baptists Believe*, 51–57.

⁵⁶Dockery, “Herschel H. Hobbs,” 226–27; Hobbs to James Leo Garrett Jr., 24 August 1989, Hobbs Folder, Archives, Roberts Library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

⁵⁷Dockery, “Herschel H. Hobbs,” 229.

interpreted the “thousand years” of Revelation 20:2–7 nonliterally as “reaching from Jesus’ resurrection or ascension to his second coming.”⁵⁸ Thus Hobbs joined certain Southern Baptist professors⁵⁹ and his own church member⁶⁰ in the advocacy of amillennialism. In summary, on biblical inspiration, the two natures of Christ, the Holy Spirit, Calvinist-Arminian issues, and the millennium, Hobbs demonstrated a middle-of-the-road stance.

Third, how did Hobbs apply his lexical-grammatical-historical hermeneutic in biblical interpretation? With the exception of *Fundamentals of Our Faith*, his earliest (i.e., pre-1962) books were either expositions of New Testament books or books of sermons. Hobbs was committed to begin with biblical exposition as the foundation and also to avoid theological speculation devoid of such a foundation. He often cited biblical texts in support of theological affirmations. Except for Faught’s previously noted critique of the Hobbs hermeneutic, this field is ripe for additional research. Two particular instances in Hobbs’s biblical interpretation may be examined as to consistency with the Robertson-Davis tradition. One is Hobbs’s unconventional interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews.⁶¹ Rather than connect Hebrews 6:1–6 with the theological issue of perseverance versus apostasy, Hobbs read Hebrews as a warning against “arrested Christian growth” and as a call to bold participation in “God’s world-mission of redemption” with warnings as to lost “opportunity” and “the consequences of failure.”⁶² This, he contended, made the epistle especially relevant to the twentieth century.⁶³ But one may ask whether the imperatives of modern missiology, more than the lexical-grammatical-historical method, may have led Hobbs to his interpretation. Another case study involves Hobbs’s doctrine of election. As early as 1960, the Oklahoma pastor explicated the doctrine that God chose not individuals unto salvation but rather a “plan” of salvation wherein God foreknew who among humankind would freely choose to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.⁶⁴ Although Hobbs did not clearly specify such, this view means that

⁵⁸Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Cosmic Drama: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Waco, TX: Word, 1971), 24–25, 181–90; idem, “Amillennialism,” in George R. Beasley-Murray, Herschel H. Hobbs, and Ray Frank Robbins, *Revelation: Three Viewpoints* (Nashville: Broadman, 1977), 76–77, 134–39.

⁵⁹Edward A. McDowell, *The Meaning and Message of the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Broadman, 1951); Ray Summers, *Worthy Is the Lamb* (Nashville: Broadman, 1951); Russell Bradley Jones, *What, Where, and When Is the Millennium?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975).

⁶⁰Jesse Wilson Hodges, *Christ’s Kingdom and Coming: With an Analysis of Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

⁶¹Herschel H. Hobbs, *Studies in Hebrews* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1954), 52–57; idem, *How to Follow Jesus: The Challenge of Hebrews for Christian Life and Witness Today* (Nashville: Broadman, 1971), 61, 141; republished under title: *Hebrews: Challenges to Bold Discipleship* (Nashville: Broadman, 1981), 56–62.

⁶²Hobbs, *How to Follow Jesus*, 141, 61.

⁶³Ibid., 141–42. According to Faught, “The Biblical Theology of Herschel H. Hobbs,” 10, Hobbs “made the book of Hebrews a Bold Mission Thrust manifesto.”

⁶⁴Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith*, 89–100. Hobbs joined this view of election with the concept of universal atonement. Ibid., 90–91. He interpreted προορισθέντες in Eph 1:11 to mean “to mark out the boundaries beforehand,” and then concluded: “He elected that all

election, though by grace, depends ultimately on the decisions of human beings. This is essentially an Arminian position. If word meanings are to be significant for interpretation, can ἐξελέξατο and προορίσας in Ephesians 1:4–5, which have Θεὸς as their subject, be rightfully understood to support election that is ultimately by human beings? Has Hobbs actually protected divine sovereignty as well as human freedom, which he indeed declared to be so necessary?⁶⁵

Fourth, how did Hobbs specifically apply the theology of Mullins? Most obviously he did so with respect to soul competency. We do well to remember that Mullins had utilized soul competency as the key to “the historical significance” of the Baptists, not as the foundation for his systematic theology. Hobbs employed soul competency as the foundational principle of Baptists in explicating the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message⁶⁶ and, as expected, in his revision of Mullins’s *The Axioms of Religion*.⁶⁷ Additionally, he utilized it in his treatment of “the priesthood of the believer.”⁶⁸ As with Mullins, soul competency was not to be taken as human self-sufficiency and can be differentiated from soul freedom. But the claim that it is a New Testament principle⁶⁹ raises the question as to the difference between an inference and the fruit of exegesis. One may argue that soul competency is a possible inference from the biblical doctrine of the image of God in man but hardly that it is derivable by exegesis. This can lead to the probability that there was in Hobbs’s thought a major tension, if not a contradiction, between the exegetical characteristic and the Mullins characteristic,⁷⁰ which, along with the bridge-building and the middle-of-the-road characteristics, marked the thought of Herschel Harold Hobbs.

who are ‘in Christ’ shall be saved.” Idem, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 67. But this “election is to both salvation and evangelism.” Idem, *What Baptists Believe*, 107.

⁶⁵Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith*, 92; idem, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 66; idem, *What Baptists Believe*, 106–07.

⁶⁶Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 7–10.

⁶⁷Hobbs (with Mullins), *The Axioms of Religion*, 47–53.

⁶⁸Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 1–4.

⁶⁹Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*, 65; Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 8; Hobbs (with Mullins), *The Axioms of Religion*, 48; Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*, ed. C. Douglas Weaver (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2010), 64.

⁷⁰Raymond Evans Carroll, “Dimensions of Individualism in Southern Baptist Thought” (Th.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995), 127–72, classified Hobbs and Frank Staggs as “existential individualists.”