



Harold W. Hoehner 1935- 2009
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Harold Hoehner, Distinguished Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, collapsed at his home from a massive heart attack on February 12, 2009. He had just completed his morning three-mile run. Hoehner was 74.

Hoehner grew up in upstate New York. He was a second-generation Swiss, learning German at an early age. Throughout his life, he maintained dual citizenship. He earned a bachelor's degree at Barrington College (1958), Th.M. (1962) and Th.D. (1965) from Dallas Seminary, and Ph.D. from Cambridge University (1968). His doctoral thesis on Herod Antipas, under the supervision of Ernst Bammel, was later published by Cambridge University Press (1972).

Hoehner taught at his alma mater, Dallas Seminary, for nearly forty-two years, twenty-four as chairman of the New Testament department and twenty-seven as Director of Ph.D. Studies. He was still teaching there when he died. He was a member of the Society of Biblical Literature, the Evangelical Theological Society, Institute for Biblical Research, and *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*. His publications include *Herod Antipas* (1972), *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (1978), and *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (2002), all widely acclaimed tomes, especially his Ephesians commentary. His monograph on Herod Antipas is still the standard volume on this historical figure; his Ephesians commentary, which took decades to write, is considered one of the finest exegetical commentaries on this book; and his *Chronological Aspects* presents a cogent argument for a 33 C.E. crucifixion date. His last published essay was "Did Paul Write Galatians," in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis for his 80th Birthday* (2006), where he argued (tongue-in-cheek) that Galatians should be regarded with suspicion since it does not stand up to Ephesians in terms of the critical criteria for authorship. He was a meticulous scholar, known for his attention to detail, facility in ancient and modern languages, and his exacting demands on his students. His sabbaticals were spent at Universität Tübingen and Tyndale House, Cambridge.

So much for Hoehner's C.V. Hoehner was devoted to his students, having them over to his home every semester. In the classroom, he would always lighten the seriousness of the topic by cracking awful Aggie jokes. Many of his colleagues, former students, and friends contributed to his Festschrift, *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, published in 2006. Several personal notes can be found in this volume attesting to the indelible mark that Hoehner left on these scholars. The preface extols Hoehner with these words: "Most of all Harold has shown us what it means to be a man of God, committed to Christ and his gospel, and reflecting the fruit of the Spirit over a lifetime of faithful service." He had no vices. Michael B. Thompson, Vice Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, declared, "Harold was simply the finest man I have ever known."

Hoehner was the first Dallas Seminary graduate to earn a degree at Cambridge University. Because of his influence, countless Dallas alumni have gone on for degrees at Cambridge, Oxford, and other U.K. universities. Yet for all of his love of biblical scholarship, he was more interested in missions and proclamation of the gospel. Three of his children became missionaries in eastern Europe. He was on the board of directors for Jews for Jesus when he died.

He engaged critical scholarship with an openness that was disarming to his students. And he shaped the New Testament department at Dallas Seminary by hand-picking the faculty, giving it direction and focus, and demanding the highest levels of scholarship—especially in honest and thorough research—from doctoral students and colleagues alike. Many a doctoral dissertation was rejected by Hoehner for having an inadequate bibliography, especially in critical scholarship and foreign language materials.

Hoehner was a cheerful, compassionate, disciplined, and remarkably humble man, with a wicked sense of humor. He was always surprised to learn how he had impacted people. He went out of his way to help students. The countless eulogies posted at <http://www.dts.edu/landing/hoehnertribute/> are a tribute to his character and life. At his memorial service, one of his four children, David, noted that all four considered Harold to be their best friend.

He had no interest in sports but was a faithful jogger. And he loved Apple computers—so much so that he became the campus's evangelist for the Mac. He mastered *Accordance*, squeezing out all of the promise of computer software for biblical studies. He considered himself of average intelligence, and he figured that a person of average intelligence could learn the intricacies of car maintenance to keep from paying a mechanic. Hoehner was frugal in the extreme, yet generous to a fault. He would frequently help his neighbors with all things mechanical; he built his own television set. He was a fair man, always seeking justice for the oppressed and underrepresented. He was the champion of many students and faculty. Yet I never knew him to push any agenda in which he had a vested interest. Frequently, in fact, he argued for policy changes that would adversely affect him.

Any tribute to Harold Hoehner must have at least one Aggie joke. I will conclude my remarks with the one that David Hoehner gave in his eulogy for his dad:

Three guys found themselves stuck on a desert island. They had been there for a long time and they all but gave up hope of ever being found. Then, one day, a bottle drifted ashore. They popped the cork, and out came a genie. The genie gave each man a wish. The first one said, "Well, I'm from Cambridge, England, and I really miss it. I miss the cobblestone roads, King's College Chapel, the medieval buildings of the colleges. My wish is that you send me back."

Poof! The genie granted his wish and he was gone.

The next man said, "I'm from the University of Texas. I graduated there a couple of years ago and am working there now. I absolutely love Austin. I wish that you send me back there."

And poof! He was gone.

The last man, an Aggie, said, "Oh my! My friends are gone. Now, I'm really lonely! I don't think I could bear to be alone on this island by myself. I just wish that my friends would come back!"

After the laughter died down at Harold's memorial service, David concluded, "I would give anything right now to be an Aggie with a wish."

Harold Hoehner is survived by his wife Gini and his four children, Stephen, Debbie, David, and Susan.