

DR. ROBERT L. SUMNER'S ARTICLE ON DR. HYMERS

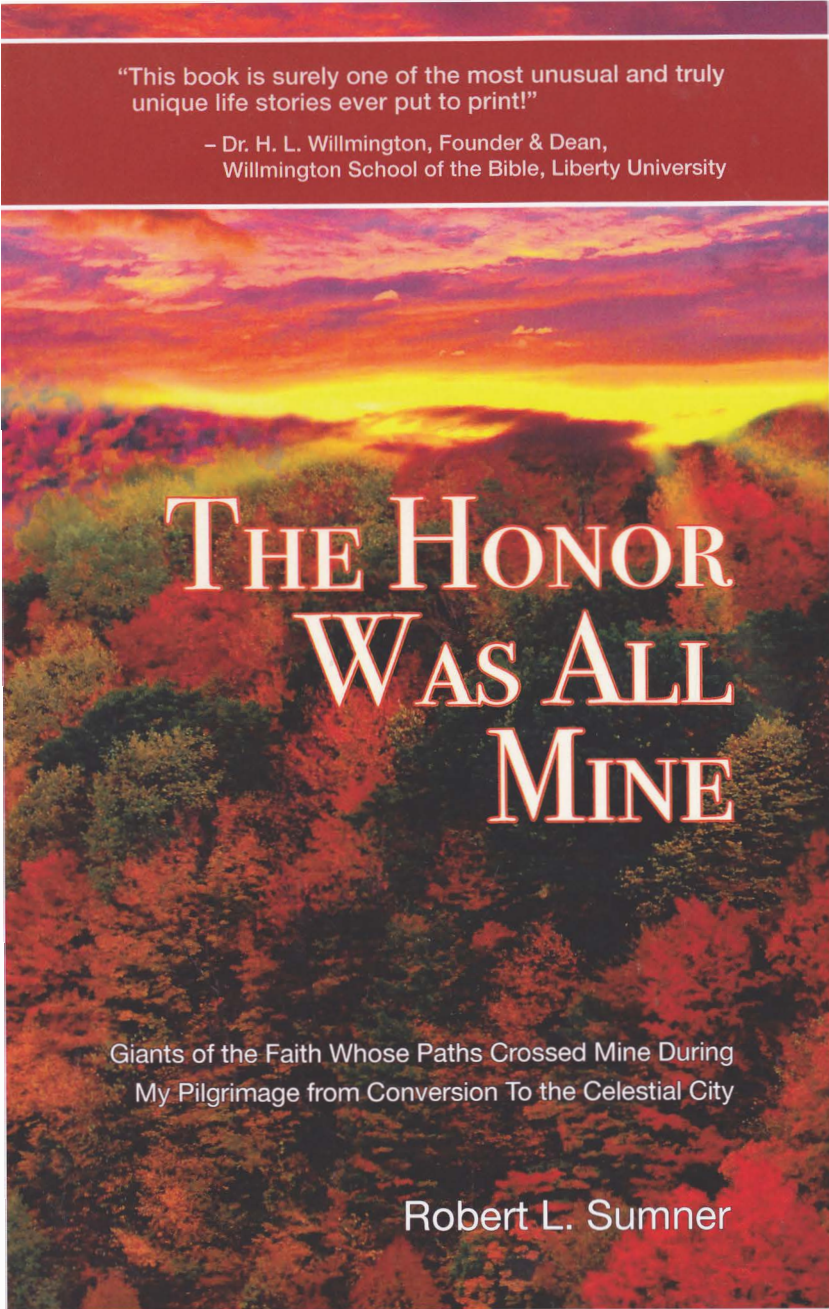
DR. ROBERT L. SUMNER'S BIOGRAPHY OF DR. R. L. HYMERS, JR. IN DR. SUMNER'S BOOK, "THE HONOR WAS ALL MINE: GIANTS OF THE FAITH WHOSE PATHS CROSSED MINE" (BIBLICAL EVANGELISM PRESS, 2015, PP. 103-105). FOREWORD BY DR. H. L. WILLMINGTON, PROFESSOR, LIBERTY UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF DIVINITY.

SCROLL DOWN FOR THE ARTICLE ON DR. HYMERS.

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Willmington School of the Bible, Liberty University



THE HONOR WAS ALL MINE

Giants of the Faith Whose Paths Crossed Mine During
My Pilgrimage from Conversion To the Celestial City

Robert L. Sumner

Merle, in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "laid down his sword and shield down by the riverside, to study war no more," thanks to a massive heart attack on November 12, 1990. At the memorial of his Homegoing, Dr. Paul N. Tassell, the GARBC National Representative at the time, described him as *true* (to his convictions), *treasured* (by his family), and *trusted* (by fellows laborers in the Lord's harvest). He was all of that, *and much, much more!*

Friend Merle has been missed, indeed. His gifted wife, Shirley, followed him to Glory on January 7, 2015.

R. L. HYMERS

I have known Dr. Robert Leslie Hymers (1941-) for over a third of a century. When I was serving as an editor of *The Sword of the Lord* he came to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, with an assistant and a television camera to interview Dr. John R. Rice – not long before Rice took off for Heaven. At that time I learned that he had been so greatly impressed with Dr. Rice's stand on ecclesiastical separation and other doctrinal matters that he had renamed his work in downtown Los Angeles after Dr. Rice's early work in Dallas, the Fundamentalist Baptist Tabernacle. He had also read most – if not all – of Dr. Rice's literally hundreds of books and booklets, along with studying and following his international ministry through *The Sword of the Lord*.

At that time, this was all I knew of Dr. Hymers and his ministry at one of our nation's largest metropolitan centers. Later we became good friends and I have preached for him at the Tabernacle many times. In fact, I still have a standing invitation to speak there anytime I am in the area or even just passing through. Of course, at my age, he isn't worried that I will make a pest of myself or become a nuisance by being there too *soon* or *very often*.

Dr. Hymers' conversion and early Christian experiences were in a Chinese church and with a Southern Baptist background. In 1960 he was licensed to preach by the First Southern Baptist Church of Huntington Park and because he planned to go to the mission field, he transferred to the First Chinese Baptist Church in Los Angeles. He was one of the members voting to call Dr. Timothy Lin as pastor, at that time teaching systematic theology at Bob Jones University. About 45 years later, at Dr. Lin's request, Hymers preached his funeral and in it he described Lin as one of the most godly men he had ever met.

After earning his bachelor degree at the California State University

at Los Angeles, Hymers received his M.Div. at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (SBC); his D.Min. at the San Francisco Theological Seminary (United Presbyterian); and his Th.D. from the Louisiana Baptist Theological Seminary (Baptist Bible Fellowship International). He was also awarded a Litt.D. by Louisiana Baptist University. Over the years he has been the recipient of numerous other awards.

I am also impressed with Dr. Hymers' family. He has a lovely, dedicated wife who knows her Bible well and is a consistent, proven soul winner. She is faithful to her husband and she is faithful to her Lord. Together they raised twin boys, Robert Leslie, III, and John Wesley.

Dr. Hymers deliberately, *intentionally* set out to establish a gospel-preaching, evangelistic, Bible-teaching church in the very heart of wicked downtown Los Angeles. If for nothing else, I commend him for that and for not joining other evangelical ministries in fleeing to the suburbs to reach a more prosperous clientele.

That he made some mistakes in his early days of fighting wickedness and unbelief, he would be the first to tell you. But through it all he has stayed true to the *message* and *practices* of the Word of God.

Admittedly, I probably know more about Dr. Hymers than the average outsider because I worked closely with him during some of the vicious attacks critics made on him and his ministry, during which he was falsely accused of operating a cult instead of a church. As the author of a number of works against various cults, I flew to Los Angeles and spent several days going over various issues with him and his staff. I interviewed literally scores of his members *and his critics* (all who wished to talk to me and some who didn't), getting their opinions of him and the work at the Tabernacle (all of which were via private, *confidential* interviews to enable them to speak freely and without fear of recrimination). Not only so, and perhaps more to the point, I had confidential and private interviews with those who were *opposing* him, listening to and evaluating their complaints and grievances.

There were absolutely no moral accusations of any kind and, as I recall, no false doctrine charges either. All the complaints were in the area of church government and could be summed up pretty much as the usual grievances of disgruntled church members. I still remain "on call" today if anyone has any problem or needs a statement about him, his character, or his ministry. I appreciate and admire a man who is willing to take a stand for Truth according to his convictions and then stand by them, even when all the odds are against him. Robert Leslie Hymers is that kind of a Christian servant of Christ!

One of the things that has impressed me over the years has been Dr. Hymers' concern for souls, seeking to win them to Christ and then disciple them in the faith once for all delivered to the saints. When folks respond to the invitation, they are dealt with in a counseling room and that counsel is among the most thorough of any church with which I am familiar. I commend and salute him and his people for this – many of whom were saved out of lives of vilest sins.

Another thing that has impressed me, as indicated above, is the fact that Dr. Hymers has not “fled the city” for the comforts and the advantages of a suburban location. One after another evangelical church has moved out from downtown Los Angeles because of the “deteriorating” neighborhood – including the historic and prominent Church of the Open Door, where giants like Doctors R. A. Torrey, Louis T. Talbot and J. Vernon McGee labored so long – but Dr. Hymers and his noble congregation have not been among the “movers out.” Someone with the truth needs to maintain a lighthouse and a beacon for Christ in wicked sex-ridden, drug-laden, godless downtown Los Angeles – and Dr. Hymers is one of the very few dedicated to keeping that gospel light shining for the Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Word. God bless him and the various rescue missions that dot the downtown Los Angeles landscape!

In addition to the local ministry in the heart of one of America's most wicked cities, he has also maintained an international ministry – even on the local level, his services are translated “live” into both Spanish and Chinese (for Hispanics and Asians) – with his outreach making his messages available online in a host of other languages.

The Fundamental Baptist Tabernacle has a ministry that extends to between 85,000 and 90,000 people a month on its website. The sermon manuscripts of Dr. Hymers that are featured there weekly are now translated into 30 languages (it just recently added Modern Greek as the 30th). More than 212 countries and provinces around the world have people in them who read those sermons and watch the videos. (The videos of the sermons are given in English, Mandarin Chinese and Spanish, and are viewed throughout the world on the Internet. Those videos are also put up on YouTube each week, where they are viewed by about 1,000 people per month, or more. The YouTube video sermons have a link which sends them to the church website, so they wind up watching the sermons on the website. The address of his website is www.rlhsermons.com.) He is also the author of a number of books.

God bless the Fundamental Baptist Tabernacle of Los Angeles, remaining *true* – and remaining *put* – until Jesus comes again.