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CONTENTS Volume XXIV, Number 3 December 2001

From the Editor

The autobiography and notes of G. Clifford Cress are recent valuable additions to sources in Brethren in Christ history. As Cress himself explains in the autobiography, he came to the Brethren in Christ in the 1890s partly out of interest in Sara Zook, an attractive daughter of Noah and Mary Zook (Zook was one of the leading Brethren in Christ evangelists at that time). Cress's description of the Kansas church in the 1890s and later of the Chicago Mission, together with comments on the missionary fervor that began in Kansas and soon spread eastward, is an excellent and engaging account of that development.

Cress also provides interesting insights into the first several years of Brethren in Christ work in Africa. While much of what he writes is not new information, he gives interesting details of early missionary life, including pulling teeth and mending shoes, the work and personality of leader Jesse Engle, and the reactions of Africans to the missionaries. His is the fullest account of the short-lived work at Intaba (Entabeni to Frances Davidson), a few miles from Matopo, the main station.

Parenthetically it may be noted that most of Noah and Mary Zook's children went into foreign mission work (not all of them with the Brethren in Christ), and several died while overseas. An in-depth study of the religious and sociological dimensions of this remarkable family is long overdue.

The series of biographical articles (highly favored by many readers) continues in this issue with Clyde A. Ross's account of the life of Ray M. Zercher. As the author suggests, Ray was not one of the highly visible leaders in the denomination; in his unassuming manner, Ray himself would have disclaimed denominational greatness. In fact, he resisted my repeated

suggestions to write an autobiography. Thus it came as something of a surprise to read in this article that in his latest years he made notes on his life.

Nevertheless, a biography of Ray Zercher is worthy of inclusion in this journal. In various ways, Ray embodied many of the ideal characteristics of the denomination (despite his not infrequent questioning of the status quo)—humility, concern for others, working unreservedly in various church roles. He is a good example of how people outside of top leadership positions still help to shape the life of the church—both by action and example.

The article by Terry Brensinger on "War in the Old Testament" is timely, given the current tense national and international climate caused by recent acts of terrorism. The assumption, long held by Brethren in Christ, that only the New Testament can instruct us about peace is shown by the author to be inadequate. He points out that in the Old Testament, God limited the size of armies and the military propensity of kings, and pointed to a future in which peace would be the normal way of life.

John Eby's review of *Beyond the News* is the second such visual media review carried by *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (for the first review see the August issue). Readers are encouraged to send to the editor suggestions for other visual media for review.

The reports of the secretary-treasurer and the editor are carried in this issue because they were not available at the annual meeting of the Brethren in Christ Historical Society on September 29. They show the Historical Society, which sponsors this journal, to be in good spirit and with adequate finances (thanks to the generosity of many of our members).

E. Morris Sider

George Clifford Cress: Autobiography and Notes of a Missionary*

G. Clifford Cress was one of the early Brethren in Christ missionaries to Africa. Born in 1873, he was less than a year old when his parents moved from Ohio to the Abilene area in Kansas. His parents were Methodist in background, but eventually Cress's mother joined the Brethren in Christ Church, followed soon by her son. Clifford married Noah and Mary Zook's daughter Sara. Sara and Clifford left for mission work in Africa in 1899.

In early 1900, less than a year after their arrival at Matopo Mission in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Sara died from what other missionaries described as fever (undoubtedly malarial fever). Less than two months later, the leader of the mission work in Africa, Jesse Engle, died from the same disease. Cress

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*G. Clifford Cress's autobiography and his writings of experiences in Africa were brought to the editor's attention by Doris Hoover of Abilene, Kansas. H. Franklin Bloomer, Jr., and Kent Bloomer, grandsons of Clifford Cress, gave permission to reproduce those sections of Cress's work that most closely relate to his life with the Brethren in Christ.

A full copy of Cress's writings is held by H. Franklin Bloomer, Jr., and another full copy is in the Brethren in Christ Archives at Messiah College, Grantham, Pennsylvania.

returned to the United States, bringing Engle's wife Elizabeth with him.

One of his first activities on returning to North America was to write about his experiences in Africa. Under the title of "Among the Matabele in South Africa," he described his activities as a missionary and made copious observations of African customs and natural surroundings. Included also is a journal that he kept while in Africa. Selections from this work are reproduced in this article.

Following his second marriage and graduation from the University of Chicago, Cress became a minister in the Northern Baptist Convention. Over the years, he held pastorates in several states, and various administrative offices in that denomination. His entry in *Who's Who in America* (1932-1933 edition) indicates that he was "widely known as lecturer on popular subjects." He died in 1951.

In 1937, at the age of sixty-four, Cress wrote an autobiographical account of the first thirty-two years of his life. Prepared for his two daughters, the account and his notes on Africa have been preserved by the family. A grandson, H. Franklin Bloomer, Jr., completed the typing of the autobiography begun earlier by his mother, Allene Cress Bloomer. The autobiography reproduced here begins in the latter part of chapter II and ends with his engagement in 1905 to Amanda Witter Zook (the mother of his two children). Editorial changes in the autobiography are very minimal.

The autobiography and the African notes are valuable sources for Brethren in Christ history. They give us significant insights into the early years of the denomination in Kansas, and of early Brethren in Christ missionary work in Africa. The journal account of the founding of the Intaba mission is the most detailed source available for that short-lived station.

The Autobiography of G. Clifford Cress

My parents owed much to Methodism and the little church on the prairie. And even now I am grateful to God that for 13 years my young life was exposed to the spirit of religion there. It was a great feast of good things that young and old had together there every three months, when the presiding elder came to conduct the quarterly meeting and to lift the various collectives. They were earnest men full of piety and zeal for God, and John Wesley, and were always clad in black, long-tailed coats and white ties and adorned with much hair and whiskers. We saw another world when the elder spoke or preached, and our minds were quickened and our souls fed.

But these fellowships suddenly ceased for the Cresses. And it happened on this wise: in 1879 came the first large migration of Pennsylvania Dutch from southern and eastern Pennsylvania to Dickinson County, Kansas. This was duplicated in 1880 and again in 1881—whole trainloads of Dutch farmers coming to settle on the fertile black soil of Kansas. They all spoke a dialect called Pennsylvania Dutch. Most of them spoke some English. A few were fluent in the English. But they were a peculiar people, religious to the core and very clannish. Among these large groups were a class known as River Brethren or Brethren in Christ. Of these, there were enough to form six large church congregations. They formed community groups, built their churches and lived their lives according to their inner lights and the traditions of the fathers.[1]

Now one of these groups of about 150 or more souls settled very near our Cress homestead. In fact, they bought farms all around us and became our neighbors. And they were good neighbors too, very thrifty, very industrious and very odd. Several of these families bought farms in our Glenwood School District and, having large families, they soon dominated our community. Very soon after settling on the land, they built a meetinghouse, two miles by road from our home.

One of these Dutch families living near this new church, which they called Zion, was that of Rev. Noah Zook, a former minister and a preacher of some power. He had a most

remarkable wife named Mary, and she was not only the mother of eleven children but became probably the most influential woman in that congregation. They settled on their farm in 1880 in the spring. That autumn they sent Anna and David and Sara and Eber to the district school. And on that September day so long ago, the course of my life was definitely changed. This little Pennsylvania Dutch girl named Sara was only six months my junior. She had dark brown eyes and black hair, and we liked each other at first sight. I was eight years old then and very soon announced to the world that, when I grew up, this little girl would be my wife. And she made no effort to spurn the confidence, for which we were both punished at school and disciplined at home, for our parents were scandalized.

For six years this friendship grew and when my father, about 1886, withdrew his membership from the Methodist Church, my mother, attracted by the great spiritual fervor of Mary Zook, promptly announced that she would cast in her lot with the Brethren in Christ people. My father opposed this but to no avail. My mother presented herself for baptism and was immersed by trine immersion in Mud Creek near Talmage, Kansas. Now my full approval was given to this change of spiritual fireside. I could see the little maiden at school five days a week, and every Sunday I went to Sunday school or church. I attended faithfully.

And so the years went by, 1880-1890. And I was growing up and maturing, my stature passing the six feet mark when I was about sixteen. My personality was unfolding normally. I was a rather happy lad, I think, deeply religious by nature and incurably in love with a growing maiden who returned my affection. Is it any wonder then that in a meeting conducted by her father, I made my first open gesture of confession of faith in Christ? A month later I asked for baptism. And in August, 1890, near my seventeenth birthday, in the little prairie creek where my mother was immersed, I too knelt for the rite of public confession. The same man baptized me who had baptized my mother, Elder Samuel Zook, bishop of the church in Kansas north of the Smoky Hill River. And thus, my life was tied up with these good people, first through a little maiden, then

through my mother's devotion and finally on my own choice of religious affiliation. And so the decade closed.

But there was one sour note in the symphony of my expanding life. In May, 1890, my best pal for ten wonderful years told me she felt she must comply with her parents' wishes, and our friendship so far as it meant anything more than that was at an end. It was not debatable. Her word was final. And it was at this point in my life that I learned how to live in myself, to give myself to intellectual disciplines, to find my satisfactions not in the usual activities of normal youth but in a world of my own making. My mother called the next four years of my life my age of silence. But it was a period of preparation that explains much of my later life. The renewal of my lost friendship and its development fill in the intervals and high spots of the next ten years, which were to end in the final tragedy in the tropical fastnesses of the Dark Continent.

Life was full of brooding the first years of the 1890s. I had been badly used up by the ravages of the La Grippe [influenza]-measles illness. My vitality seemed to remain subnormal for years. It was at this period that my parents feared I would develop tuberculosis and slip away as my young uncle, Albert Crary, had done. My physical condition for those years, 1890-1894, as I now reflect on it, was largely the result of inner disappointment in my love affair, which had become a real and vital part of my mental life. Its bitterness filled all my dreaming of the future. There had never seemed to be any question about the future. And now all that mattered was swept away. I withdrew into myself and fed on my own sorrow year after year.

[In the] spring [of 1894] I came out of my gloom and depression occasioned by my unrequited love for Sara. I would be 21 years old in August and therefore be on my own. I threw off my self-imposed isolation and resolved to mix normally with the youth of my church and to keep my eyes open for a chance to get into self-support. One of the necessary possessions of any young farmer in that period, if he wished to step out, was a good horse and buggy. Father would give me a first-class driving horse any time I asked for it, but I must have my own buggy. There was a used, but rather good single buggy for sale in the

neighborhood, and I quietly bought it for perhaps around $30. It was a cash transaction and represented the wages of five weeks.

Thus possessed of the orthodox equipment including a good whalebone whip, a linen spread and a heavy robe for winter, I made my social debut. Neighbors were astonished to see this yokel who for the past four years had been completely and silently buttoned-up with his own thoughts, now come smartly out on Sunday mornings driving a fine black horse, second to none around the hitch racks.

In June, Sara graduated from high school and was at home again. But I would never ask her to ride in my second-hand buggy. She had thrown me over. She would have to call me back. And she did. It happened in this wise: There was a fine little German-speaking damsel in our church who seemed just now to be unattached. So she drove in my buggy, and we drove about the country lanes on Sunday evenings as the spirit moved us. But only for a few weeks. Then as the custom was, the young people used to go in groups to one church or another. In August, 1894, just as I attained my majority, I met my childhood pal again, and when we formally shook hands, her eyes and her hand told me I was welcome to come back. And I did.

In a few weeks she went away to teach a district school in White Pegion, Ill. But before she left we were engaged to be married, if, as and when our financial conditions would justify such a happy consummation. One of the values in belonging to the Brethren in Christ was that it conferred on you as a sort of character not being too much affected by material resources. Every year our young people were married and began their home building with slender means. I knew my future was secure after the same fashion. But left alone again, I formed a high resolve: next year, I too would enter the teacher's profession as a springboard to something better. The necessary books for normal training were secured and all through the coming year, I sat behind the kitchen table in the evening or in my bedroom, pouring over these subjects. When examination day came along during July of 1895, I was ready.

Early in 1895 I hired myself for five months to a farmer in the neighborhood at $14 per month and my board. It was the hardest five months of manual labor in my life. Old Jimmy Mustard was a Highland Scotchman, very religious and garrulous to the point of extinction. We rose every morning at 4:30 o'clock and milked a stable full of cows. Then we turned to the barns to feed, curry and harness the work horses. The day on the fields was long and hard. We milked all those hot panting cows again after dark when the flies ceased to keep the critters in motion. But auld Jimmy was a quaint grizzled Scot and asked nothing of me that both he and his wife did not do themselves. And all for $14 a month.

One day in July or August that year, I was plowing in a field along the road that led to Abilene. My father came along and waved to me. I went out to the hedge to visit a few minutes with him. He was much excited. Only that morning, after more than 30 years of excessive use of tobacco, he had resolved to quit. He held up his big plug of chewing tobacco and said, "I'll never taste it again, my son." And he never did. But to test his courage, he carried that plug of tobacco about until it crumbled to powder. He lived more than 40 years thereafter and joined his group of sons as non-users of the weed. Once resolved on a course he never deviated.

It was during August that year that I received a letter from County Superintendent David F. Shirk, my former teacher at Chapman. His letter bore a word of congratulations on my successful examination and enclosed my Third Grade Teachers Certification. Up till then I was not certain that I would pass. Now jubilant at having made this hurdle, my next task was to get a contract to teach. Already I had made conditional application for old Rosedale School #63, the next district to the north of us.

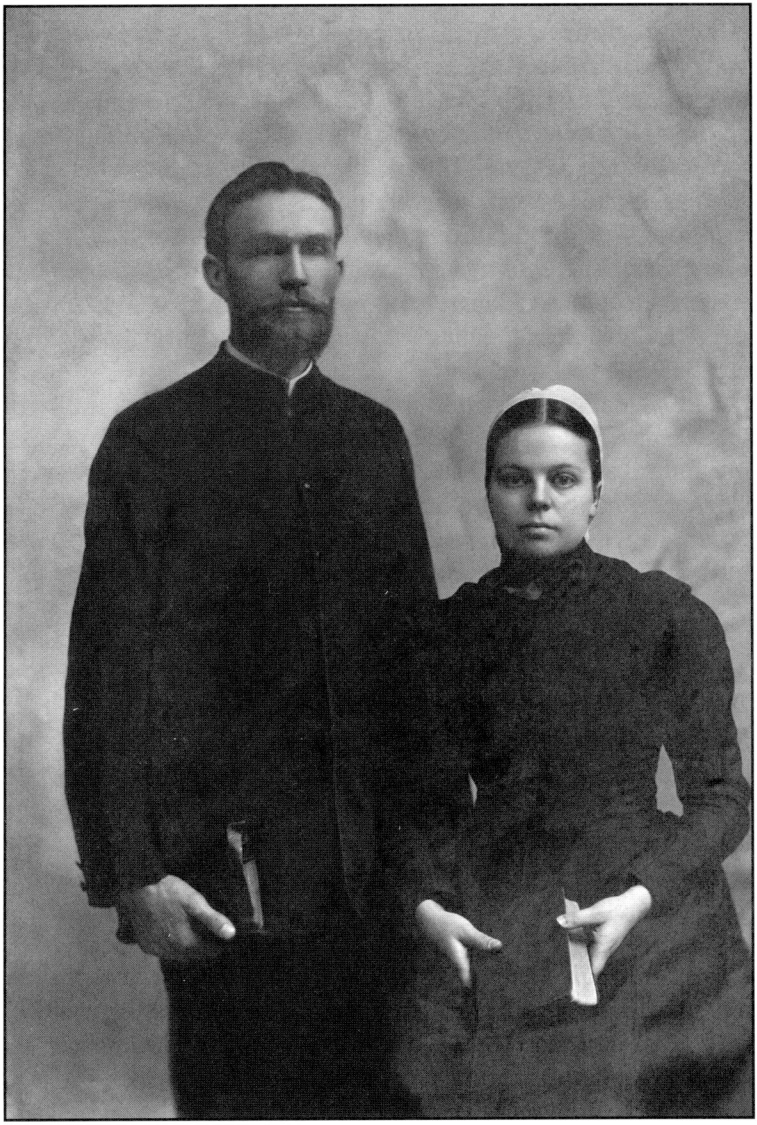
Now the directors were ready to hire me for a seven months' term. But they would pay only $25 a month. Their argument was that I could live at home and save $15 a month for room and board. They were adamant, and I had to accept their terms. Parents gladly gave me room and board for such chores as I could do evenings and on Saturdays. There were less than a dozen children, the building was cosy, and by wearing an old

suit of clothes, I passed through the term to draw my wages at the end of the last month. They paid me in gold coin—eight $20 pieces, one $10 and one $5, the total equaling $175. But weeks before my school terminated, I had married a wife and set up a home.

I was never to teach again except to fill out a period of three months in a private school. This private school was at Tabor, Iowa and was taught by my wife's brother, Eber Zook. Early in the spring of 1898 he had married one Miss Amanda Witter of Enterprise, Kansas, that together they might tour certain parts of America and sail for India as missionaries late in the autumn of that year. But that is another story to be told later.

During the summer of 1895, Sara Zook had returned to Kansas from Illinois and secured a very fine school near Moonlight, Kansas, about eight or nine miles from her father's home. She had $50 per month, and this added to my $25 now indicated that the gods were smiling on us. We were going places fast. Then came the great opportunity. Rev. and Mrs. Noah Zook, her parents, seeing most of their children were fending for themselves, now wished to retire from farming and to give their whole time to religious work. And that accounts for an invitation I received from them one day about the beginning of the year 1896, to spend an evening with them. They offered to lease me their home fully equipped, the farm and the dairy.

This gave me the opportunity for marriage and to step into a going farm-dairy business on a five-year contract. Sara was happy. I was more than pleased. The lease was signed, stock and equipment appraised as to value. Arrangements for our wedding were simple. Both of our families would be present at the bride's home. Her uncle, Elder Samuel Zook, and his wife, Aunt Maria, would come, and the Elder, who had baptized us both, would solemnize the nuptials. It was a very solemn hour for all present. Our mothers cried softly, but the congratulations broke the tenseness of pent-up feeling. The wedding supper found everyone happy about the festive board. The bride's father was a famous story teller and kept the company rippling with laughter.



G. Clifford Cress and Sara (Zook) Cress

This culmination of a romance that had begun in 1880 came with the suddenness of a prairie storm. We had expected to teach around five years each to earn the necessary stake, presto, all our plans went by the board. In 1895, it was $14 per month for a servant's wages—1896, a fully equipped dairy farm, 40 head of blooded cattle of which 15 were milch cows, a farm equipped with good buildings and ample machinery. The mill of the gods was grinding a bit faster than usual. Mrs. Cress gave up the remainder of her school term. I completed my term on April 1. And then together we laid our plans to make a living and build an estate.

In 1894 there was a religious meeting held in the church here that was profoundly to affect my life. David Zook, a brother of my future wife, came back from Iowa where he had been in contact with a holiness movement of the extreme type. He had married a wife and believed himself called to be a missionary to India. This visit home was in the nature of a farewell to his family and old friends before sailing by way of Japan.

His zeal and preaching created a tremendous excitement among our quiet country people who were Godfearing farmers. They were fighting drought, chickbugs and Hessian flies in their fields and being buffeted by the prairie. Now to be called to assume a responsibility for saving the world and dedicating their children and their substance to home and foreign enterprises never dreamed of was too much. For long generations their forebears had quietly said their prayers and attended devoutly to their religious chores, but they never felt called on to save the world.

But David Zook put a new ideal and an awful fear of God into their hearts and left them up in the Kansas wind, as it were. That meeting started the movement that took 21 young people out of our country church and into missionary fields around the world for good or ill. Zion and the other five Brethren in Christ churches in the county were convulsed and shaken. 1894 saw the initial movement of a new day. Later it was to pull me into its current.

From 1894 on, religious work took the first place in my life. Not that I ever dreamed then of ever becoming a minister. My

ambition was to become a successful farmer as all my neighbors and friends were. My marriage seemed to open the door for the consummation of this ambition. On April 1, 1896, I took off my coat, tightened up my belt, and began to struggle on my own.

Father Cress gave me my pick of the workhorses. I took one valued at about $25. That represented the aid I received from my family. My own father couldn't stake me. He had eight children in his family. Horses were worth $25 for good ones. Cows sold for $10-$20. Corn brought as low as 12½ ¢ a bushel. Wheat sold for 35¢ to 45¢, oats 15¢. Hogs sold for $2.50 per cwt. And beef cattle were hardly marketable. Under such depression, I launched out asking nothing from anyone. My career as a farmer lasted exactly two years, and then the scene changed.

During the year 1897, stimulated by the religious fervor of our church, I solemnly faced life with this constantly recurring question: Ought I plan to spend the rest of my life on a farm or should I offer my life to my God for such service as I was fitted to render in some missionary endeavor? Month after month I debated it in my mind. We did not talk much about it in our home. Our immediate job was laid out. We were under a five-year contract. But one day in autumn of 1897, while working alone in a field putting up winter feed for cattle, the question presented itself so urgently that I took this attitude: if my way should open of itself to enter some distinctive type of Christian service approved by my church, I would consider it an evidence of a divine call.

When I reached this decision, there came a great peace into my mind. My wife approved. I wrote my wife's parents. They were expecting my decision and were in sympathy. And thus it came to pass that in March, 1898, we made a public sale, gave up our lease, and walked out of our happy home to face the untried ways of those who would live by faith and conquer the impossible through seeing Him who is the invisible partner of all pure souls.

We come now to the turning of the road and one of the milestone dates in my life. It is April 3, 1898. On that day I was publicly set apart by my spiritual equals to the ministry of the

gospel announced by Jesus of Galilee. It is a beautiful picture, and since this record is for my children and for them alone, it is fitting that it should be done in more than one color. The service was held in our home church [Zion] at a Sunday morning service. It was springtime, and the weather was beautiful. There was neither wind nor dust. The new life was waking in the prairies.

The church was filled to capacity. These simple people were our people. They had never seen such a service in the life of the church. On one side of the auditorium sat the women, young and old, clad in Quaker-like garb. On the other side sat our fathers and brothers. Most of the men wore full beards. Across the front of the church stood a long varnished table on which were the Bibles and hymnbooks. Behind this table the elders were seated, probably seven or eight of them, all bearded, all in clerical coats, all wearing long, flowing hair parted in the middle. Most of them had their upper lips shaved.

There were four candidates for this consecration service: George Clifford Cress and Sara Zook Cress, his wife; John Eber Zook and Amanda Witter Zook, his wife. Sara Zook Cress and John Eber Zook were brother and sister of David Zook who with his wife was now in Japan en route to India where he was to serve over 40 years in the area in and near Calcutta. Mr. and Mrs. J. Eber Zook had recently been married at Tabor, Iowa, and were designated for service in India. Mr. and Mrs. G. Clifford Cress were to sail a year later for Africa. Each of these four young people had the love and confidence of the church. They were of its life and came to this service under the support and prayers of many true friends. There was a service of worship and several short addresses by the ministers. Then came the charge to the candidates by the bishop after which the quartet came forward and knelt side by side before the pulpit.

It was a tense and sacred moment, and people were deeply moved. It was a sort of zero hour equivalent. The candidates were young and alert and devoted to a high ideal. They were going out and might never come back. For the young people, it was the hour when they were being given a commission for a great spiritual adventure.

For the Cresses there was the memory of poignant grief since in this church and on the very spot where they knelt there had recently been placed two small white caskets. Each contained the body of a baby boy [the Cress's children] who had come prematurely into this life and had gone out again. That very morning early the young parents had stood beside two small marble stones in God's acre by the churchyard, and for the mother it was the farewell forever of dreams that had come true and then had faded away.

Now the moment for the prayer of ordination was come. And as these four separate petitions were offered to God, their parents, and ministers of the congregation, laid their hands on our heads, symbol of ancient priestly anointing. (No apostolic succession, no pontifical benediction was ever received in purer desire or more unfeigned devotion than this simple service of setting apart four lives for sacrifice and service.) Then came the hand of fellowship and the expressions of love and good will. There could be no turning back now. The greatest values in human life lie in simple elemental experiences which rise spontaneously out of our growing soul fibre. For me, this day recorded a decision which I have never doubted nor ever wished to change.

Now I was ordained—a man set apart to a distinctive task. My field was to be evangelism and education among the Matabele or northern Zulus of Rhodesia, South Africa. Our denomination had, through the David Zook awakening, sent out its first foreign mission band. It consisted of an old gentleman named Jesse Engle and his wife and two college-trained young women as teachers. These had gone to Africa, met Cecil Rhodes and from him obtained a grant of 3000 acres in the Matoppo Hills [Matopo in later spelling of the word] of Matabeleland. My objective was to get some smattering of information regarding this field and its work, to join the party as soon as possible.

Support was not guaranteed. But we had faith that a wealthy group like the Brethren would not let us starve. We went out largely on this faith. Looking back now after 40 years, it seems hardly possible that two young people could take such a

hazardous course with such assurance and joy. There can be no doubt that we were honest in purpose and wholly unselfish and ready to die for an ideal venture. It is the way of youth. There was an element of romance in it as well. Though past 24 years of age, we were yet children in experience and judgment. Our course led to adventure, travel, escape from the hard life of the farm. These factors are clear now. But in 1898, all was submerged to obedience to a divine calling.

At Tabor, Iowa, there was a faith home where young people were alleged to be trained for missionary service. To this institution had gone others that we knew—our brothers, David Zook and Eber Zook and Eber's wife. All had been imbued with a certain fervor for sacrificial service. So I took my young wife and went there to see what could be absorbed. The school position left vacant by Eber's marriage and departure for India via Kansas was given to me. I completed the term ending mid-June. Here we began systematic study of the Zulu language. We discovered something of our needs for the journey and for equipment after arrival.

After four months at Tabor we were judged to be ready to begin our tour of the churches of our denomination. So we left for Kansas and visited every community where there was any organization of our people. This was to acquaint us with the home base. It was also to let the supporting constituency see and hear their representatives, for it would be long before we expected to return. Our next seven months were devoted to this visitation with its endless talk, dinners, meetings and addresses. We traveled in Kansas, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania. During January and February, 1989, we were in Pennsylvania and were accompanied by Rev. and Mrs. Noah Zook, parents of Mrs. Cress.[2]

We sailed from New York on the White Star liner *Majestic* on the eighth day of March, 1899. Freewill offerings and private gifts amounted to possibly $1,000. And since we went the lowest possible class, Third Class, our travel expenses for the 10,000 miles to Port Elizabeth, Cape Colony, were very modest. In addition to the gifts given to us for our journey, we had our private funds which represented the net profits of our two years

on the old farm in Kansas. From these funds we drew liberally to purchase the required outfit that we took with us.

[The autobiography breaks at this point and does not resume until he sails back to the United States. In less than a year after their arrival in Africa, Sara Cress died from fever (probably malarial, although Frances Davidson diagnosed the sickness as food poisoning). Clifford himself was near death at the same time from malarial fever. Soon after his recovery, he returned to the United States.]

My 27th birthday found me on a North German Lloyd liner, the *Aller*, returning to America. We were in mid-ocean, but so was I in my life plan. My young dreams had been fiercely broken, my health undermined. Worst of all I was in a mental haze, and sorrow was liberally mingled with anxiety. It seemed to me that strange powers had played on my credulity and had robbed me of some of the finest things of life.

Being untrained and without an adequate philosophy of living, all my disappointments were magnified manyfold. My religious training had not been wisely directed so that when natural forces in my environment cut me down and left me helpless, and without an objective, I was an easy prey for doubts and fears. But I had one hope to which some assurance could be pinned. My parents would at least give me shelter and food. My experience was not unmatched in others. The head of our mission had gone, leaving the work in a precarious condition for lack of a leader. The churches, I thought, would appreciate my story. And maybe by patience and effort, better days would dawn.

When, therefore, I arrived in New York, I began at once to plan a lecture tour on my way back to Kansas. September, October and November, 1900, were booked solidly with speaking engagements from Pennsylvania on westward to my boyhood home. It was on this tour that one cold followed another, so that by mid-winter I had developed a deep-seated case of bronchitis that was to annoy me for many years.

It is to be recorded that my speaking activities were perhaps the worst possible course I could have pursued. Night after night, and many times during each intervening day, I was forced

[through my speaking engagements] to live through our collapse in the tropical tests for which white men from temperate climes were not equal. This constant narration of defeat only tended to intensify my sense of loss so that, by mid-winter, my whole outlook was blue indeed.

My parents were kind and generous. But they could not give me what I so desperately needed. My father had never had any real sympathy for my religious activities. He looked with disapproval on my African venture, and there was no consolation in his rough and ready interpretation of my course. Mother was more considerate. But even she seemed to feel that I had surrendered my call and place in the Kingdom.

I know now that her inability to comfort me lay more in me than in her want of sympathy. In my loss, weakness and sorrow, I had naively turned to her again without realizing that my age, marriage and whole man's attitude made the gulf unbridgeable. But at Christmas we went down into Missouri to the home of my Uncle William Cress and spent several weeks in a cheerful atmosphere where we did not continually recount my personal miseries. This helped me. When we returned to Kansas, I spent about two months very quietly at home and wrote the record of my African adventure as "Life Among the Matabele in South Africa."

It was during this period, in 1901, that a special ceremony was held to validate my ordination. The railroads would not recognize my commission from the foreign mission board, now that I had severed my connection with the African work and was not to return. Therefore, in February, 1901, in our church in Abilene, the bishop and several elders gave me an added ceremony of ordination to comply with the standards of the denomination and to satisfy the railroad requirements. But this was privately done and meant nothing to me except as a recognition of my "setting apart" on April 3, 1898.

Spring comes early on the Kansas prairie. March first found many mild days and much active work on the farms. I now had to come to some decision as to my future. It seems pitiful now as I recall it. Two courses were open to me. I could assist my

father on the farm for room and board. Or I could take a position again as a day laborer at the meager pay such work would yield.

I chose the latter, and for perhaps two or more months labored as I could find work. This paid me $1.00 per day and my board. It was honorable but humiliating after the exalted state of mind I had been in from 1894 when I knew my childhood sweetheart would marry me, until February, 1900, when she passed out of my life forever. But I had no choice. Our denomination paid no salaries to pastors, and I was not convinced I ought to try again to live in the tropics.

Perhaps the greatest boon of this springtime was to be employed by Elder Samuel Zook to assist him personally in his orchards, vineyards and gardens. He was the leader of our people in Kansas, honored and loved by all and of great wisdom in human affairs and religious duties. From his fellowship I derived much help, and by his suggestion I secured the job of giving our meetinghouse two coats of white paint. This paid double wages when compared with manual labor and was the beginning of my experience in painting which covered the vacations of the next five years, generally at union wages though I never joined the local labor union. However, I agreed with the painters' local to observe union regulations and to ask union wages. Being a minister, I was never molested in any way, although others were driven off their work more than once in my vicinity.

When the harvest was ended that summer in July, my decision had to be made as to my future in the ministry. Many were anxious to have me publish my African diary, and one good friend put a check for $500 into my hand as the guarantee deposit required by a book publishing firm operated by the Mennonites at Elkhart, Indiana. Although my own judgment did not approve printing such a crude record, yet I went to see the editor of this printing establishment. He was an honest man and candidly advised me not to take a risk that probably would involve me in debt if it failed to sell in sufficient quantities. His advice was so convincing that I bound my copy for my own use and returned the check unused to my trusting friend. [For selections from this work, see below.]

In connection with this trip to Elkhart, Indiana, I had to pass through Chicago. Our people had a small mission located in the stockyards district in Englewood, and I spent a Sunday with them en route. The superintendent of this mission was a Kansas woman [Sarah Bert]. She belonged to the Bethel congregation and had been kind to me both before going to Africa and also on my return. They were temporarily without a resident minister and invited me to become the regular pastor, without salary. All I could expect was room and board and one freewill offering a week to be taken at the Sunday evening service.[3]

This looked very inviting to a homeless man. It was an opportunity for the limited service I could render. It was among people whom I could understand and appreciate. It carried the privilege of further educational advantages, and there would be fees and private offerings and an unlimited opportunity for work as a painter at wages such as I had never earned in my life. I accepted this call and, in August 1901, became the regular pastor of a small but live Christian church. It was to be my full-time task for the next four years, until August 1905.

My home for these four years was to be at the Brethren in Christ Mission, 5956 Peoria Street, Chicago. It was housed in an old corner building owned by the Schöenhofer Brewing Company and leased to us. It faced east and south on the corner of Peoria and Sixtieth Streets, and my room was on the second floor facing east. The building was a cheap frame structure set on wooden posts. It had no basement and stood on the flat swampy ground so characteristic of the larger part of the great city sprawled out along Lake Michigan.

The neighborhood was solidly covered from 59th Street south with block after block of two-story frame dwellings built to accommodate two or four families. The people were low-income type, employed all over the city and coming out at night on the Halsted Street car line or from the east over the 59th and 60th Streets car line. There were a great variety of nationalities in the vicinity, and we always had from 10 to 15 languages represented in our regular parish group to two to three hundred souls identified with our several departments.

The usual mission workers consisted of a married man and his wife, myself and from two to five single women who served in various types of work among our motley and humble group of people. These were the staff and lived in the Mission and were supported by it. The chapel was the old barroom. Back of this on the ground floor was a four-room apartment and on the second story two four-room apartments. We ate together in common and lived much as a family.

The services rendered by the Mission were many and varied. There was a Sunday school at 9:45 a.m., worship and sermon at 11:00 a.m., Young People's service at 7:00 p.m., evening worship service and frequently an evangelistic "after" meeting starting at 8:00 p.m. All these occurred every Sunday the year around with celebration of Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas and other special activities. Several times a year there were series of special evangelistic meetings every night for a month at a time. There were mothers' meetings during the week, and prayer services, cottage meetings, Young Men's classes and Young Women's classes meeting on week nights. Several months every year there were street meetings patterned after the Salvation Army, using a portable organ and held at 59th and Halsted Streets, our busiest corner. There were sewing classes, sick visitations, relief of poor, care of orphan children, labor bureau activities and special activities used in common with the association of city missions in Chicago.

During the winter, every Saturday afternoon and evening was devoted to educational work for our staff using the extension courses of the Moody Bible Institute. These were classes held in local churches but most of the time at the school's plant on the North Side, ten miles by trolley car from our home. I took this work regularly for four years.

Our baptismal services were held in Lake Michigan and were conducted as occasion required. During these four years, I immersed many young Christians, reformed drunkards, converted Jewish women, mothers and fathers of families, young people out of other denominations, ignorant foreign-speaking immigrants and their children, and one graduate student from the University of Chicago. In spite of the engulfing poverty, crude

facilities and untrained workers, including the writer, this work had elements of genuineness, directness and uplift not found in many more pretentious organizations. It was an open door to a discipline for me that I needed for later service in the Baptist denomination.

During these four years my income remained very modest. I had some small direct gifts each year. The collections on Sunday evenings probably were less than $2.00 per week for the four-year period. Then during the summer season, July to October 1st, there were wages from painting houses. This ran into considerable amounts. Many people visited our Mission who had never seen the sights of Chicago. I became a tourist guide for such, and although I made no charge, these people usually paid me something for a day's services.

Another source of income was my typewriter. During the last two years while a student at the University of Chicago, I did a good many theses for graduate students. This type of work required perfect performance and knowledge of thesis preparation which made skill and production exacting. Special linen paper, approved by the University, had to be used and was quite expensive. Then perfect copies were required, one direct and two duplicate carbon copies. The pay was 14¢ per page (three perfect copies). These had to be done with the utmost care. But the day's work brought good returns.

During my four years here I kept a savings account in a large branch bank, and its balances rose year by year. When I became a student at the university, I opened an account in the university bank. I recall that after paying my way as I went, there was a balance of $385 in the account January 1, 1906, when I began my last year's work to complete my theological course. But this is anticipating. These items are noted here to give evidence that, from my youth up, the policy of spending less than my income was firmly fixed. I never was in debt as a youth.

When I became a member of the Brethren, my hat must of necessity conform to the "plain" black type worn by them much after the Mennonite and Quaker styles. These I wore until I went to Chicago. Then because one of the finest ministers in our denomination began wearing a stiff type known then as

"soupbowls," I began to wear a narrow-brimmed, high-crowned, stiff hat, and I continued to wear this sort of hat until after several years in Montana—discarding my last stiff hat around 1920.

By 1906 when I had completed my work at the University, I had for all time thrown off my earlier restraint regarding clothes and was wearing good quality, tailor-made suits and linens, and ties to match the suits. When I could afford good clothes, I wore them, although I have continued very conservative in taste and approach. But I emerged from the rural to the modern city type while at the Mission. And they did not dismiss me.

The atmosphere [at Chicago Mission] in which I lived these four years was not one of unhappiness. There was a religious restraint among the older workers that in a measure was ascetic. One of the things not approved at our common table was "lightminded" or frivolous talk. Laughter was in a way disapproved. But this gave way during my years there under my persistent good humor and flow of happy-go-lucky conversation. In spite of their solemn demeanor and drab garb, these men and women were human and repressed by what seemed to me a false standard of non-mirthful table talk. There were always two formal prayers at table—the "blessing" before we ate and "thanksgiving" at the close of the meal. Too much laughter was evidence of "light mindedness" and was to be suppressed.

But here my irrepressible Irish (?) came in. I could keep up my end of any pious conversation, but when the spirit moved me, I could give vent to humorous anecdote or current observation. And after a few months when they came to love me as a member of the family, then little by little I brought on the smiles and then the laughter. Every evening at supper I related some incident with a humorous slant. Often I kept a solemn face in doing so and inwardly enjoyed seeing suppressed emotion ripple over in health-giving laughter. But more than once I heard some of the workers in their evening prayers asking God to forgive them if they had been too light-minded during the day.

One of the fine fellowships of my four years at the Mission was with a young man who attended our Sunday services

regularly for two or more years. He was Albert Baker of Ontario, Canada. His father [Charles Baker] was an elder in our denomination. His mother and sisters were members.[4] But Albert had never made any open avowal of religious faith. He was two or three years my senior and, in most ways, more developed than I. He had graduated as silver medalist from the University of Toronto. His department was that of Romance Languages. His scholarship had given him large cash awards so that he came to the University of Chicago to do his Ph.D. work and was in residence until he received this degree, after which he went to the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg as instructor in German and French.

Albert Baker was a choice soul, modest, self-effacing, very retiring. We invited him to our rooms and to share our Sunday meals. He was on the defensive usually and seemed to fear that he might make some unconscious concession to our religious way of life. He was soon my best pal in my new environment. I admired his fine intellect, his culture and cool self-sufficiency. His one great need as I saw it was an experience of discipleship with Jesus, the great Teacher. This I urged on him in public appeal and in private conversations.

We took many long Sunday afternoon walks about Englewood and confided to each other the deepest realities of life. He had once felt he loved a splendid young woman but the affair had not led to marriage. It had required a legal annulment to free him from this woman, and he had paid a large money assessment as well as mental and social penalty still more galling. When our trust in each other was complete, he opened his heart in confidences, and in wordless appeals for understanding that I felt only God his Maker could give. To him I revealed my own happy love affair, my marriage and the blissful four years, the ending of any dreams for fellowship, a companion, a home and perhaps a child. But neither could help the other in these deep needs of normal life.

Albert Baker helped me far more than either of us suspected at the time. His way of life intrigued me. He had money, books, high educational privileges and associates in the world of scholarship. As we came to share our confidences, there grew in

me an irresistible desire to achieve that way of life, too. But as I looked on him and loved him as Jesus did the Rich Young Ruler, I felt that he lacked the most valuable thing in life: discipleship with the Master of my life. I earnestly tried for two years to help him make the decision, but he could not. He graduated with his high degree and went on to Canada for the summer.

But in September he returned one Saturday evening and found me ill and alone. Kneeling down by my armchair as I sat wrapped in blankets in an upper room, he began to weep saying, "On Monday I begin my life work as a teacher of youth. I know I ought to be a Christian to be my best. Pray for me that I may begin at this very hour the new life in Christ." We prayed together, and a short interval thereafter, with fifteen others, I baptized him in Lake Michigan at the foot of 57th Street. This was one of the high rewards of that period. And on that same day, there was immersed a young woman, an art instructor in the public schools. She has since taken two degrees at the University of Chicago and for a lifetime has been a divisional art supervisor in Chicago. Another candidate was the oldest daughter in a Jewish family, another, a mother of a large family. Another was a converted drunkard whose exemplary life thereafter until his death was an inspiration to all who knew him.

Albert Baker taught the first year of his professional life at Morgan Park Academy, thus I had the great joy of having him near me during his first year as a Christian. And he has never married. But almost every year for thirty years (1904-1934) he has returned to Chicago to visit the spot where the greatest event of his life occurred—his confession of faith and his baptism. At last accounting was still in St. John's College, a unit of the provincial university at Winnipeg.

In September, 1901, I began to attend courses at the Moody Bible Institute on Saturday afternoons and evenings. This continued, nine months a year, through 1904-1905. The courses were popular for uneducated ministers, mission workers, evangelists and a host of humble Sunday school teachers. They came in, 1500-2500 students, every Saturday to take this simple

work and listen to lectures on the Bible. I found it helpful for spiritual tonic and Christian fellowship.

The autumn of 1902 I determined to take up, in addition to my studies of the English Bible, a course in New Testament Greek. As a tutor I secured one Rev. Everett Lincoln Meservey, a local Methodist Episcopal minister and pastor at that time of the May Street M.E. Church. After some months of Greek with him, he shocked me almost to death one day as I appeared for my weekly lesson in Greek. He said very kindly but with great conviction, "Mr. Cress, what you need isn't Moody Courses, New Testament Greek with a tutor, or any more religion. What you need is to have your head adjusted. The trouble is inside your skull and not in your heart. I think you ought to go to the Divinity School of the University of Chicago for a complete theological course." I was dumb. "But they are a graduate school," I countered, "and would not receive me as an untrained farmer from the prairies." I firmly believed that. But before I could explain all my limitations, this good man had called the Divinity School by phone and asked for an appointment with the dean the very next day.

Then we forgot all about our Greek lesson as we went over the case together. "Why, up at Moody's," I said, "they say the University and all its works are of the devil. My parents believe it is the very gates of hell. The Mission has no more confidence in the University than they would have in the Sultan of Zulu as a religious influence for good." I went back to my room with my N.T. Greek under my arm and a mighty tempest of cyclonic power whirling about in my brain. I had come to a great turning point in my life. Dr. Meservey had shown me the vision. It was up to me to follow the gleam or fail at the greatest challenge that had ever been given me.

It was a cold raw day in late November or early December, 1902, that I went over to the University to meet Dr. Meservey and to go with him to see the dean of the Divinity School. The Dean, Dr. Eric B. Hurlburt, received us in his private office on the ground floor of Haskell Museum. Dean Hurlburt was about sixty years of age, white hair, florid complexion, nervous and

exceedingly impulsive. I was formally introduced to him by my Methodist sponsor and told to sit down by his desk. I sat down.

Then Rev. Meservey presented my case and its solution as he conceived it in a full three-year course in this seminary. I sat shivering. Then the dean turned in his swivel chair and said, "What college work have you had?" I told him, "None at all." Then his face got red and he fairly thundered: "Meservey, why do you bring this young man to me? You know this is a graduate department of the University. We cannot load up our classes with such men. No, *no*." But Rev. Meservey, not a bit squelched, proceeded to tell him about my work as a foreign missionary in Africa, how my young wife was buried there, and a few other similar facts. "What's this, what's this you say—wife died in Africa—trying to preach in a mission over by the stockyards? Well, young man," looking at me, "are these the facts in your case?" I affirmed them and added a bit more to make it real.

The old dean now removed his glasses and wiped his blue eyes and began polishing his glasses and twisting in his chair. After a few minutes of sympathetic questioning, he turned to his secretary and said, "Call Dr. Mathews in here." Now Dr. Mathews was none other than the man who was to succeed Dr. Hurlburt as dean of this famous school; the man who was to become the second president of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the first Christian envoy to the Court of the Mikado, and President of the Northern Baptist Convention 1915-1916. Dr. Mathews, whom I had never before seen, entered while Dean Hurlburt delivered the following statement: "Mathews, here is a young man named Cress from Kansas. He comes up through some German sect and has been their missionary in Africa. They buried his wife over there. He isn't very well but Meservey says he's worthy of our consideration. He has no college training but we must give him a chance. Mathews, I propose we allow him to come for a three months' trial period to see what he can do. If he cannot carry the work, he must get out April 1st. But if he can keep up our standards, what do you say we give him a special privilege to do the Bachelor of Divinity courses?"

Dr. Mathews approved, helped me select my first courses: "History of New Testament Times in Palestine" and "Introduction to History of the Christian Church" by Dean Hurlburt. Thus the two men whose words were final as to my seminary career would try me out under their own personal observation. My matriculation cards were filled out, initial costs advanced and in January, I began my studies at the University of Chicago. The University had a system of markings as follows: A for excellent; B for good; C for fair; and D for poor. Below D one flunked. My scholastic record made up in August, 1906, on the occasion of my graduation showed no rating under A for any of the twenty-four subjects which comprised the course. I was never told to "get out."

My life now took on a complexity never before experienced. I attended classes and study periods at the University four days each week, Tuesday to Friday. They were long days too but never long enough to get my work done. For a good many quarters, my classes began at 8:30 a.m. My home was almost three miles distant and one could not hurry a household to meet such early hours. But on the whole there was happy cooperation. I assured the workers that I would not become a dangerous heretic, and they agreed to pray earnestly for me and to give me what freedom from routine was required so that I could carry both my school work and my pastoral duties.

I kept up my attendance at Moody's Institute and had a fine time trying to balance the extreme conservative views held there against the extreme liberalism of the campus. With fires burning on either side, one was required to be alert and step lively.

In the great no-man's land between these two camps lay my work where all manner of undeveloped, deformed and crippled folk were struggling with forces they did not understand. The major part of my work at the Mission was not with adults, although that was a large field. The major group was under twenty-five years of age. To help these bewildered youths was no mean task for any man. I was in a measure conducting a great laboratory experiment—interracial, polyglot, mixed social strata, all looking to me for a few brief years for inspiration, counsel, guidance. If I could elect to go through that period of life again,

I should choose something of the sort to be sure that theory squared with experience in the test tubes of life.

Little by little my transition was effected so that from January 1, 1903, to August 30, 1906, I had crossed a great area of religious history and theological thought. I had kept my faith unimpaired and emerged into a vaster, more complex world than I had ever dreamed of. It was splendid.

A few notes ought to be recorded regarding my seminary experience. The University of Chicago was still very young during the years I was a student there. It had only been operating about ten years when I knocked at its doors for admission. Only a few of the present buildings were completed at that time. Dr. William Rainey Harper, its founder and first president, was still living. It was my privilege to do three courses in Old Testament with him, for he continued his active work in the Divinity School along with his duties as president, right up to the day of his death. Another instructor was Dr. Edward Judson, born in Burma, son of Adoniram Judson, America's first missionary to a non-Christian land. He guided us in devotional literature and homiletics.

My major subject was Church History and my minor subject, systematic theology. The courses in church history entailed extended reading in general and so acquainted my mind with the whole story of civilization. In theology, the outstanding course, six months long, was Philosophy of Religion, taught by Dr. George Burnam Foster He was too advanced for his generation and was afterward forced to resign from the faculty of the seminary, after which he was given a position on the faculty of the University, department of philosophy. He continued until his death to give the same courses. He won my admiration both as a Christian and as scholar and thrilled me no end by his spirit.

My life was filled with strenuous duties after January 1, 1903, when I entered upon my university studies. My program at the Mission was not decreased an iota. There were six to ten stated services per week. Saturday afternoons and evenings were still given to my Moody Institute courses for eight or nine months each year. In spite of the conservative teaching there, anyone with a soul would be thrilled by the gospel hymn

singing. I took some of their musical courses and was able in a short time to read all sorts of simple music at sight. There were classes in congregational and choir singing. As soon as I had any proficiency, I began regular rehearsals at the Mission. This gave me practice and encouragement. It was appreciated also as the Mission lacked musical leadership. We had a good organ, volunteer organists and good average voices, but lacked leadership. This musical training I carried on two or three years. My last six-month course was at the University under very competent teachers who trained young ministers in church and choir music, sight reading, voice and directing. This discipline gave me great pleasure and prepared me to be helpful in many capacities for the next twenty years in the frontier field of the Rocky Mountain West.

February, 1900, had left me stranded in Africa, my wife dead, my home dissolved. I went on from that tragedy like a wounded creature. My whole philosophy of life was hopelessly broken by a grave in the hills of a tropical land. I had to reconstruct a faith to live by out of the hard experiences that followed. Marriage I put out of my mind as impossible until mind and body should build up a new harmony. It was a long hard discipline. And I was resigned to wait until health returned, my seminary course finished, and I should have a position guaranteeing income. But nothing in this statement is to be construed as a profession of defeat. I believed the sun would shine again for me, and I had great inner peace and assurance that eventually all would work out for my good. It was in this frame of mind that I entered the August revival, 1905 [at the Mission].

One day after meetings were well underway, I learned that my sister-in-law, Mrs. Amanda Witter Zook, was coming to the Mission for a visit. Well, that meant nothing. People were coming and going continuously. We had probably one hundred out-of-the-city guests every year I was there. However, there was a feeling of sympathy for this young woman whom I had only seen twice before. As a little girl perhaps thirteen or fourteen years old, she had once come to my parent's home with an older sister, and had remained over night. But I did remember

her and her auburn hair in two large braids down her back. And she wore a silk waist with distinct stripes and bars that crossed over at right angles much like the pattern in a Scotch plaid.

Our next meeting was in 1898 when she was a bride of twenty-one, the wife of a young minister and en route for India. In that memorable ordination service she had knelt close to me as the service proceeded. I recall her only indistinctly at that time, except that her hair was done up high on her head; that she was very tired from travel and constant visiting among anxious friends, and that she had a lovely complexion and large luminous eyes that, when cast down, gave her a shy and modest girlish appearance.

Then she went away from us and several years later she wrote me a letter addressed to Bulawayo, South Africa. It was a sad letter telling me that her husband had been taken from her by death and that he was buried in Calcutta, India. Thereafter, we exchanged probably one letter per year. We had married brother and sister and were part of the Zook family still, though bereaved of our companions. Now after seven years she was returning home on furlough. Her route lay through the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea to Genoa, Italy, thence to Sinsheim, near Karlsrue in Baden, Germany. Here she was met by her father, John Witter of Enterprise, Kansas, who had gone over to meet his daughter. Together they had visited relatives in Baden and then came to America together in mid-summer. The father went directly to his Kansas home after arrival in New York. But his daughter had come leisurely along, stopping first at Waverly, New York, and then was to meet her late husband's parents at the Mission in Chicago.

That is how it came to pass, returning one day from calling on parishioners, I came into the back apartment on our upper floor and met this sister-in-law. She greeted me with dignified reserve as her "Brother Clifford," and I greeted her as "Sister Amanda." Now there was unusual affection among the members of the Zook *freundschaft*. Mother and Father Zook invariably kissed their children on meeting and parting. It seemed perfectly natural for me to kiss this sister. And I did. It was a happy and very satisfying greeting, and our first kiss sent a thrill down my

spinal column that gave me occasion to look at her upturned face with more than casual interest. That greeting was marked by our parents-in-law with many lost tears of sorrow for the two children who had gone out of their lives with us and would never come back again.

And then, our greeting ended, we sat down for a brief visit. I confess it now, after more than thirty-three years, that I was fascinated by the large, soft blue eyes of this young widow. Even before that first August day came to a close, I found myself wondering whether she was going back to India; whether she had come to be married again. As the days passed, my heart grew strangely agitated, and I sought every possible opportunity to be near her. We went for quiet walks about the hot streets after the evening services were over. Ostensibly it was to visit and compare experiences in our vastly different types of life. I recall that an aged blind man and his wife used to come to our meetings. Someone led them home after the meeting closed. I asked Amanda to accompany me [as I took this couple home]. She complied gladly. On another day we went to one of Chicago's great parks for a few hours.

I was distracted over my interest in this young woman. What if she were pledged to another! What right had I to annoy her by my interest? This went on for a week or more until one Saturday evening, when there was no meeting, we went to Washington Park for the evening. That night we confessed our love for each other and in the flush of eventide pledged our devotion each to the other in a blind hope that tomorrow would be more propitious than the sad yesterdays. A week later we left the Mission together for our childhood homes in Kansas. We were engaged.

Selections from "Among the Matebele in South Africa"

Four little huts in a group beneath a large tropical tree, thirty miles southeast from Bulawayo and ten miles southeast of Fort Usher: this is Matoppo Mission and what we found one day after

walking out from Bulawayo accompanied by a native guide. This was the station we had read about and had come some thirteen thousand miles to see.

Wife and I, and others, were placed in the dining room until we could erect suitable quarters for ourselves. We began at once to take notes on the style of architecture used at the station and found it very similar to that used by the natives. Large poles were set into the ground and daubed with mud; a set of pole rafters, grass thatched, was our roof. We hired native men to cut down and carry in the poles, paying them for their labor with trousers. A pair of trousers worth one dollar was given as payment for four days of work.

We had the daubing done by women who were more than anxious to do it for us in order to earn the salt or cloth which we paid for our female help. These women would take the dirt used by the large termite ants in constructing hills, and beat it firm with clubs, reducing it to mortar by a liberal supply of water and much kneading with their hands or feet. They used their hands for trowels and filled in and smoothed off the walls. For their labor each received about three pints of salt or a certain amount of calico, varying from one-half a yard up to one and one-half yards.

To thatch the roof, grass was also purchased with salt and the women would cut and carry in as much as we desired. The bundles they carried were usually tied with strips of tough bark and were often of great size and weight. This grass was usually four or five feet in length and of a coarse, stemmy kind. We thatched after the manner of the old Dutch farmers in Cape Colony. When properly done it will last as long as a shingle roof and turn the most driving pour of a tropical thunderstorm.

Our floors were of clay, beaten down, smoothed, and polished. We had hired a certain woman to polish a floor for us one day, and going around later to see how she was progressing, we were astonished to see her smearing cow dung over it and rubbing it with a stone. The polish was beautiful but the odor, well, it wasn't quite as desirable since we had not acquired a relish for it.

Mats made from river reeds were placed on the floor and rugs made of various sorts put upon these. Thus our huts took on a comfortable and homelike look when our beds, dressers, bookcases, tables, and chairs had been set in, and neat little curtains and blinds hung over our tiny windows which contained only one or two small panes of glass set in homemade sashes made from shipping crates. However, in those faraway and remote regions, one soon learns to appreciate the semblance of civilization, be it ever so meager, and a sense of satisfaction is forthcoming.

The greatest annoyance caused by the grass roofing is the entrance through the thatching of bugs, spiders, lizards, and rats, and now and then a snake. The rats are the most annoying. Had it not been for the timely services of a very industrious mother cat, I do not know what we would have done. The rats were chewing into everything, eating buttons from our clothing, riddling rugs and carpets, ruining food supplies, spoiling our roofing, and were even so audacious as to come upon our beds and bite us as we lay sleeping. Several times did they enter our servants' quarters and actually chewed the thick calloused cuticle and ate off some of the toenails from the boys' feet, so soundly did they sleep.

Our life was a very busy one and not as monotonous as one might think. The study of the language kept us busy at odd times and was a most interesting one. We were daily catching up some new word or idiomatic phrase and discussing it among ourselves, questioning our servants regarding its use, and comparing our notes with our vocabularies. We were compelled to use the Sentebele which is a dialect of the Zulu-Kafir of Natal. We usually retired about ten and arose at six, eating only two meals per day, at 8:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M.

After meals we conducted services in our dining room. The need of a church or public place for services was very apparent and pressing, so that in course of time a very neat and convenient little building was erected with capacity for seating about two hundred when well filled. But the Matebele are used to sitting in close quarters and two hundred of them can conveniently sit in a space where one hundred whites would be crowded (or think

they were at least). The window frames and sash, doors, seats, and pulpit desk were all neatly made from shipping cases.

The bell of the church was a source of unspeakable wonder to the people. We had it shipped from Chicago by Montgomery Ward and Co., and as it clanged out loud and clear for the first time in their ears, they would look questioningly at each other, pat their hands together, and wag their heads as though it were the most profound mystery, saying, "The iron cries." We used it largely because the people had no idea of time except for the sun. We told them that we would always ring it on Saturday evening at the setting of the sun, and by that they would know that on the following day we desired the people to assemble with us to pray and receive instructions.

Our plan worked well. It was a joyful sound to hear it ringing out sharp and clear through the valley and for miles around even when the evening was a calm one. The bell was also used to call the people on Sunday morning and on school-day mornings.

The natives were fascinated by the tools we had brought with us. We told them that our thermometer is a machine for telling us how hot and how cold it is. At this one of them looked rather more disgusted than surprised and turning away said, "These white people! They wear so many clothes that they cannot tell when it is hot or when it is cold. They have to have a machine to tell them." We must confess that this idea is not so absurd as it sounds.

We were quite often visited by traders, policemen, government officials and friends. Often they found it convenient to remain with us over night and their company was usually agreeable as it broke our spell and gave us a glimpse into another's sphere of life. The best is always spread out and the most comfortable quarters given to our friends whether they be sympathizers with us in our labors or not. Some of these same persons who have enjoyed our best, and even luxuries which we reserve by rigorous self-denial, go away and spread abroad the report that these missionaries live high and fare sumptiously every day, have many servants, and are enjoying a good time at other people's expense.

The first thing for me to do on arriving at the station was to pay respects to the Government *induna*, or chief, of our district. He is selected and appointed by the Administration and has the general oversight of the six thousand and more natives in our political district. He is subject to orders from Mr. Jackson, the Native Commissioner who lives at Fort Usher.

Fort Usher is twenty miles south of Bulawayo and is a military post. Quite a number of mounted B.S.A. [British South Africa] police are quartered here in barracks made of poles and mud with iron roofing. There is a well-kept parade ground, officers' huts, telegraph station, hospital and surgeon's department, Commissioner's quarters and dwelling huts, offices of the Labor Bureau, barns, and stores. Beside being fully armed with the best rifles, the police are trained hands in operating the rapid-firing Maxim guns; several of these are kept here.

The courtesy and respect shown to us at the station by the various officers and police is worthy of special mention. While there was possibly none of them in sympathy with our work, yet they showed us the respect due to Christian workers.

This *induna* receives compensation from the Government and is granted certain privileges which others are denied, the principal privilege being to carry firearms. He is a petty chief and announces any matter of law or business which he may receive from the Native Commissioner to the people. It is his business to report any dissatisfaction among the people; to report deaths and special happenings; to persuade the young and able-bodied men to work in the mines or other places for white man's money with which to pay hut tax, for which he is in a measure responsible.

We felt it to be for the best that I be taken to visit him as I had just arrived and expected to remain in his vicinity for an indefinite time. One afternoon the Elder [Jesse Engle], Bro. L. [Isaac Lehman], and I made ready to go. In the absence of any vehicle excepting our wheelbarrow and of any fleeter animals than our donkeys, we saddled one for the Elder, and Bro. L. and I used blankets for saddles. We rode along in single file following the winding footpath that twisted through the valley. It took a considerable amount of exertion on our part to urge our

donkeys forward at a rate of 2 and one-half miles per hour. But we finally reached the foot of the hill upon which was built the village home of Nhlukaniso, the *induna*.

The *induna* sent a boy to say he was coming while he followed in a few minutes. He was a man of perhaps fifty years of age, rather squarely built, about five feet and seven inches high. His greeting was very open and free; his manner friendly and sociable. His greatest concern was to tell us at once about his sick wife and to invite us to come down and see her which we did. Later we asked him to call all the people together and the Elder conducted a short gospel service among them. When this was concluded, we began to sing "Abide in Peace." But we did not escape the merciless begging from the old man and others. All we gave them was an invitation to come to services at the station on coming Sunday, and thus took our departure. Some of them accompanied us for about eighty rods homeward in the gathering night amid the heavy cold driving mist, feeling that our short and very unceremonious presentation at the *induna*'s court would add to our prestige and influence among the people.

My first Lord's day at our new home was a very special one to me. Somehow we all felt impressed that the most blessed way to open the day would be by commemorating together the death and suffering of our Savior in the presence of the people. The *induna*, the chief witch doctor of the community, several headmen, and quite a concourse of men, women, and children were assembled at the first Sunday service. I was privileged to attend here. As the station had been running for nearly a year, these people were beginning to understand something of the Testament and the plan of salvation through Christ. The Elder read the proper passages of Scripture and made such comment and explanation as he was able, being assisted also by the two [missionary] teachers. The regular services were engaged in and the people sat in almost perfect silence and observed our sacred devotions.

After service we invited all present to remain and share our hospitality, a custom which we expect to regard once or twice per year. Large quantities of cornmeal porridge were boiled and

everyone given as much as we judged would make a good meal. We allowed none to eat until all were served, when a blessing was asked upon the meal; and for the first time in their lives they partook of food upon which God's blessing had been invoked. After all were gone home, we had a special prayer service to offer praise unto God for the blessing he had conferred upon us that day.

The mission station is our home and general center for working out in the various directions. It became the center of attraction for the people for many miles around. They regard our home with its big huts, gardens, shade and ornamental trees, and civilized air as a sort of curiosity, and they resort here for a hundred and one things. Every weekday morning a number of men, women, and children are present who have brought a great variety of wares to trade to us. One has a basket containing a half gallon of shelled corn; another has some peanuts, another a pumpkin; others have citrons, wild fruit, potatoes, yams, a fowl, eggs, and an almost endless variety of produce such as we can use for ourselves or food for our native servants. Our servants were always more contented when fed a native diet.

We usually rose early and spent the first hours of the morning in study, meditation, and prayer. At eight o'clock we breakfasted, and immediately after covered our table with a spread, opened the dining room doors, called in the servants and all the natives present. Some worker present then led the service of song, reading the New Testament in the native tongues, and offering prayer. Sometimes there would be a few questions asked by the reader to draw out the minds of our audience. At other times a short exhortation was given to the natives to accept Christ, and in many ways our services were rendered interesting, instructive, and refreshing. Thus we caught scores of men and women who would not attend regular services on Sunday, and compelled them to come in and hear the glad news of salvation.

After services we traded with them. Had we traded before breakfast, they would not have consented to remain for prayers as they manifest a dread of our religion until they became acquainted with us. Their minds have been abused by unscrupulous traders, policemen, and others, who tell the natives

that we are deceiving them and that bye and bye we will catch a lot of them and sell them for slaves.

We had set rules for trading with them as they are shrewd dealers. We gave cloth for peanuts and potatoes; salt for corn, grains and fruit; and money for honey, etc. We had our regular measures and scales to prevent mistakes.

As we only ate two meals a day, we usually took our dinner at about three o'clock in the afternoon. Again we held divine services following dinner as we had done in the morning.

Because the natives cannot read we have to do their reading for them. When we wish to sing a song, we take the song book and read two lines aloud and then sing. We keep lining it off and leading the tune.[5] We invite the people to sing with us and as they have very retentive minds and are usually good singers with good voices, the matter of song is solved. I have often been struck with surprise by hearing some native singing, "Hold the Fort," "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," or some other familiar gospel hymn which he has learned at the mission services.

The more special services are those conducted every Sunday in the little church at eleven o'clock. The big bell has rung out loud and clear at sunset on Saturday evening as a call to services the next day. On Sunday the regular calls are rung also. The people begin to assemble as early as eight o'clock. They pass the time by sitting about in little groups, talking in low tones of our labor, our buildings, our machinery, and the general topics of interest suitable to the season. They are very matter-of-fact folks and never lack for subjects to discuss.

At eleven o'clock we repair to the little church and the people assemble for the services. The people sit on the low seats or squat on the floor and generally give attention to what is being said and done. Very seldom do they give reason for being reproved. We taught them to kneel in prayer, to be respectful and orderly, and we must say that they were very ready learners.

After singing and prayer a sermon is preached. Those sermons deal with the simplest and plainest truths of God's Word. The teachings and parables of Christ are suitable for instructions to sages or savages.

After the preaching service, a short recess is given after which the people are reassembled, divided into classes, and a Bible school is conducted for one hour. They ask some very puzzling questions. For instance, they will ask, "Where did God get the material to make the earth and everything?" "Why do we condemn polygamy when the good men in the Bible had many wives?" "If God loves the people why does he let so many plagues come upon them?" These questions are hard to answer satisfactorily to a heathen mind.

Teaching and preaching from village to village, or kraal work as it is generally termed, is another branch of Christian mission work. There are hundreds and thousands of natives all about you who will never come to you to hear the gospel and it devolves upon you to take it to them. The white men who rule the country they regard as a set of the most despotic tyrants and oppressors. The white traders are generally a very dissipated, immoral set who cheat the ignorant native and abuse him and his women in various ways, and the native, at first, cannot distinguish you as a gospel teacher from any other white man, and he regards all white men as an evil and a pest. Therefore he gives you "a wide berth" and leaves you severely alone, no doubt hoping you will follow his example.

But the command to preach the gospel to every creature sends you out into the country to preach it to those who refuse to come to you. In this manner you reach a multitude in their own homes and by a kindly loving spirit you convince them that you are their friend. Perhaps no part of our work was so pleasant as this line of Christian effort.

Leaving the station early in the morning, we would go out, generally man and wife, or two and two as we could, and when a little ways from home, enter a village, call the people together, and tell them who we were. We would then chat with them awhile about whatever seemed to interest them. Here we generally found some old grey-haired man and woman who never have been at the station, possibly had never seen a missionary before. They would regard us with mingled awe and surprise and if upon further acquaintance they found us approachable, never failed to ask for a present of some kind.

Our clothes and our books were objects of astonishment to them. Our white skin was often a prolific source of comment. They wanted to see my bare arm. They all run bare-foot and wondered what kind of feet a white man has. They were immensely surprised to see what soft white skin I had, compared with the thick, horny, almost alligator skin of their own feet. My wife's hair was a great attraction. They wanted to feel it and see how long it was.

After many an odd performance, which indeed did not seem so out of place there, we asked permission to have a short service which was generally very gladly granted us. Often we had singing and prayer but sometimes we dispensed with both as we felt was for the best under the circumstances. It appeared very absurd to them to be told that they were sinners. They always countered that they had no sins, that their hearts are white.

Often we would visit half a dozen villages in a single day only to repeat our little story and get acquainted with the people. They often followed us from one place to another and of course would learn our little exhortations quite thoroughly. Often they would assure us of their joy caused by our coming and beg us to accept some little present as a token of their goodwill toward us. A basket of peanuts, some honey, or a nice big pumpkin would be presented which we always received with an air of gladness for it signified a friendship which we coveted.

In the mission school the sessions open with gospel songs and prayer. The Word of God is daily read and studied so that they slowly begin to realize their need of a power to cleanse and save. That these people have receptive and retentive minds is proven by the rapid progress made by some of these children. At the close of the first year of school, some of these boys who formerly were running wild like rabbits among the mountains, were able to read the Gospels with considerable accuracy.

As the light shone in and conviction deepened, some of the boys and girls began to seek God and there were a number of conversions. Those whom we judged as being worthy candidates were baptized by immersion in a clear little pool in the river nearby.

A "jack of all trades" becomes a very useful person here, although he is a nobody in the States. You will meet many odd jobs and puzzling tasks. If you are ingenious, you are saved a deal of money and trouble. I found myself halfsoleing boots and shoes for the workers [missionaries] at the station before I had been there a month. A set of cast iron lasts, some sole leather, Swedish iron nails, a few awls, and a hammer are indispensable. The rocks and sand soon cut away a pair of good soles. Cobblers charged very extravagant prices in Bulawayo, so that I found cobbling a very pleasant and profitable pasttime.

I had not been at Mattopo long before the people learned that I could pull teeth. I had brought with me a full set of S.S. White's forceps, had spent a few days in Philadelphia in a dental college taking lessons in extracting, and now began actual practice. The natives as a whole have very good teeth, but there are scores of them who suffer from decayed ones. They have no method of relieving themselves but to sit down and dig their bad teeth out with a drill knife, not a very pleasant pasttime you may know if you have ever suffered from an ulcerated molar.

So here they began to come telling me their tale of woe, and I, like a young doctor anxious to try his first patients, slipped proper forceps into my coat pockets while I seated the afflicted native on a camp chair in the yard. There he opens his mouth very wide and points out the painful tooth. A strong tobacco or beer breath strikes you in the face. I show him how to clench his hands together. Bro. Lehman holds his arms from behind. I select proper forceps, take a firm grip, and pull. Not a yell did I ever hear. They are very stoical.

I show him the extracted tooth. Maybe he is an old grey-haired man. He rises up, spits a few times, and rubbing me on the arm, says in the most profound voice, "Oh my grandfather. You have greatly helped me. I praise you." He calls me grandfather when I am only a young man of twenty-five summers, probably meaning that I had done for him what his grandfather couldn't do.

Though this kind of work was anything but agreeable, yet I cannot say that I disliked it as I became a painkiller and a reliever of suffering humanity. I pulled teeth for my wife, for

our Elder [Engle], and for one other of our fellow laborers and always had remarkably good success for an amateur.

The civil law of Matebeleland requires that every native who desires to travel from place to place for any purpose must obtain from the proper authorities a passport setting forth his name, place of residence, and the nature of his errand. This pass he must carry with him and show it to any policeman, commissioner, or white man who may meet him and demand its presentation. The privilege of issuing passes was accorded us by our local collector, Mr. Jackson.

When the natives learned that we could give the proper credentials, they came to us in preference to going to a civil officer to secure passes. We would be seated in our huts for an hour's study, to write a letter, or to read and meditate upon some portion of Scripture for use among the people. Then came a gentle tap on the door. We dropped our work and answered the call. There stood two or three natives asking for a pass. You tell them to sit down while you write them out and they squat down around the door which you leave open so as to interrogate them as you fill out the papers. As you sit down and begin to write, asking their names, residences, and business, they can hardly answer for looking around your room and making comments on your surroundings. You hand out the passes and they greet you with half a dozen questions. You patiently answer all, invite them to come to services, bid them good morning, and seat yourself again at your work.

Day after day we had this to do but we often turned it to good account. If it was near the time of our daily services we would not write passes until after this was over in order to detain them.

Selections from the Journal

Editor's note: The following selections from Clifford Cress's journal relate the founding of Intaba Mission, the second mission begun by the Brethren in Christ in Africa. The passages contain the most detailed description available of this short-lived extension of Matopo Mission.[6]

July 30, 1899

Another matter came up today. Wife and I are quite rapidly acquiring the native language that fits us for more active service. Four or five are enough for this station [Matopo] and we think it expedient soon to divide up and open another station at some desirable point several miles away. The new branch would not be a separate work but a part of Matoppo Mission and under the supervision of Eld. Jesse Engle. We are now looking to God to show us when and where to locate and wife and I will be the teachers in school number 2. Time only will develop and prove all things.

August 2, 1899

Last Wednesday morning, Elder Engle, Sister Davidson, Sister Sara, my precious wife, and I, mounted four of our saddle donkeys and bid farewell to the station folks for two days. We took a native guide and two extra donkeys on which were regular packsaddles loaded with food, cooking utensils, and four sets of bedding. We left the station and struck into the mountains pursuing an easterly course. The country through which we passed has never had a missionary. Consequently the poor people have never had one offer of salvation through Jesus the Christ of God.

Our mission was to select a location for the new station. We camped at noon about four miles east. We were going slowly, visiting the villages, and talking to the people as we passed along. After dinner we ascended a very high and steep mountain side to Ubuku's kraal. Ubuku is a petty *induna*. We desired to show our respect for him and ask his permission to visit his people and consult them about a mission school; but he had suddenly disappeared, undoubtedly taking us for police. We conducted a service in his kraal with twenty present. Among them was a headman named Lozipo. He said his English name was "long one," perhaps because he was very slender and tall. We told him that our intentions were to come and open a school among them at which he was greatly pleased. He immediately

invited us to come and locate near his house which was about one mile on farther east. He also consented to be our guide for the remainder of the day. Arriving at his village, we were glad to see that it was a nice one composed of seven living-huts of about the finest pattern of any we saw in Matebeleland.

Unpacking our donkeys, we put our rugs, bedding, and saddles on the ground beside some massive rocks and made ready to inspect the people and locality. We were very favorably impressed with the place. There were over thirty villages included in a tract of land four miles in diameter. Our guide said in his exaggerating way that for a long way around, the villages lay one against another and many, many people lived in them. Our eyes proved that it was a very thickly settled place. The people spoke a clear dialect (same as we used at Matoppo M.) and gave us a hearty invitation to come so we visited six or eight villages that evening. Many of these people had been down to the other station and some had been in wife's Saturday sewing circle. These were especially glad to see us and learn of our intentions to come and live among them.

Late in the evening we returned to our camp. Lozipo made us feel welcome; ordered his boys to bring us a big supply of firewood; and as a token of his "white heart," gave us a large dishful of peanuts. That evening after we had discussed the contents of our ration box, we sat for a long time around the flickering fire recounting the adventures of the day. Here we were, four defenseless missionaries surrounded by hundreds and thousands of savages, sitting around a little fire in the heart of the hills. We were not afraid. Some ground nearby had been ridged for corn at the close of the last wet season so we each selected a deep furrow and in them made our beds.

We rose early next morning and while breakfast was being prepared, Lozipo sent a lad to milk two goats for us. We enjoyed this treat of new, rich milk. After breakfast we had worship with twenty adults present. We then decided upon a spot on which to build about a quarter of a mile from this village. After this we saddled up and returned to our home by a different route from the one over which we came.

November 26, 1899

Last Monday morning I rode my wheel up to what we purpose to christen "Intaba Mission," our home to be. *Intaba* means mountain. My wheel showed the distance to where we expect to build from this station as about five miles. I engaged several men to begin to cut and carry poles for me to be used in erecting a home. On Sunday I hired a man to take our wheelbarrow on which I had tied an axe, a mattock, or shovel, a large hoe, a cooking pot, etc., and wheel it up to Intaba. I followed and began active work on the yard and house. I spent full six days there last week riding backward and forwards on my wheel. Average time to ride the five miles along the tortuous footpath that ran through the mountains was one hour.

It was a trying week on me as the work was heavy and weather oppressively humid and hot. The thermometer registered at and above 100° every day. As I was at work I could hear the large baboons barking and calling to each other in the deep jungles and rocks nearby. Some sat up on the rocks a good way off to watch me. Others passed by wagging their heads. Every night I laid a massive rock on my tools for fear these troublesome mimics would carry them away for me. Bye and bye when I bring up my combination gun, they shall have leaden pills free of charge if they come too near.

By Saturday evening I had cleared off a big yard, dug out trees and bushes, had one hundred and thirty-five big poles carried in for the frame, twelve specially straight poles for rafters, large ridge pole, wagon load of stone brought in on the barrow, and ditch dug in which to set the poles for the wall. It will be fourteen by eighteen feet. Paid out for native labor, 15s. I have fully decided to take my iron roof along.

December 7, 1899

Intaba Mission: First record written at the new station. I am sitting in our tent, wife by my side, six o'clock in the evening, and raining.

Last Sunday we were down to Matoppo Mission. That evening the nine workers and three visitors assembled in the dining room, and Elder preached a sermon from the text, "The Word of God is quick and powerful." We all greatly enjoyed it. Next morning I removed the iron roof from our hut while wife was busy in packing goods for this place. Tuesday morning we packed our load. It consisted of four hundred pounds of iron roofing, two wooden doors, five window frames and sashes, our iron stove top and door, two large chests of bedding, clothing, etc., 200 lbs. salt, five bolts calico, box of food, cooking utensils, two heavy trunks, table and chairs, and lastly a tent sixteen feet square with ropes, stakes, poles, and all complete. The bucksail was then placed over all and a comfortable place arranged for wife to ride. Bro. L. went along as driver.

At nine we started, having a native guide ahead to show a safe road as the way was dangerous and tedious, and the eight donkeys had all they could pull. Before we were an hour on the way, we were overtaken by a pouring rainstorm. We quickly adjusted the bucksail and took shelter under the wagon, as also did our lead boy and our guide. Soon the bushcovered valley was a lake, and water running ankle-deep. Bye and bye it slackened and we tugged on at the rate of two miles per hour. Till the end of our trip it continued to rain on us, sometimes in blinding sheets, again in showers, then in heavy driving mists. Our shoes were full of water and our clothing soaked in face of the fact that we wore waterproof (?) coats. When near the end of our weary, tortuous drag, a dense fog settled down over the mountains, so that the nearest peaks were hidden from our view. Our guide said, "We are lost." I answered, "No sir. Never." Striking out alone I found the way and at one o'clock we reached Intaba.

Just then an awful flood burst upon us. We outspanned the poor, tired, soaked donkeys which looked more like drowned rats than beasts of burden. At 2:00 it slacked and we worked. Our tent was up in a few minutes. Placing poles on the ground we offloaded the contents of the wagon into the tent. Thanks to our waterproof wagon cover our load and wife were as dry as when we left the other station. Making some pine shaving we

started a fire in the tent door, splitting up a piece of dead tree for fuel. By this we dried our clothes and cooked some dinner. The wagon returned in the rain which continued all night. Our bedding was dry, and arranging our cot, we tied down our tentflap and went to sleep while the rain poured and showered by turns. Next morning we rose at five, thankful indeed, that our tent hadn't leaked a drop in a fifteen hours test.

About nine o'clock I began and put the roof on our hut. A pond had formed in it as we had provided no ditches yet. It was impossible to dry anything that day as it rained or misted all day. Through all this we were as happy as could be. We felt in divine order and sang through it all. Next day it was clear part of the time, tho it rained again heavily all night. While the sun shone for perhaps three hours, we put out our cot and bedding, mats, etc., on a large flat rock nearby to dry, and tied up our tent flaps and let the sun and breeze air off our floor a bit.

Yesterday fifteen women and girls came to plaster our hut with anthill dirt. We gave all work and they prepared their own mud and put on one coat inside and one on the floor. They were a jolly set and worked hard. When they had finished for the day, we assembled them on a big rock and wife talked to them about the things of God and then prayer was offered. They will come back soon to finish the first coat on the outside. As they went away, each one received a ticket bearing her name and amount of calico earned. About fifteen more were here today and were real angry because we didn't call them to do our work.

Last evening we planted some garden but the rain ran us in. Today we were busy laying up our fireplace. I suppose we erected half of it. It is quite a task to mix mortar, carry stone, and lay up a large fireplace.

A beerdrink is in progress in the valley below us and a great yelling going on now. These natives are exceedingly fond of beer and seem to have an unlimited supply on hand now. They say that they are unable to dig without it.

Our food is very wholesome but not many fancy dishes. We have no bread and no flour. We couldn't bake if we had any. We cook on a campfire, are well, and very happy. Every day we meet numbers of these people and never let an opportunity slip

to tell them of the love of God and point them to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

December 29, 1899

Last Thursday we moved into our new hut here at the new station. It is nicer than our other hut in almost every way. When my desk and case of books, clean white bed, washstand and large mirror, the curtained clothes-rack, table, cupboard, mats, and chairs had been placed, we sat down to our dinner of boiled beans, roast peanuts, citron sauce, cornmeal cakes, and honey. We felt that God had greatly blessed us.

Three months of rain yet to come. Well, indeed! It rained all last night without a moment's intermission (as far as we know), almost all day today, and apparently is settled down for all night again. This will make our garden grow if it doesn't all wash away. Our home is so located that we look out over the narrow gorge of the uMchabezi [now Mtshabezi] River, about one mile from us to the northeast and several hundred feet below. We still have all the wild oranges we can eat. I have just completed a cow pen. I made it native fashion between some large rocks. We are to have some cows soon. We are very busy now and usually retire early and sleep soundly all night. We, like the majority of whites living in this land, take a cold bath every morning as soon as we rise. This has been our custom for two years. Now that we are really settled in our new home, we begin to realize how isolated and far away we are from other civilized men. But we are glad to be of the least service to Him whom we serve and whose we are.

January 5, 1900

We have now entered into a new year—1900. There has no rain fallen now for a day or two and the air is clear and quite dry while a few fleecy clouds hang high up in the sunny blue of the azure sky. How it cheers our hearts to feel in divine order, to believe we are where God wants us to be. I had a short but

severe attack of fever last week but am feeling all right again now. This country is scourged with fevers of various kinds.

[Within two weeks of this entry, both Clifford and Sara contracted malarial fever. Sara died on February 8.][7]

NOTES

[1]For accounts of Brethren in Christ moving from Pennsylvania to Kansas in these years, see Carlton O. Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience: The Story of the Brethren in Christ* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1978), pp. 146-148, and Wilma Musser, "Brethren in Christ Churches in Kansas," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (August 1991), chapter 3.

[2]For an article on Sara Zook Cress, see E. Morris Sider, *Evangelical Visitor*, July 1995, pp. 10-11.

[3]For a biography of Sarah Bert and an account of the Chicago Mission to her death in 1948, see E. Morris Sider, *Nine Portraits: Brethren in Christ Biographical Sketches* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1978), pp. 15-45. More insights into the Chicago Mission may be found in Wilma Musser, "Carl and Avas Carlson and the Chicago Mission," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (August 1993), 171-213.

[4]For a biography of Charles Baker, see E. Morris Sider, *Nine Portraits*, pp. 85-119. The biography includes a section on Baker's children and Baker's philosophy of education which encouraged education for his sons but not higher education for his daughters.

[5]Lining hymns was practiced in the Brethren in Christ Church before the denomination acquired hymnals, and continued in modified practice until hymns with musical notations were introduced in 1906.

[6]According to Francis Davidson, the name of the mission was spelled Entabeni.

[7]The events leading to Sara's death are covered in the journal by quoting letters of other missionaries. The best account is by H. Frances Davidson in *South and South Central Africa* (Elgin, Ill.: Printed by Brethren Publishing House, 1915), pp.96-98, reproduced in part as follows: "At the Christmas holidays they came to spend the time with us, and we had a very enjoyable time with the natives. The third week in January, 1900, a messenger arrived to inform us that Sister Cress had been stricken with fever. A conveyance was immediately sent to the place to bring her to Matopo Mission, and by the time they reached their mission Brother Cress also was sick. Both were brought to the

mission and made as comfortable as possible. At first no one considered their illness serious, for our party had thus far been enjoying good health since the work opened. Other complications set in in connection with Sister Cress' illness, and she gradually grew worse. For twenty-four hours she lay unconscious and then rallied and seemed quite bright. We were all present—Engles, Van Blunks, Sister Heise, Brother Lehman, and myself—when she rallied. She requested that prayer be offered for her recovery. This was done and we felt that she would gain strength, but it was not to be. In half an hour that sweet young life passed to be with God. This was February 8, 1900. All through her sickness she felt perfectly resigned to the Lord's will, whether for life or death.

"We felt that we could not spare this saintly woman, so well fitted both by nature and by grace to shine for God. She had laid her all upon the altar for Africa, and often expressed herself that she wanted to spend her life in behalf of this people. She had been in Africa only nine and one-half months, yet she had entered heart and soul into the work of the Lord, and was rapidly acquiring the language, so that she could converse with the people. She had formed some of the women into a sewing class, uniting this work with religious instructions, and endearing herself to all with whom she came into contact. She loved the people and was willing and ready to undertake any kind of work that came to her. She was especially gifted in prayer, and it was always an inspiration to the rest of us to listen to her heartfelt petition. Why the Lord thus early in her missionary career took her to Himself, we know not; but when the things of earth shall be revealed, when we shall know as we are known, then all will be clear.

"Brethren Engle and Lehman made a coffin; we covered it within with white muslin and without with black cloth, and thus laid the body away. Mr. Eyles, of Bulawayo, was interested in the mission and occasionally visited us and spoke to the natives, since he had good command of the Zulu language. On this occasion he consented to come out and preach the funeral sermon. The chief men of the people carried her to her last resting place beneath the Umkuni tree, and they mingled their tears with ours. The occasion was made more sad by the fact that the husband was still ill and unable to view the corpse or attend the funeral."

Ray M. Zercher: "A Keen Wit . . . A Calm Reserve"

By Clyde A. Ross[*]

Introduction

Born into a rural world of simple farm life in which the introduction to the mysteries of a family-owned radio was a major event and living to an age when he would wrestle with the mysteries of word processing on a computer, Ray Zercher lived a life that was characterized by sharing and contributions: to family, friends, church, students, and art. A worthy biography of such a man should involve more than the mere systematic presentation of the facts of his life; it should include an attempt to capture something of the warmth, struggles, convictions, and commitments of one who took life very seriously but also who knew how to garnish it appropriately with humor.

Early Years

Very fortunately, Ray wrote an unpublished (and not even fully edited) set of notes concerning the events of his life, beginning with his birth and ending just a couple of years before his death. Naturally, much of the following information comes from that source. In that account, Ray mentions that when he was born on September 26, 1921, his paternal grandfather noted in his diary that "this morning a young son was added to Andrew's family."[1] Commenting on that diary entry, Ray

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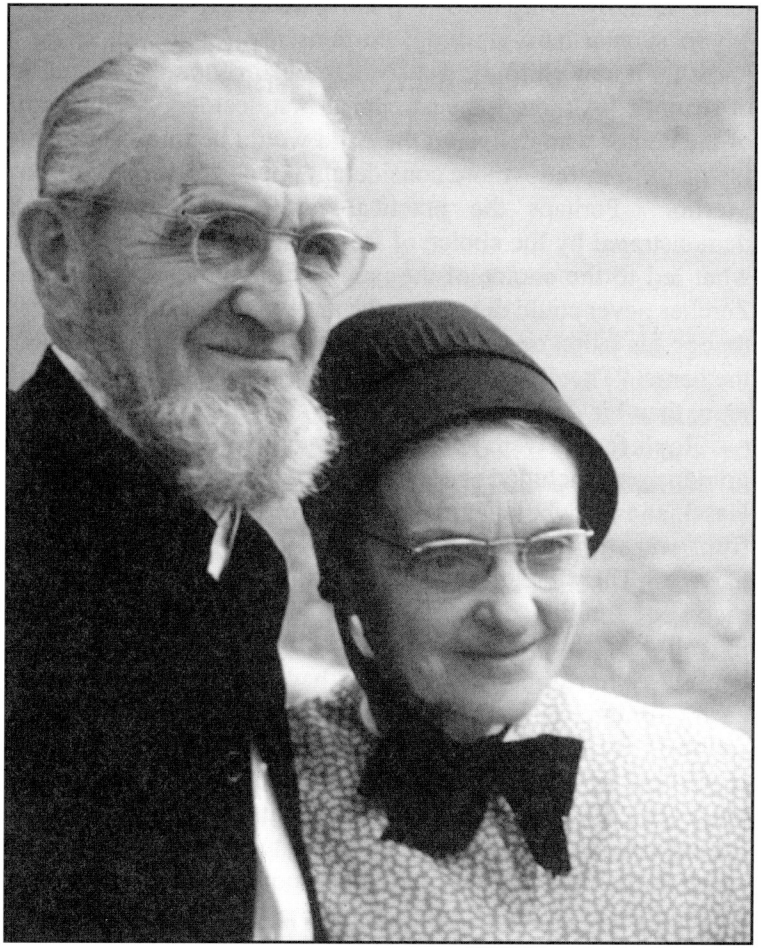
somewhat facetiously observed that "I was 'young' indeed but just in time for the week's work! And work was to be the major theme in daily living in my formative years."

In such a hard-working, no-nonsense family, choosing a name for a new child did not seem to be a matter of much effort or struggle. Although the parents at first decided that the name of the doctor who delivered the child would be fine—providing the name Winfred—more consideration led to the choice of Ray Merlin. Perhaps the practical nature of the parents is demonstrated by the choice of Ray, rather than Raymond. But what led to the choice of the name? It is quite clear that Ray Zercher never could determine the answer to that question, even though his father once jokingly told a neighbor who asked about the name, "There's a ray of hope that he'll amount to something more than his daddy someday."

Ray's family were farmers in Mount Joy, Pennsylvania. His grandparents included one Brethren in Christ minister (Abram Z. Hess), and the whole family (six children, of which Ray was the fifth) were very active in the Cross Roads Brethren in Christ Church. Therefore, many of Ray's memories of his childhood involved farm life and attendance at church activities. Nor were the religious observances restricted to church worship. Looking back, Ray remembered: "We also had regular family worship each morning. This consisted of Daddy reading from the Bible, followed by kneeling prayer. . . . The routine was followed regardless of the work schedule for the day." He further observed, "We always had prayer both at the beginnings and at the endings of meals, our parents taking turns leading. When we children had 'made a start,' although not consulted in advance, we could be sure to be called on to pray at the table. It was a kind of formal ritual admitting us to adulthood and the spiritual fellowship."

The faithful church attendance of the family provided Ray with special memories, some of which he included in his autobiographical notes. Fondly, he remembered, for example, how his father often caused the family to be late to Sunday school. Going to the barn, he would prolong the morning chores until his wife would again be calling to him, as she did—it



Ray Zercher's parents, Andrew and Anna Zercher

would seem—almost every week, reminding him that he was going to cause them to be late to Sunday school. And Ray remembered how embarrassing it was for him "because of the arrangement of the church, that meant coming in from the front of the worship room, facing the congregation and being seen by all gathered there. Just how much of the cow stable we brought along was of course another matter, for our hurried schedule certainly did not permit thorough cleansing." Trying to determine the reason for his father's habitual tardiness, Ray later understandingly decided that it was because his father, a rather timid man, did not want to be called upon to offer the opening prayer, impromptu. When he shared this theory with his mother, she concurred.

Of course, the family did not spend all of their time in church or religious observances. Theirs was the life of typical small farmers of the 1930s. It is significant that in discussing his birth Ray said, "Work was to be the major theme in daily living in my formative years." In a culture such as ours—with our air conditioned houses, luxurious automobiles, and obviously pampered children—it is exceedingly difficult to even begin to imagine what life was like for a boy growing up on a small farm in the 1930s. It was a world of thrift and some very basic facilities. For example, although the family did enjoy indoor plumbing, including two bathrooms, the farm included the always smelly, sometime very hot and sometimes very cold outhouse (where the family made practical use of the few newspapers and catalogs that came into their possession). It was a place where the family had to depend on various sources of income, including taking some baked goods and surplus vegetables to sell in Columbia on Saturdays. And there was always work to be done.

Ray performed many different chores on the farm, naturally some changing as he grew older. And the chores were a bit overwhelming. Recalling those days, Ray spoke of "the enormity of the constant burden of farm responsibilities. It seemed that no matter how fast or faithfully we worked, we never got done." Those responsibilities were varied, but included each morning cutting kale for the chickens before he

went to school, gathering the eggs from about a thousand layers, grading and packing the eggs for pickup by a dealer, helping his mother to take products to market, and riding the lead horse in cultivating the crops or loading hay. He obviously took special pride in the responsibilities involved in riding and caring for the two-horse team.

And there were other farm chores in which he would occasionally take great delight. One such was the annual preparation for and monitoring of hundreds of chickens that were delivered to the farm each spring. Ray remembered that the "annual ritual was both demanding and delightful. While their welfare required careful monitoring, seeing the tiny chicks in good health, rapidly picking up clues to their survival, was a pleasure."

Writing candidly in his memoirs, Ray recognized that his childhood years on the farm had not been characterized by an ideal relationship with either of his parents. Basically Ray felt that his parents understood very well how to run a farm and were committed to doing so, but they did not seem to understand the needs of a sensitive child for meaningful time with them. Speaking of his relationship with his father, Ray felt that even though his father talked often while they were working long hours together, he failed to show any interest in hearing about Ray's feelings and experiences. In fact, for whatever reason, his father would always address him as "Mr. Ray," which Ray felt depersonalized their relationship even more. Therefore, Ray felt "increasingly alienated" and "developed a habit of limiting my talking to him to what was necessary to get the work done."

Nor was his relationship with his mother all that he wished for. In looking back, Ray felt that the problem was often the mother's belief that farm life did not afford opportunities for an abundance of what we today would call "quality time with children." (He even referred to his "parents' nearly obsessive preoccupation with the press of farm work.") For example, when Ray would come home from school each day, he often was eager to share with his mother some of the special events of the day. Instead of listening to his enthusiastic presentations, however, Ray's mother would almost immediately admonish

him to do his after-school chores, gathering, sorting, and packing the eggs from over a thousand layers.

This was especially upsetting to Ray when he felt that he had something special to talk about. Feeling rebuffed and rejected, he made a decision: "So I discontinued such efforts." But it should be recognized that as an adult Ray came to appreciate his hard-working parents, understanding more fully the realities that they faced in trying to succeed on a small farm in the Depression years. (And the degree to which they did succeed is demonstrated by Ray's remembering that while growing up he was hardly aware of the harsh realities of the Depression experienced by so many farm families in the 1930s.)

Life on a farm belonging to devout Brethren in Christ involved wrestling with decisions that were not issues for most of the other farmers. For example, there was the question of the propriety of putting lightning rods on the farm buildings. Wasn't the use of such devices a lack of faith in God's providence? Naturally, the purchase of fire insurance also was questioned by many in the church for the same reason. And what about having a radio in the house? The purchase of such an obvious source of worldly attitudes influencing the family had to be undertaken only after much prayer and careful consideration. But Ray reported that the Zercher farm did eventually have lightning rods on the barn, and a radio in the house (carefully supervised by the parents, of course).

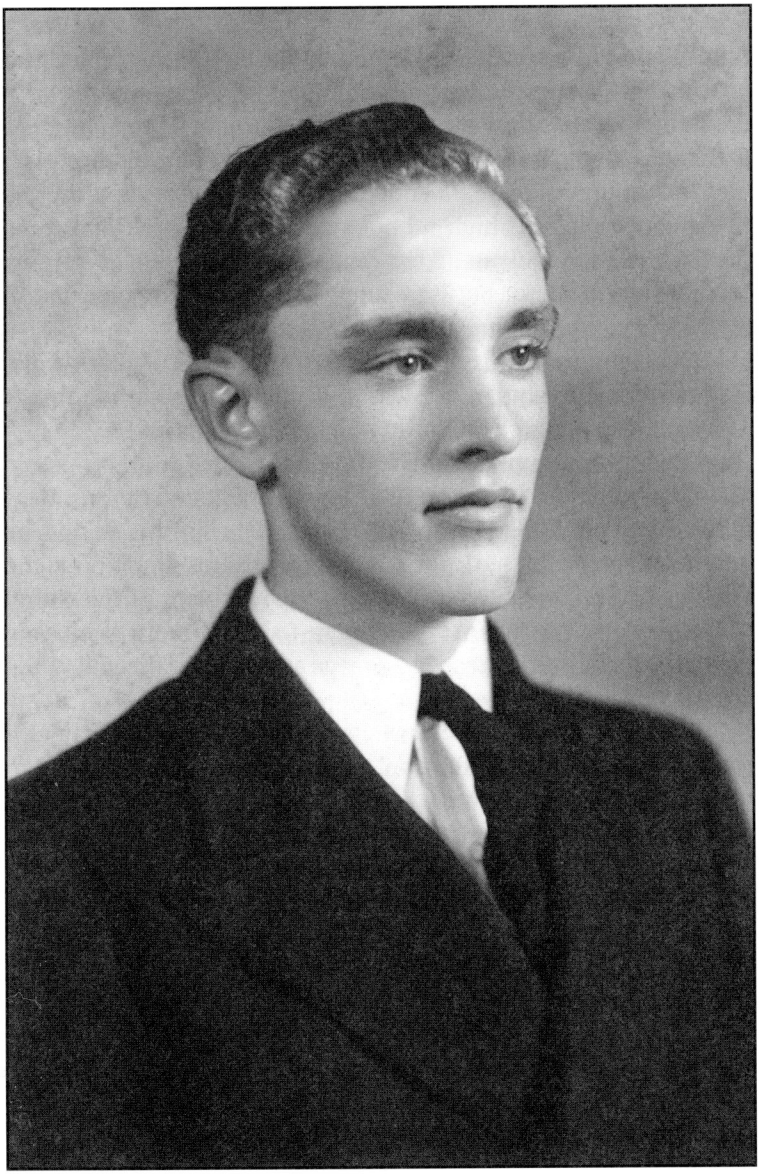
Ray's early Christian commitment seems to have been a rather dubious one. In his memoirs he explained how (in 1929) he "made a start" by going forward in an revival meeting at the urging of his father. He found the experience lacked the "dramatic and supernatural confirmations of spiritual acceptance" that he had heard about in the testimonies of others. And since he was not counseled by either his father or anyone else in the church, he was forced to look for confirmation of God's grace on his own. The result was that he "remained confused" by the experience for many years to come. And the confusion obviously lasted for a while. For example, Ray remembered the annual visits of the "visiting brethren" (deacons from the church who would visit each home to inquire about the

spiritual standings of the members of the family) as "stressful occasions" because of his ambiguous feelings concerning his "start."

Nor did his "making a start" result in his following the usual paths of conformity for a young Brethren in Christ convert. Usually a boy who had "made a start" would appear in school with his hair parted in the middle as a sign of conformity to the plain dress styles of the brethren. Observing that his school teachers and classmates seemed to be good, happy people, Ray did not make the switch to the plain dress that characterized members of the Brethren in Christ in the 1930s. In fact, Ray did not observe any of the patterns that usually followed "making a start": namely, change in appearance, baptism, and church membership. He wanted "to defer the matter pending better understanding of the issues."

Ray's decision to attend Messiah Bible College Academy in Grantham for his junior year in high school was obviously made with mixed reasons and emotions. On the one hand, he saw the move to a church school as an opportunity to rid himself of the tension that he had experienced in a public high school: a tension that resulted from the influences of a secular high school environment contrasting with his home-church life. But, even as he wanted to relieve that tension, he also saw a move to Messiah as an opportunity to escape from some of the pressures of conformity in his home and church "which [he] found stultifying." So, ironically enough, his decision was motivated both by a desire to escape the worldly pressures of a secular high school but at the same time to have an opportunity to more fully explore the wider cultural world to which that high school had exposed him, especially when he had sung in an operetta presented by the high school the previous year.

The description that Ray provided of his two years in the Messiah Academy would indicate that they passed rather uneventfully. In light of his life-time commitments to music, probably one of the more significant things that happened at the school in Grantham was that Ray became a baritone member of Professor Earl D. Miller's Male Chorus during his junior year and continued to be part of that group for the rest of his high



Ray's high school graduation photograph

school and college career. He points out that during his senior year he was persuaded to wear plain clothes when singing with the group because they often visited Brethren in Christ churches to sing for them, and Ray continued to wear plain clothes even after his high school years ended. Another observation that he made concerning his high school years is that he felt that some of the female students were pursuing him with a serious relationship in mind, but Ray suggested in his memoirs that "I avoided the conquesting girls."

After graduating from high school in a class of thirty-nine, Ray became a freshman at Messiah Bible College in the fall of 1939. It was near the end of his freshman year that Ray finally followed through on the "start" that he had made in his home church a number of years before. He was baptized by President C. N. Hostetter, Jr., on May 12, 1940. During this period he continued to be part of various choral groups, including the College Male Quartet, and served as the president of the choral society. And, no surprise, he began to think more positively about the girls. In that respect, he was attracted by the end of the school year to Ruth Niesley.

Ruth was from a Brethren in Christ family (her paternal grandfather was a Brethren in Christ pastor) that owned a farm near Carlisle, Pennsylvania. By December 1940, Ray was finishing the first semester of his sophomore year, and he was still interested in Ruth. Realizing that thoughts of interest were not enough, he decided to ask her for a date, and they attended a revival meeting together in Shepherdstown. For the rest of the school year their relationship continued to grow. But Ray had to balance his new-found desire to see Ruth with his commitments to the choral society, and he recognized that "the heavy schedule of programs with music groups kept me very busy."

Although he had been baptized, Ray obviously continued to search for his own understanding of some of the traditions of his denomination. During a 1941 trip with the college male quartet to Kansas and Iowa following his graduation from Messiah (a two-year junior college in those days), he was searching for a better understanding of the holiness tradition because he felt something lacking in his own spiritual experience, but he did not

find the help that he was looking for. However, he would soon be called upon to make a special commitment to one of the traditions of the Brethren in Christ, for soon after he graduated, the bombing of Peal Harbor would bring the United States into World War II.

By February 1942, Ray was registered with his local draft board and had to give serious consideration to pacifism, which was a tradition of his church. After Ray passed the physical exams, his parents' request of the draft board for farm deferment was rejected. Therefore, on November 12 Ray left Pennsylvania for Luray, Virginia, where he and some other conscientious objectors (members of Civilian Public Service) were housed in a former Civilian Conservation Corps camp. After staying in that camp for several months, he was transferred in March 1943 to serve in a mental hospital near Providence, Rhode Island, where he had a variety of jobs. Although he began his stay by working in the kitchen, he was eventually transferred to working on the ward for the criminally insane. Such an assignment was not an easy job, and although Ray did not provide many details about the ward in his memoirs, he did say that he had "many memorable experiences" there.

Of course, Ray was not the only conscientious objector at the hospital, and he was housed with others serving there, including a number of Mennonites. Members of the group often spent time discussing the implications and meaning of their pacifistic stand, especially as they realized the harsh realities faced by other young men their age in the various war fronts. In their struggles with this issue, they received some guidance and aid from a local Quaker church. Also, a number of them signed up for training that would prepare them for relief work after the war.

But as the months of 1943 passed, Ray began to make plans for special companionship in Rhode Island. On his way to New England in March, he had stopped in Pennsylvania long enough to ask Ruth to marry him, with the assumption that their wedding would take place after the war ended. However, as Ray became more familiar with the hospital situation, he realized that it was more congenial to marriage than he had originally assumed. There was a two-story building on the grounds which was

The Zercher family in 1942. Back row, left to right: Mary (Smith) and Jacob, Rhoda (Zercher) and Jacob Brubaker, Ray, Anna Ruth; front row: Randall (son of Jacob and Mary), Anna, Erla, Andrew

available for married conscientious objectors and their wives. Therefore, Ray began to correspond with Ruth concerning the possibility of their being married soon--with the idea of Ruth joining him in service to the hospital.

Receiving favorable replies from Ruth, Ray obtained a short furlough to return to Pennsylvania, where his marriage to Ruth took place in the A Street Brethren in Christ Church, Carlisle, on January 29, 1944. Soon the newlyweds were on a train heading back to Rhode Island. Theirs was to be an especially congenial marriage. Wendell Zercher, one of their sons, has said, "An amazing memory for all of us children is that we never heard our parents fight or even say an unkind word about the other."[2]

Ray had one more assignment as a conscientious objector. Experiencing chronic problems with his sinuses and throat in the damp New England climate, he asked for a transfer to another setting. He moved in April 1945 to a soil conservation camp in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He was to remain there for about a year, being discharged from Civilian Public Service in April 1946. After a trip to the West with Ruth (a kind of delayed honeymoon), the Zerchers arrived back in central Pennsylvania in July. And after consultation with president C. N. Hostetter, Jr., Ray began his third year at Messiah (a postgraduate experience in those days of the junior college) in the fall.

Ray and Ruth lived in the Youth Center of the A Street Brethren in Christ Church, Carlisle, while Ray pursued his final year of studies at Messiah (his fifth year on the campus). For the privilege of living there, the Zerchers were in charge of social events at the center and acted as the church custodians. While Ray was there, he tried to work out a meaningful youth program (even asking for advice from C. N. Hostetter) but he did not feel that he succeeded. Also, he was considering a call to the pastoral ministry. And in that respect, it is interesting to note that Ray tended to assume that God gives us directions through circumstances when we seek his will. This tendency shows up several times in the notes dealing with Ray's life. In this situation, for example, he assumed that the Lord used a Brethren in Christ bishop to give him his answer. It seems that he made an appointment to confer with a bishop who was famous in the

Ray (left) and close friend Paul Crider in CPS camp at Luray, Virginia

The Messiah College men's quartet with director Earl Miller (seated). Left to right: Paul Crider, Erwin Thomas, Ray Zercher, Eugene Wenger

Wedding portrait of Ray and Ruth (Niesley) Zercher

church for his exceptional memory. When the bishop completely forgot the meeting, Ray "concluded that his oversight meant that I was not destined for pastoral work."

The Years of Service to the Brethren in Christ

Ray was now a young man searching for an appropriate vocation. Since he had decided not to pursue the pastoral ministry, he was obviously struggling in 1947 and 1948 with the question of just what he was to do with his adult life. He tried helping some farmers in the summer of 1947 and became the assistant manager of the Carlisle Production Credit Association, a job that required his having much contact with farmers in the area. In these endeavors, Ray became completely convinced that he was not destined to make his living in farming. As he said, "Farming simply did not 'take' with me." And so the decision was made to earn a college degree. Therefore, Ray and Ruth, now parents with one child and another on the way, traveled to Indiana in the late summer of 1948 for Ray to attend Goshen College in the fall. Since Ray had taken his third year of college at a junior college, he had to attend both the full college year (1948-1949) and summer school in 1949 to meet the requirements for his bachelors degree.

Before his graduation from college, Ray was asked to join the staff of the E.V. Publishing House in Nappanee, Indiana. His new duties included being the copy editor and lay-out person for the three weekly Sunday school papers: *Sunbeams, Youth's Visitor,* and *Sunday School Herald.* His biggest responsibility was to be the office copy editor for the *Evangelical Visitor*, the denominational magazine that dated back to 1887. Ray had started what was to be a life-long service to the Brethren in Christ, first as a very important member of the team that produced the denominational publications and then as a professor and public relations leader at Messiah College.

Ray was to serve as the copy editor, designer, circulation manager, and tract department manager of the E. V. Publishing House/ Evangel Press from 1949 to 1962. His influence on the denomination's most important publications was obviously

significant and will be covered more fully in the last part of this biography. However, it should be noted here that while he served the publishing ministry, he did so with an obvious commitment. It was a commitment to his Lord which expressed itself in an obvious commitment to excellence. In reading Ray's comments concerning the years that he spent in Nappanee, it is obvious to even a casual reader that one of Ray's heartfelt desires was to improve the public image of the *Evangelical Visitor*. And to that end he applied his considerable talents for layouts and compositions, often fighting against the previous poor reputation of the magazine and the inadequacies of the funds budgeted by the denomination. He also struggled against what he perceived to be the indifference of others involved in the publishing house and the denomination in general. These feelings were clearly expressed in his notes that deal with that period:

> I grew increasingly dissatisfied with my situation at the E. V. This was partly because I not only seemed never to succeed in patching up its public image but I thought others did not share in the attempt. I realized later that I should simply have done what I was told to do and not to have assumed the broader concerns. They were the responsibility of the Board of Trustees, which came there to meet at least annually. While they were always generous in their remarks of appreciation for what I was doing, I thought they did not really have a good understanding of publishing, especially what should have been happening in the editorial department. They were concerned primarily with balancing the books.

Ray was given the title Office Editor or Compiling Editor, but by whatever title, he was clearly much in charge of the various publications, especially in their composition and appearance. His commitment to excellence compelled him to work toward improving the visual appearance of the paper. When he began his work as the editor, he discovered that the illustrations of the publications were provided by using the same

Ray with *Evangelical Visitor* editor John Hostetter

Ray delivering the first copy of *Crusader* magazine, which he edited, to C. O. Wittlinger at the youth rally at General Conference in 1957

unorganized cuts over and over. These cuts included some that had been purchased from commercial sources about twenty years before and some that had been used in advertising. Soon, Ray had these various cuts organized and labeled so that they could be used more appropriately and extensively " to avoid the drab appearance of a solid page of type."

Eventually, the budget allowed for the purchase of some new cuts, even some original illustrations, but one of the improvements that actually thrilled Ray was the addition of a second color in 1953. Now he had more tools available to him in his endeavors to improve the appearance of the publications, especially the *Evangelical Visitor*. In his memoirs he says, "The designing of the covers, as well as the layouts of all the periodicals, were always a challenge and thus a pleasure to me, each one being different, each an experiment, each a chance to learn a bit more about graphics."

It was in 1959 that Ray began to give serious consideration to the possibility of becoming a college teacher. That year he received a letter from C. N. Hostetter, Jr., president of Messiah College, suggesting that Ray consider the possibility of pursuing a graduate program in preparation for eventually teaching English and Art at Grantham. The letter presented Ray with a difficult decision to be made. He was now almost forty years of age with four children to support. To take further education, give up his position at the Evangel Press, and enter into the uncertainties of a college teaching career would require much faith. But faith was one of Ray's obvious qualities, so in January 1960 he took a room at Bloomington in order to attend the spring semester at the University of Indiana. Beginning advanced studies at a secular university after previously studying only at small Christian colleges was much more difficult than he expected. He says, "I was unprepared for the difficulty. Teachers assumed familiarity with things I had not even heard about, and I naively and erroneously thought that I should somehow find things easier because I was doing the Lord's will."

Since Ray continued to work part time at the publishing house, he at first did not move his family to Bloomington, but

Ruth and the children did move there in the fall of 1960. The family was to remain there until 1962. During this period, Ray not only struggled with the rigors of pursuing an advanced degree; he also continued to serve the Brethren in Christ and a local Methodist church. For his own denomination, he continued as a member and secretary of the Board of Education and a member and secretary of the committee compiling a new hymnal for the Brethren in Christ. It is obvious from reading Ray's notes that he worked very hard on the final editing and publishing of the hymnal by Evangel Press (in 1963). He also served as the Director of Music for the First Free Methodist Church in Bloomington. It is no wonder that he remembered this period as one in which he was constantly busy, but by the spring of 1962, he was ready to graduate with a Master of Arts degree and to prepare to move to Grantham, Pennsylvania.

Even as Ray moved to his new career, he had some misgivings concerning the adequacy of his preparation for college teaching—misgivings that would continue to bother him for much of his teaching career. As he had approached the end of his pursuit of the masters degree, he had considered continuing into a doctoral program, but that had not proved to be possible. Therefore, he was accepting the invitation to teach at Messiah College with only the M.A. As he later observed, "I never did move to that [the doctoral] level, although it was assumed that college instructors be so qualified. Logically or not—perhaps more psychologically—this deficiency was the most crippling factor in my entire teaching career." But even with his misgivings, Ray was to make major contributions to Messiah College.

Ray and Ruth were not moving back to Pennsylvania alone. Their years in Indiana had seen them blessed with three additional children. (Their first son, David Lowell, had been born in 1947, while they were living in Pennsylvania.) In Indiana, they had added two more sons: Wendell R. in 1949 and Marvin D. in 1951. Finally, a daughter, Joanne Z., had arrived in 1956. Although all of the evidence would indicate that they were both very conscientious parents, Ray pondered in later years if his commitment to excellence at the publishing house

had resulted in his spending less time with his children than he should have. He observed:

> I spent much more time at the office than necessary. I often went back in evenings and on Saturdays. Only in later years did I realize the price I paid by not being at home with the family instead, both by imposing undue burdens on Ruth and by neglecting development of relationships with the children. While we still lived in town, we had walked one day to the park a few blocks away. On the way home, we passed a lady who inquired about our three boys and said we should make much of them for they would soon be grown and gone. But I, at least, did not take her seriously. It seemed we had forever before us. We did not.[3]

So the family of six arrived in Grantham, where the children were to grow up and Ray would contribute to the college program in various ways for twenty-four years. During his first year he taught a combination of English courses and art courses and engaged in public relations work (partly as the editor of the college *Bulletin*). That pattern, adjusted with somewhat different assignments from time to time, would be the framework for Ray's service to the college until he retired.

Perhaps it is appropriate to pause here to remind present-day readers that Messiah College in 1962 was not very much like the college of today—in many, many ways. For example, the physical plant had much acreage but not many buildings. There was Old Main, where much of the classroom space as well as living and administrative facilities were found. Beside Old Main was the little former school house (still part of the campus), and beyond that the Alumni Building, with its combination gym upstairs and dining room downstairs. Up on the hill was a small library with both Hoffman Dormitory and the Grantham Brethren in Christ Church nearby. Of course, there were a number of houses (that have since been torn down) being used for various purposes, including the music program (Hill View) and faculty housing. But so many of the most prominent

buildings on campus today were not even in the planning stages in 1962.

And, of course, the faculty was much smaller. Some of the names that are still remembered today were already veterans by 1962: people like Al Long, K. B. Hoover, Earl D. Miller, and C. O Wittlinger. And, of course, these veterans had been, or soon would be, joined by other new faculty who would be major contributors to the growth of the college: Ronald Sider, E. Morris Sider, Howard Landis, Mark Wolgemuth, D. Wayne Cassel, Martin Schrag, Dorothy Schrag, and D. Ray Hostetter, for example. All together, the faculty numbered about thirty and taught a student body that numbered under three hundred. As Ray observed, it was "a size student body which permitted all—students, staff, and faculty—to know all others, both name and reputation." The $4,000 annual salary that Ray received for that year was typical of the very small remuneration received by faculty members for their hard work.

Both the small nature of the college and the inadequate remunerations are illustrated in the details of the Zerchers' move to the first home that they owned in Pennsylvania. After renting for three years, Ray and Ruth decided it was time to move to home ownership again. Having selected a lot in Grantham, in 1965 the Zerchers engaged the services of faculty members who supplemented their inadequate teaching salaries by building houses in the summer. Dedicated to teaching in a Christian college (even to the degree of giving some of their small remunerations back to the college in donations), these men, including Al Long, Mark Wolgemuth, and Howard Landis, built houses during the summer months in order to make an adequate living. Just as several other Messiah College faculty members were already living in such a home or would later live in one of them, so the Zerchers became residents of a faculty-built home in the fall 1965.

But the early years that Ray taught at Messiah saw the college growing, both in numbers and facilities. In the 1960s important buildings were added, including the Kline Hall of science and dormitories, for both men and women. And the college decided to become more experimental in its program. For

example, a new satellite campus was opened in Philadelphia in conjunction with Temple University, a move that made it possible for the college to make considerably more programs available to the students.

Then, during the summer of 1969, Ray was a member of a special faculty study committee that met to consider the feasibility of working an integrated studies program into the college academic requirements. Encouraged by the new dean, Daniel Chamberlain, the faculty wanted to consider a program in which teams representing various academic disciplines would offer courses that were part of the requirements for graduation. These courses would be integrated courses: that is, courses in which the teams would include information from several academic disciplines at the same time. It was hoped that such an approach would help the students to see the interrelationships between the various areas of knowledge: that the students might come to understand, for example, that one can not really study history thoroughly without also studying the literature, music, and art of the various historical periods. Somewhat idealistically perhaps, the faculty believed that maybe a small college was flexible enough to develop such a program whereas larger institutions were too unwieldly for such experimentation.

When the faculty not only accepted the report of the study committee but also voted to introduce the program in the fall of 1970, Ray was appointed to be a member of the first team to present the introductory course to the freshmen. That team included Ray, Howard Landis, Donna Wenger, Robert Stoner, Clyde Ross, Robert Markham, George Kimber, and David Kale, the chairman. All of the team members worked very hard for six weeks structuring that new course. Certainly one of the very important members was Ray, who had experience both as a composition instructor at the college (teaching composition was to be a major component part of the course) and as a member of the study committee that had planned the whole integrated studies program. Along with many other contributions, Ray suggested the title for the course that was adopted: "Shapers of Man." The writer of this biography still remembers portions of

the excellent lectures, especially those on art, that were given by Ray in that course in the fall.

Actually, it was providential that either Ray or many of the other college people were alive to work on the new integrated studies program. In January 1969, the major derailment of a train carrying munitions to a naval depot in New Jersey (for the Viet Nam War) almost destroyed a major portion of the campus. The writer of this biography had offered Ray a ride home and the two of us had seated ourselves in my car when we watched the engine of the train go by in front of Old Main. I commented to Ray concerning the nearness of the train tracks to the college, and as we started down the hill to the only college exit that existed then, we were both startled to discover many railroad cars strewn about the campus and hanging over the embankment. Realizing that the train that we had just watched had derailed, Ray and I got out of the car and began to inspect things. Some of the boxcars had been broken open by the impact, spewing various boxes and crates over a wide area. Some of them said, "Smokeless Projectiles." Little did we realize as we stood there how close we had come to a major tragedy. Soon the campus had been evacuated and experts were explaining that if anything had detonated those munitions, most of the campus and those on it would have been destroyed. There were many prayers of thanksgiving offered up by members of the college that night.

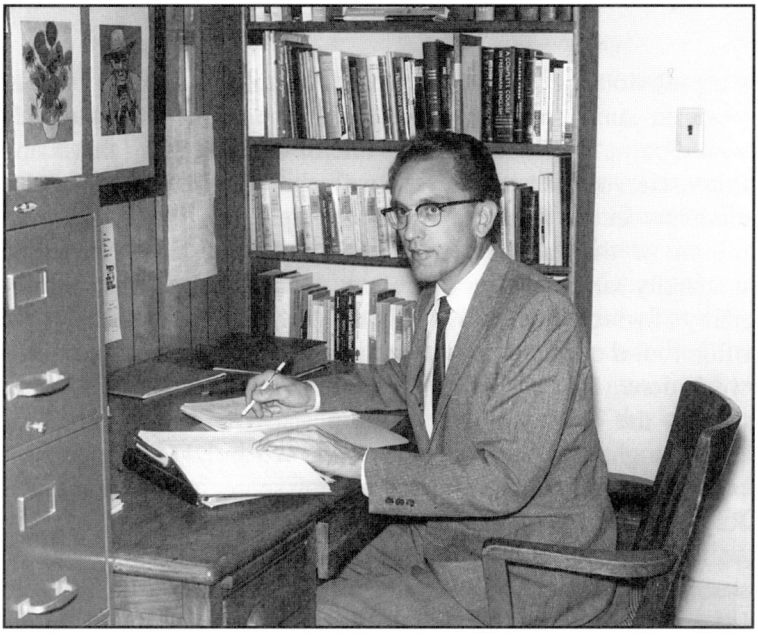
One of the things that embellished Ray's service to the college was his marvelous sense of humor. Whenever he was in a classroom or a gathering of faculty members, be it two people or several, Ray could usually find a means to bring humor to the situation. His was a dry, low-key type of humor that required one to listen carefully. As Paul Nisly, Ray's department chairman for many years, has said, "His wonderfully wry sense of humor probably passed over the heads of his less alert students. He loved to pun and play with words and the sounds of words."[4]

That humor could penetrate to a lighter side of basically frustrating situations. The author of this biography remembers, for example, how often it was frustrating during my first year on campus to share a very small room with Ray as our office. There

were obvious problems with our attempts to accomplish our work in such crowded conditions, especially when students would come in to counsel with one of us. The thing that many times relieved the tension was Ray's ability to find the humorous elements in the situation. For example, during the opening month of the fall semester (1968), there seemed to be an unusually large number of yellow jackets around the campus, many of which entered our office, which had no screens. As we often found ourselves swatting the invaders in order to get some work done, Ray agreed to a friendly contest as to who could destroy the larger number of the pests. I still remember how many laughs that contest generated as we daily joked with each other about our contest and the running score, including some of Ray's marvelous puns, of course.

Although Ray contributed as a teacher in the first integrated studies courses to be offered at the college, he was basically to leave the classroom in 1971 to become the Director of Public Information at Messiah College. (Actually, his public information assignment was a three-fourths assignment, and he taught two courses during the school year.) Since the college was still a rather small institution (somewhat over 800 students and around fifty instructors), Ray again found himself in charge of diversified publications: the college catalog, the *Intercom*, the *Messiah College Bulletin,* the *President's Report,* various newspaper articles and inserts, and various brochures to be used for college promotional campaigns. He obviously went about editing these various publications with the same desire for accuracy of content and attractiveness of appearance that he had demonstrated when he edited the publications at Evangel Press. He remembered that " I sometimes tested the limits of my licence for the unconventional. Such, for example, was the 1972 - 73 catalog cover, showing the Kline Hall of Science entrance, but with the two halves of the photo mirroring each other."

And this director of public information could be innovative in other ways, as well. In his notes on his life, Ray tells how when the new Eisenhower Center was dedicated, he placed some small stenciled signs along Route 15 advertising the event. He realized later that he had failed to get the proper legal permission



Ray in his faculty office at Messiah College

Ray with colleagues in the Language, Literature, and Fine Arts Department at Messiah College. Back row, left to right: Donald Forsythe, Clyde Ross; third row, left to right: James Cramer, Lois Beck, Robert Heineman; second row, left to right: Ray, Anna Verle Miller, Paul Nisly; front, Martha Long

for such signs, but he did want the public to be aware of this major event in the history of the college (an event that included Ray being able to share a stage with Mamie, David, and Julie Eisenhower). Later, remembering the uncertainty of the legality of his Route 15 signs, Ray did obtain permission to have a sign painted on the Grantham water tank, telling all who traveled on Route 15 that this was the "Home of Messiah College."

But by the summer of 1974, Ray was definitely frustrated with his public relations work. Although Ray did not write about his frustrations in detail, he did say that at the college there was "a meager managerial understanding of public relations." The reaction of Ray to this situation was to request a return to full-time teaching. Realizing that he would be teaching some art courses again and knowing how little actual formal training he had received in art, Ray requested a sabbatical in order to study art in Philadelphia. Living at the Messiah College satellite campus, Ray pursued more knowledge and skill in art, first at Tyler School of Art in the Summer of 1974 and then at Temple University in the fall term. As one reads Ray's recollections of those sabbatical months, it is quite clear that he learned a great deal. For example, speaking about a course in basic design, he remembered that it was "one of the best choices of my academic career! Professor Koss really opened my eyes that summer. I began to see design everywhere I looked."

It is obvious that when Ray returned to full-time teaching at Messiah in the spring semester, he was more qualified than he had been previously to teach the broad spectrum of courses that he was assigned. However, interestingly enough, he felt less accepted by the faculty and less important to the college program than he had previously:

> After my sabbatical, I never felt accepted by the faculty. It was as though they had gotten along quite well in my absence and could continue to do so. Therefore, I never regained a sense of involvement and partnership. I am sure that this was not the intention on anyone's part. Probably it only showed that I was less important than I had assumed.

Since he was a close colleague of Ray's during those years, the author of this biography was absolutely shocked to read the above words. Since I realized how very much the members of his department valued Ray (including his department chairman, Paul Nisly, who shared with me a number of times how much he appreciated Ray, both as a person and a teacher), I found myself searching for some kind of explanation for what I interpreted to be an obvious misunderstanding on Ray's part. Searching for reasons for Ray's feelings, I came up with the following suggestions: (1) Ray came back in 1974 to a very rapidly growing campus, one that was quickly gaining new recognition in academia. Part of the changing academic environment was the addition of quite a number of new faculty, men and women who had doctoral degrees or were moving quickly toward them. These professors were more obviously professional scholars, specialists in their disciplines. Returning to a faculty with so many such people, Ray felt a bit inferior. (2) Also it should be remembered that Ray was an innately humble individual who tended to underestimate his worth. For example, when Robert Ives, Ray's pastor for many years in Grantham, was asked to share his memories of Ray, he spoke of Ray's "self-effacing character."[5]

Ray was to continue teaching full-time at Messiah, both English and art, for another twelve years after he returned from the sabbatical. After John Pimlott left the college, Ray began to include Painting Studio in the courses that he offered, and he acknowledged that he fashioned his course after Pimlott's approach. Juggling his course load in various ways as he was asked to teach a variety of courses (as Paul Nisly has pointed out, "When we needed someone, Ray was willing"[6]), things moved along more or less normally until 1981. In the summer of that year, a routine physical examination revealed a very high white-cell count: Ray had leukemia. Not yet quite sixty years of age, he was told that he had about eight years to live. (Actually, he lived more than seventeen years.) Not knowing how long he would actually be able to fight this deadly disease, Ray continued to teach full time for another three years. Then after two years of teaching art studios part time, Ray completely

retired from college teaching in 1986. He had entered into his retirement years.

The Contributions of Ray Zercher

Having considered most of the active years of Ray's life, this biography will now shift the focus away from a chronological presentation of incidents and attempt to evaluate some of the contributions that Ray made in various areas. In doing so, this biographer believes that Ray Zercher presents a very good example of the many faithful and talented individuals that have contributed so much to the history of the Brethren in Christ without ever becoming one of the denomination's "outstanding personalities." Although known and recognized for their contributions, they are not counted among the easily recognized leaders of the denomination. But it is they—these talented and faithful workers in the denomination—who make it possible for the leaders to lead.

It seems that a natural place to begin a consideration of Ray's contributions to his denomination would be the work that he did as compiling editor of the *Evangelical Visitor* and the other publications of the E.V. Publishing House. As mentioned above, Ray saw the publishing of these works as an expression of his commitment to serving Christ. And he was determined to improve them, especially the *Evangelical Visitor,* which he felt had a reputation with the church for poor service. That reputation was not acceptable to Ray. As E. Morris Sider has said, "Everything that he did, he did with efficiency and in good taste. Therefore Ray found difficulty in accepting inefficiency and poor taste when and where he found them."[7]

And if the magazine was to be improved, it was his job to do, because he was basically in charge of the publications. As Ray later observed: "Actually, as copy and lay-out editor, I was in charge of all these papers, as well as the *Evangelical Visitor,* with very little input from the editor, who lived in New York and only infrequently came to Nappanee. . . . I did the copyreading, lay-outs, and made a final proofreading check before approving press runs." Doing all of these tasks well in order to improve the

Ray and Ruth with their family in 1991. Back row, left to right: Marvin, Joanne (Yoder), Lowell, and Wendell.

image of the magazine involved many hours of hard work. As Ray later observed: "I spent much more time at the office than necessary to maintain the status quo. I often went back in evenings and on Saturdays."

The evidence that Ray's hard work paid off is found in the changes in the magazine while he was the compiling editor. A perusal of the magazine that begins with editions that preceded Ray's editing and continues through the years of his tenure as the compiler of the *Visitor* should demonstrate to anyone the effectiveness of Ray's efforts to improve its appearance and worth. One who does that is certain to notice how during those twelve years the appearance changed—with more attractive layouts, more frequent effective illustrations, occasional touches of artistic imagination, and the increasing use of color. But it is clear from his notes that he was never fully satisfied with the magazine, especially in its editorial policies.

Perhaps that dissatisfaction was at least partially related to what E. Morris Sider refers to as Ray's discomfort with the Brethren in Christ:

> Ray had some discomfort with the denomination on two, seemingly contradictory levels. He was more clearly aware than many people in the church of the ways in which elements of the denomination's past were ethnic rather than theological in nature. Such elements he resisted and, in his reserved way, protested. On the other hand, he was equally concerned that the Brethren in Christ Church was becoming rapidly acculturated to American thought and practice, usually without knowledge of what was happening, let alone giving reasoned thought to the changes.[8]

But any discomfort that Ray had with his denomination did not prevent him from serving it in various ways: He was the secretary of the Central Regional Conference from 1958 to 1960. Also, he was the secretary of the committee that compiled a new hymnal for the Brethren in Christ and the United Missionary Church, and it is clear from his memoirs that he spent many hours in the final editing and publishing of the hymnal by

Evangel Press in 1962. He was a member of the Brethren in Christ Board of Christian Education in 1958 and the Youth Commission from 1958 to 1967. From 1968 to 1972 he was the secretary of the Allegheny Regional Conference.

It was while he was the secretary of the Allegheny Regional Conference that Ray used his influence to challenge racism in his denomination. It seems that Ray discovered in the bylaws of a Brethren in Christ cemetery (written many years earlier) a clause that allowed the burial of blacks only on a segregated basis. The clause required that the cemetery trustees set aside a section to be marked for blacks only. Disturbed by this obvious racism, Ray became the instigator of an action that was first passed by the Allegheny Conference and then passed on to the General Conference, where it was also accepted.[9] In both conferences the rather broad action called for members to identify and eliminate traces of racism in their thinking, encouraged ministers to denounce racism, and "requested examination of official church documents, such as property deeds and cemetery bylaws and directed that any evidences of racism be removed from them by whatever official or legal action might be necessary."[10]

Ray was, of course, one who believed that writing could be a vehicle of Christian service. He described that conviction in an article that he wrote for the *Evangelical Visitor* in May 1984. The article, entitled "Writing as Discipleship," challenged the readers to *realize* the importance of writing as part of their stewardship commitment: "What you write will vary with your calling. It will emerge as an expression of who you are, where you are, what else you have done. But it can be a powerful extension of your influence, your effectiveness in the work of the Kingdom."[11]

And Ray's encouragement to writers is recognized and appreciated. For example, Harriet Bicksler, a former student, says, "Ray is probably responsible as much as anyone for my being a writer and editor by profession. . . . Ray was always very supportive of me professionally, especially in my writing and editorial efforts."[12] And E. Morris Sider provides this testimony:

> I cannot overestimate the help that Ray gave me in my own writing. He encouraged me to initiate in 1978 the journal, *Brethren in Christ History and Life.* As editor I relied heavily on Ray for advice in content, style, and graphics. Similarly with the books and articles that I have written, I never published *anything* without asking Ray to read it. He was the most severe critic, and thus my most helpful reader. I learned as much about editing and writing from Ray's criticism as I did from university and college courses and reading books on writing. And Ray designed the covers for virtually all my books. In short, Ray contributed much to whatever value my own writing has had for the denomination.[13]

And, of course, Ray himself wrote: various published articles, poetry, and a history book, for example. The poetry and history book will be considered more fully later, but here the focus will be on his articles, especially those contributed to the *Evangelical Visitor* and *Brethren in Christ History and Life.* To the *Visitor* Ray contributed a variety of articles, as well as poems and letters. The articles deal with such subjects as the church hymnal, the history of the Messiah Rescue and Benevolent Home and the Messiah Home (forerunners of Messiah Village), the need for more racial integration in the denomination, prominent Brethren in Christ families, and the challenges of stewardship. His thirteen articles contributed to *Brethren in Christ History and Life* consider such topics as denominational history, the importance of poetry and art, biblical interpretation, and prominent leaders of the Brethren in Christ. They also include one collection of his poetry.

Naturally one who served the denomination in so many ways would also contribute to the ministry of his local church. He was always a willing worker. As Robert Ives, his pastor, has said, "Ray had the old BIC character that when the church asked you to do something, that was a call from God and so you agreed to do it. Today people are more interested in protecting their time; but for Ray, his own interests were secondary to those of the church."[14] With such an attitude of commitment, it is not

surprising that he served local churches in many capacities. In Grantham, for example, besides his service on various church boards and committees (including the music committee, and peace and social justice committee), he was a deacon for ten years, serving as the chairman of the deacon board for part of that time. When the Grantham church expanded its facilities with the Great Leap Forward in 1972, it was to Ray that they turned for the planning and publishing of the promotional brochure. These activities represent only a small sample of Ray's contributions.

Speaking of the local church, one should not forget that Ray ministered to a number of churches with his beautiful singing voice and musical knowledge. From his days at Messiah College, where he was a member of the quartet that traveled extensively to minister to churches, to his residency in Messiah Village near the end of his life, Ray's love of music enriched various churches. Besides being a member of the Grantham Church Chancel Choir for twenty-five years, he was a director of music and choir director at two churches: First Free Methodist Church, Bloomington, Indiana (1960-1962) and Grace Methodist Church, Lemoyne, Pennsylvania (1966). Even in retirement, he sang in the choir, led the congregational singing and occasionally directed the choir at the Village Church (but he recognized that his hearing problems hindered his effectiveness).

And the contributions of Ray to Messiah College were also numerous--too many, in fact, to all be considered here. For example, those who remember Ray as a fellow faculty member seem to share Paul Nisly's evaluation that " Ray was a good brother and colleague."[15] Talking with his former colleagues will verify that they remember him fondly. When asked why they enjoyed teaching with Ray, they mention a number of qualities. Almost always, they include an appreciative word about Ray's wit, his ability to bring humor to almost any occasion, and often they illustrate by telling a story. They always talk about his faithfulness and Christian commitment. Some, like Anna Verle Miller and Kenneth B. Hoover, express appreciation for Ray's ability to confront other faculty members in a difficult discussion without bringing heightened tension or

emotions to the exchange. Martin Schrag expresses appreciation for his "friendliness, kindness, and good judgment." Still others comment on his willingness to extend a helping hand to other faculty as they needed guidance or help.[16]

Maybe more important than the faculty are the former students who remember Ray fondly. Some comment on his helping them to see the importance of writing and challenging them to write better. For example, Harriet Bicksler says, "I had Ray for English Composition as a freshman. On the strength of doing well in Ray Zercher's composition class (no small feat in those days, I might add), I changed my major to English."[17] Others remember Ray for increasing their understanding of the artistic qualities of literature. For example, Audrey Brubaker, an English instructor at York College of Pennsylvania, remembers that Ray taught her to read literature carefully: "To look for specific word usage and repetition in the text, a technique that I still encourage my students to use. I fondly remember Mr. Zercher teaching me the same thing."[18] Still other students remember Ray's encouraging them to appreciate art. For example, Karen Dearing remembers how Ray helped her when she took his art studio course. As she recalls, "I knew nothing about art and what is involved in producing a painting. Ray taught me something of the process—enough for me to appreciate it."[19]

And these present-day memories of Ray's teaching are supported by excerpts taken from letters that Ray received from former students. For example, Karen Leland wrote in 1978, "I sincerely wanted you to know that being in your classes was one of the best experiences of my life. . . . Thank you for your humor, your fellowship, and all you've taught me.[20] And Jonathan Kuttab, an attorney in Jerusalem, wrote to Ray in 1984, on the occasion of his retirement: "Like many other students I remember with gratitude the patient lessons you taught us in English 101. The skills I learned in my freshman year are still with me, and I remember you every time I write an outline for an article."[21] Probably the most unreserved praise found in a letter is the statement made by Dennis Junn in a postscript to a letter

written to the college registrar: "Send my best wishes to Mr. Zercher. He was the greatest teacher I ever had."[22]

The above words of commendation are not cited in order to gloss over the weaknesses of Ray as a professor. If former students mention a weakness, it almost always centers on his not being the most exciting or dynamic instructor they had studied under at the college. But observations about his sometimes boring lectures are then followed by appreciation that his keen sense of humor, obvious understanding of the craft of writing, contagious enthusiasm for art, genuine supportive attitude toward students, and unfailing integrity clearly offset any deficiencies. For those who recognized those qualities, Ray was a very good professor.

It should also be mentioned that Ray did other things for Messiah College. For one thing, he strove for more art appreciation courses to be included in the curriculum at a time when very little provision was made for the visual arts at the college. In that respect, it should be pointed out that, working with a very limited budget and receiving no compensation for his efforts, Ray was the director of the college art exhibits for more than fifteen years. To read his memoirs of the college years is to become aware that he often found his attempts to bring meaningful and attractive exhibits to the campus involved much hard work and no little frustration. (For example, Ray remembered asking a Bloomsburg State University art teacher to provide such an exhibit only to discover when he was unloading his paintings that he intended to include some that involved obvious sexual imagery. Since the painter was providing the exhibit free and Ray had asked him to come, Ray found it very embarrassing to have to approach him about omitting some of the more explicit paintings from the exhibit.)

Still another contribution of Ray was his poetry. Although his notes clearly suggested that he was always fascinated by words and their usage and recognized a love of poetry as early as ten years of age, it was not until 1984, the year in which he retired from teaching full time, that he developed a strong commitment to writing poems. Interestingly enough, he attributed his new commitment to a club that he formed in 1984

together with four Messiah College students to consider creative writing, including samples of their own works that the members would share in the weekly meetings. Although the club was short lived, it was Ray's testimony that "the club launched—for better or for worse--my poetry writing career." That year Ray published both his first anthology of poems (*Up and Over*) and an article in *Brethren in Christ History and Life* describing the nature and value of poetry.

To read the article is to confirm what a careful reader will discover in his poems: namely, that Ray's theory of poetry definitely reflected the thinking of the great English romantic poets. William Wordsworth, for example, suggested that good poetry results from an individual sharing himself with others. A poem is not meant to be merely a clever collection of related words but a communication of deeply experienced feelings. Thus Rays says, "Poetry is derived from the poet's experience--feelings, perceptions, convictions, apprehensions, actions, aspirations--indeed, the whole person."[23] Also the romantic poets also defended the importance of both intuition and emotions. Again, Ray shared that kind of thinking, saying, "Candor is closely related to another important earmark of poetry: the intuitive perspective. . . . But his [the poet's] quest is for emotive insight based on intuition, for emotional truth rather than rational proof."[24]

And as Ray began publishing his poetry, he emphasized again that he wrote as an expression of Christian stewardship:

> Though you may conceive of poetry in terms other than mine, I hope these words encourage you to write poetry. The gift of language is clearly one of the most precious of our human attributes. It is God's gift to us. What we do with it, in poetic verse or prose, can be our gift to him. Through Christ as Word, God was revealed to us. Through our stewardship of words, we communicate that revelation. At the same time we define and reveal ourselves. [25]

Besides publishing a small anthology of his poems in the August 1984 edition of *Brethren in Christ History and Life* and

occasional individual poems in the *Evangelical Visitor,* Ray published six anthologies of poetry. These anthologies were published not to make money for the poet. In fact, they were not sold but given away—to friends and relatives, people that Ray felt would enjoy them. Observing that writing poetry to share with friends rather than to be published for wide circulation was an old Renaissance tradition, this writer made the following comment in a review of one of the anthologies (*Thistle Dew,* 1988): "As a poet, he returns to the Renaissance tradition, in which poets wrote not for commercial publication but for the joy and enrichment of their friends. *Thistle Dew*, like the hand-copied manuscripts of Renaissance poets that were circulated among acquaintances, is designed neither to make money nor to bring fame."[26] Not fame but sharing was the purpose of these anthologies.

And what characterized the poetry that he wrote? For a full answer to that question, the reader is encouraged to read reviews of two of Ray's anthologies that appear in past issues of *Brethren in Christ History and Life.*[27] Sufficient here to point out some very basic qualities. For one thing, Ray liked traditional prosody. He usually employed meter and rhyme, only occasionally adopting the free verse that has become so characteristic of modern poetry. Also, he very often wrote about ordinary, not spectacular, occurrences in life: a rabbit outside his window, his darkroom, a flock of starlings, the setting sun, a maple leaf, and other such common phenomena would set his poet's imagination to contemplating and composing. Finally, it is quite obvious to any careful reader that the poems often reflect and express Ray's Christian faith and commitment.

Ray expressed some of his feelings about writing poetry in a poem:

To Write a Poem

Another day, another time,
A foot or two of metered rhyme,
To marshall meaning in a line,
To elevate from coarse to fine,

To say again what has been said,
To separate the quick and dead,
To speak from heart as well as head,
To put it down and have it read,
To sail aloft without an oar,
To say it briefly, meaning more,
To unlock what's been held in store,
To open a neglected door,
To see in beauty our desire,
To add to light a warming fire,
To strike a chord upon the lyre,
To find, beyond the parts, entire
Visions, values – valid, vast –
To write a poem.[28]

As Ray enjoyed writing poetry to share with his family and friends, so he also enjoyed painting. Ray recognized that his love of the visual arts began in his childhood when he was able to peruse copies of the *Literary Digest* (provided by a neighbor), enjoying especially the reproductions of the paintings of J. L. G. Ferris. He believed that "the time I spent studying and admiring his pictures represented my introduction to art and probably contributed to my lifetime interest." It was an interest that continued to grow through the years. His first formal art course was a correspondence course in commercial art that he enrolled in while serving in the mental hospital in Rhode Island during the war. Then he enrolled in another correspondence course during his years in the publishing house in Indiana. When he pursued his Master of Arts degree in English at the University of Indiana, he managed to enroll in and audit a few basic courses in art. But it was not until the summer and fall of 1974 that, as mentioned previously, he was able while on sabbatical to enjoy full-time art studies, both at Tyler School of Art and Temple University.

Those of us who knew and worked with Ray realized that he had the mind of an artist. It was a quality in his personality that was expressed in numerous ways. For example, it showed in the layouts that he used whenever he was in charge of any

publication. It was revealed in his ability to see design everywhere, and in the manner in which he captured images on film and employed them in publications. It was evident in his intense reaction to art. (For example, he wrote about seeing Van Eyck's *Marriage of the Arnolfini* in a London museum: "I was amazed by the pearl-like quality of the paint, in spite of years—was moved to tears.") And it was most obviously demonstrated by the paintings that he completed during his life.

Just how many paintings he completed and just where they are all located now, even Ray himself probably did not know, but it was at least over seventy-five, most of them in the homes of family and friends. Like his poems, they were a work of love, designed to be an expression of an artist and his attempts to wrestle with the realities of life. Again, like his poems, they were for expressing and sharing, not for profit. But the evidence seems to indicate that he probably spent more time writing verse than he did painting, as one of his sons verifies: "I believe his art contributions were probably greater in verse, since he published books of poems and seemed to spend the most time writing poetry."[29]

Probably the greatest contribution that Ray made to the visual arts was his passing on to others a sense of artistic appreciation. Reading his notes should convince anyone that he tried very hard to encourage a meaningful appreciation of art in both the courses and the studios that he taught at Messiah College. Clearly, it did not work with all, but it did happen with some, as indicated in a letter Ray received from a former student:

> Thank you very much for what you've taught me this year. Being in your class was one of the best experiences of my life. . . . I knew that if I wanted to learn, the best thing to do would be to listen to *you*. So I did and, boy, did I learn! I used to hate abstracts . . . and landscapes and still lifes were never very special to me before either, but I will never scoff at them again. Y'know, the day we got back from that museum trip, I ran back to dorm, grabbed my watercolors, and did a scene.[30]

And another former student, Shirley Groff, says that "Ray is remembered by me as an encourager, always with helpful suggestions. He even made an amateur photographer out of me by praising my excellent composition."[31] Also, one of Ray's sons (who is a contemporary artist in Alaska) remembers how his father encouraged him to love art: "His big contribution to me specifically is artistic. He was always interested in art (involved in and observing). He helped me learn to see the world around me as an artist; that means to really observe and interpret. He also helped to open the world of modern art to me, for which I am ever grateful. I often wonder if I would ever have had the interest in art without his influence."[32]

Moving toward the end of this biography, it seems fitting to consider the last great contribution that Ray made to his church, namely, a history of Messiah Village, the denominational retirement home. Ray was first approached in April 1990 by the Messiah Village Board of Trustees about writing such a history. It seems that neither they nor Ray recognized at the time the gigantic nature of the assignment. He soon discovered that if he was going to do an adequate job of telling the story of the first one hundred years of the Village (including its predecessors in Harrisburg), he would have to dedicate himself to pursuing arduous research and writing a very long book Never one to reject a difficult challenge, Ray accepted the assignment. Thus followed many days spent in detailed research, extensive note taking, careful outlining, and rigorous composition. All of this was done during a period of increasing health problems, many of them involving considerable discomfort and pain.

Methodical as always, Ray kept a record of the time that he invested in the project. He spent 2,727 hours in research and writing (the equivalent of 340 eight-hour days), finally experiencing the satisfaction of seeing *To Have a Home: The Centennial History of Messiah Village* published in 1996. This comprehensive history of the Village and its forerunners contains over five hundred pages, complete with many appropriate pictures. To thumb through those well-written pages—page after page—causes one to wonder how a man who was experiencing the kind of health problems that he describes in his

notes could have possibly researched and written so well. For any who read this book knowing what Ray was enduring during that period, it is a reminder of the truly remarkable power of dedication and commitment.

But he did write it, and he wrote it well. E. Morris Sider expresses his admiration for this book in a foreword. The following are a few excerpts:

> In relating the story of Messiah Village, the author follows canons of good history telling. Throughout the narrative, he places the institution in the wider and usually changing context of the times. . . . And he does all this with a well-tuned ear and practiced eye to the elements of human interest in the story. . . . The author has done his work well in other ways. He provides a wealth of detail to illustrate general developments, and supports this detail with copious notes based on interviews and a wide reading of the documentary sources. . . . In short, not only is this a book about a model institution, it is a book written in model form. Surely the author's account of Messiah Village will set the pattern for how the story of other retirement homes will be written in the future.[33]

Emerson L. Lesher, President of Messiah Village, agrees with Sider that the book is both well researched and well written. He also stresses its value. Speaking of the quality, Lesher says: "I believe that Ray Zercher has not only written an outstanding history of Messiah Village, but in many respects a history of the Brethren in Christ Church. In reading *To Have a Home* one learns much about the polity of the BIC Church, the issues which confronted the church, and how the church responded to local and world-wide mission and service needs during the twentieth century."

Commenting about the value of the book to Messiah Village, he says,

> The memories held by an organization are just as important as the memories held by an individual person. Ray Zercher

> has provided an outstanding service by providing an enduring "memory" of the first one hundred years of Messiah Village's ministry. Few organizations have documented their history in such excellent detail and perspective. To have our history in written form increases the sharpness of our organizational memory and helps to sustain it for generations to come. In this way, Mr. Zercher has provided a valuable service to the ongoing ministry of Messiah Village.[34]

Ray lived to see his book published in the spring of 1996, but the various manifestations of his leukemia began to multiply. However, he continued to work hard, pursuing various writing projects on the computer that he had purchased and learned to use while writing the history book. For one thing, Ray composed the notes on his life that have been so helpful in the writing of this biography. Also, he excerpted about forty diaries written by his grandfather and great-grandfather. These he deposited in the denominational archives at Messiah College. But even a noble spirit is eventually conquered by the realities of an ailing body, and by the early fall of 1998, it was clear that Ray's earthly tenure was quickly coming to an end. He died at home on November 19, 1998.

When he graduated from junior college in 1941, someone wrote beside his picture in the college yearbook "A keen wit . . . a calm reserve . . . a model of integrity and manhood." Whoever wrote that had known Ray only for a few years, but this biographer, who knew him, worked with him, and loved him for over thirty years, acknowledges the accuracy of that yearbook description.

NOTES

[1]Ray Zercher, unedited and unpublished notes on his life. All further quotations by Ray Zercher are from this source unless otherwise indicated.

[2]Wendell Zercher, e-mail letter to the author, August 9, 2001.

[3]In a letter sent to the author, one son expressed some of the same concern: "He was overly conscientious and dedicated to his work to the detriment of his family. He simply spent too much time at work, striving toward excellence." Wendell Zercher, e-mail letter to the author, August 9, 2001.

[4]Paul Nisly, e-mail letter to the author, July 27, 2001.

[5]Robert Ives, e-mail letter to the author, July 26, 20001.

[6]Paul Nisly, e-mail letter to the author, July 27, 2001.

[7]E. Morris Sider, letter to the author, August 8, 2001.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Conversation with E. Morris Sider, August 8, 2001.

[10]Carlton O. Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience: The Story of the Brethren in Christ* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press , 1978), pp. 155-156.

[11]Ray M. Zercher, "Writing as Discipleship," *Evangelical Visitor,* May 1984, p. 20.

[12]Harriet Sider Bicksler, e-mail letter to the author, August 8, 2001.

[13]E. Morris Sider, letter to the author, August 8, 2001.

[14]Robert Ives, e-mail letter to the author, August 2, 2001.

[15]Paul Nisly, e-mail letter to the author, July 27, 2001.

[16]All these comments, except for Paul Nisly's, are based on individual interviews with the cited individuals.

[17]Harriet Sider Bicksler, e-mail letter to the author, August 8, 2001.

[18]Conversation with Audrey Brubaker, August 25, 2001.

[19]Conversation with Karen Dearing, July 29, 2001.

[20]Karen G. Leland, letter to Ray Zercher, May 4, 1978.

[21]Jonathan Kuttab, letter to Ray Zercher, October 14, 1984.

[22]Dennis Junn, letter to the Messiah College registrar, June 24, 1988.

[23]Ray M. Zercher, "Beyond Pale Kings and Princes Too: A Personal Statement On Poetry," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (June 1984), 48.

[24]Ibid., 48-49.

[25]Ibid., 51.

[26]Clyde A. Ross, "Ray M. Zercher. *Thistle Dew,*" *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (August 1988), 205.

[27]Paul Nisly, "'To Say It Briefly, Meaning More': A Reading of Ray M. Zercher's Poems," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (June 1984), 57-64, and Clyde A. Ross, "Ray M. Zercher. *Thistle Dew*," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (August 1988), 205-209.

[28]Ray M. Zercher, *Bag & Baggage* (Grantham, Pa.: Precipitant Press, *1983*), p. 28.

[29]Lowell Zercher, e-mail letter to the author, August 13, 2001.

[30]Karen G. Leland, a letter to Ray Zercher, May 4, 1978.

[31]Shirley Groff, e-mail letter to the author, August 15, 2001.

[32]Lowell Zercher, e-mail letter to the author, August 13, 2001.

[33]E. Morris Sider, "Foreword," in Ray M. Zercher, *To Have a Home: The Centennial History of Messiah Village* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Messiah Village, 1996), p. viii.

[34]Emerson L. Lesher, e-mail letter to the author, August 20, 2001 (both quotations).

War in the Old Testament: A Journey Towards Nonparticipation

By Terry L. Brensinger[*]

In March of 1994, on the second day of Purim, a thirty-eight-year-old physician named Baruch Goldstein strolled into the Mosque of Abraham in the West Bank town of Hebron and proceeded to massacre some twenty-nine Palestinian worshipers. In the aftermath of this apparent atrocity, Israeli Prime Minister Rabin personally contacted his avowed enemy, PLO chairman Yasar Arafat, and confessed: "As an Israeli, I am ashamed of this deed."[1] Yet the atrocious character of Goldstein's act was not so apparent to the militant Jewish settlers with whom he resided in Kiryat Arba, a small town situated just outside of Hebron. To them, Goldstein was nothing less than a hero of biblical proportions, for his annihilation of the Palestinians constituted a reenactment of Samson's warring exploits against the Philistines.

Before judging Goldstein and his fellow Jewish settlers too harshly, however, we at least need to be reminded that the Hebrew Scriptures have inspired the Christian Church throughout its history to engage in similar military adventures. In describing the capture of Jerusalem by the crusaders, for example, Raymond of Agiles wrote:

> Some of our men (and this was more merciful) cut off the heads of their enemies; others shot them with arrows, so that

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> they fell from the towers; others tortured them longer by casting them into the flames. Piles of heads, hands, and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city. . . . Indeed, it was a just and splendid judgment of God, that this place should be filled with the blood of the unbelievers, when it had suffered so long from their blasphemies.[2]

He goes on to describe the mood of the crusaders upon arriving at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre: "Now that the city was taken it was worth all our previous labors and hardships to see the devotion of the pilgrims at the Holy Sepulchre. How they rejoiced and exulted and sang the ninth chant to the Lord."[3] Throughout such crusading episodes, a favorite text of the participants was Jeremiah 48:10: "Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood."[4]

More recently, the Puritans at times saw their conflict with the "aboriginal natives" here on American soil in similar terms. In 1704, for example, Herbert Gibbs preached a sermon following Puritan advances; in it he joyfully acknowledged "the mercies of God in extirpating the enemies of Israel in Canaan."[5] Still later, World War II General Montgomery prayed "that the Lord mighty in battle will go forth with our armies, and that his special providence will aid us in the struggle."[6] Just a few years ago, a student in one of my seminars casually but seriously remarked: "If killing was good enough for Joshua, then it's good enough for me!"

For most of us, such blatant applications of Old Testament passages concerning war immediately strike a raw nerve. Yet the issue remains: What is a Christian, distanced from the Old Testament by both culture and further revelation, to do with these texts? People who accept the justification of war, at least under certain circumstances, often use them to add validity to their claims. Those from peace traditions tend, with exceptions, to assign them to a pre-New Testament period, a period since surpassed by the teachings of Jesus. Is there, however, another alternative?

In seeking such an alternative, it must be stated up front that the Old Testament is clearly not a pacifistic document. On the

contrary, wars abound in the traditions of ancient Israel, often in graphic and seemingly barbarous forms. At issue, however, is whether the Old Testament consistently accepts war as an inevitable and at times appropriate human activity, or whether it seeks instead to transform and even abolish it (much as it does, in the minds of many readers at least, with such matters as slavery, polygamy, and the subjugated roles of women). Can we find emerging from the pages of the Old Testament what Susan Niditch refers to as an "Ideology of Nonparticipation?"[7] In order to address this question, three general issues will be discussed: reducing the troops; constraining the king; and imagining the unimaginable.

Reducing the Troops

Wars, once again, are extremely common in the Old Testament, as they are in texts throughout the ancient Near East. War, in other words, was a standard part of the landscape. What requires our attention, then, is the manner in which Israel and her neighbors portrayed their wars.

To begin with, the writers of Scripture seek to present the various wars in which Israel engaged as divinely ordained campaigns. According to this prevalent trajectory, Israel's wars were in fact a primary means through which God judged the sinful nations of the world (Lev. 18:25-28; 20:22; Deut. 18:9-14; 1 Kings 21:9). Accordingly, such war narratives have more in common with the biblical account depicting the divine destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah than they do with contemporary conflicts between warring nations. Rather than simply portraying adversarial nations defending or expanding their borders, the war stories of the Old Testament reveal God distributing his justice through human instruments. In short, God instructs Israel when and where to fight (Num. 21:3; Deut. 7:2; 20:17; Josh. 10:40; Judg. 1:1-2). Wars initiated by and for Israel herself are doomed to fail.

Beyond this, Israel's military victories were divinely propelled. In other words, the narratives consistently attribute Israel's victories to divine intervention. God sends the plagues

upon the Egyptians (Exod. 7-12). God destroys the walls of Jericho (Josh. 6:20). God causes the sun to stand still during Israel's fight against the Amorites (Josh. 10:12-13). God sends rain in order to stymie the Canaanite coalition (Judg. 5). God confuses the bewildered Midianites (Judg. 7). God blinds the Arameans (2 Kings 6:18). God strikes the blood-thirsty Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35-37). God ambushes the invaders from the east (2 Chron. 20). Again and again, God manipulates the forces of history and nature and victoriously intervenes on Israel's behalf.

Importantly, then, the writers of the Old Testament invite us to see Israel's wars as divinely inspired and divinely propelled confrontations in which God accomplishes his purposes. Interestingly enough, such a conception is essentially how Israel's neighbors viewed war as well. Continually, the records from Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Syro-Palestine reveal the widespread conviction that the gods of these people also fight in battle. They too ordain military conflict, and they too intervene in order to assure victory. Consider just a few examples in which the gods miraculously intervene on behalf of their subjects:

A. Hittite texts

1. Report from the reign of Muršiliš II:
But as I marched, as I reached there to the mountain of Lagaša, there the proud Weather-god, my lord, showed his divine power, and he attached a thunderbolt there. And my army saw the thunderbolt, the land of Arzawa also saw it, and the thunderbolt went forth there, and struck the land of Arzawa, it also struck the Lhhaluis city of Apasa (*KBo* III 4 II 15-19).[8]
2. Report from Muršiliš II, who was in pursuit of Sunupassaer:
The proud Weather-god, my lord, stood beside me. It rained all night so that the enemy could not see the campfire of the troops. But as soon as the weather became clear in the early evening, the proud Weather-god suddenly raised the storm

and brought it and it went before my troops, making them invisible to the enemy. So I arrived at the land of Malazzia and burnt and destroyed it utterly (*KUB* XIV 20 11-22).[9]

B. Egyptian Texts

1. From Rameses II during a Syrian campaign in bad weather:
His majesty considered, and took counsel with his heart: How will it be with those whom I have sent out, who have gone on a mission to Syria, in these days of rain and snow which fall in winter. Then he made a great offering to his father Seth, and with it pronounced the following prayer: Heaven rests upon your hands; the earth is under your feet. What you command, takes place. [May you cause] the rain, the cold wind and the snow [to cease] until the marvel you design for me shall have reached me. Then his father Seth heard all that he had said. The sky became peaceful and summer-like days began (*Aub Simbel* 1:36:39).[10]

Clearly, the war narratives of the Old Testament and those of Israel's neighbors have a great deal in common.[11]

What appears to be lacking in the ancient Near Eastern accounts, however, is the strong emphasis that the Old Testament places upon the theme of God warring on behalf of a weak and perpetually overmatched group of people. We find, for example, Deborah and Barak encountering the chariot-possessing Canaanites, Gideon the camel-riding Midianites, and David the awe-inspiring Goliath. Likewise, the Chronicler repeatedly calls attention to the weaknesses of those whom Yahweh assists (2 Chron. 14:9-15; 16:8; 20:12). "O our God," Jehoshaphat cries, "will you not execute judgment upon them [invaders from the east]? For we are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you" (20:12). In each instance, the Israelites are woefully under-equipped—torches, trumpets, pottery, slings, or nothing at all. David can apparently turn completely around in Saul's armor without moving it (1 Sam. 17:38-39)!

Significantly, this theme of God warring on behalf of the weak is so prevalent in the Old Testament that in a few instances when Israel's own resources might lead them to believe that they could win the battle on their own, an act of reduction occurs. As a result, Gideon confronts the innumerable Midianites with but a fraction of his original forces (Judg. 7), and Amaziah is left to face the Edomites without the aid of the Ephraimites (2 Chron. 25:5-7). To make matters even worse, the troops left for Gideon to employ are the least competent of those originally summoned.[12] Unmistakably, only Yahweh deserves the credit for Israel's military victories.

The war narratives of the Old Testament, then, resemble those of Israel's neighbors in several crucial respects. God directs the fighting, and it is he who intervenes in battle. However, unlike the accounts from the surrounding nations, Israel's texts place particular attention on the weaknesses of the people and their occasional need for reduction. That such a theme of weakness and reduction occurs at all is noteworthy. That it occurs with respect to a group of people who find themselves in what is perhaps the most war-torn region of the world is potentially profound. Rather than celebrating their own military accomplishments, the Israelites are instructed to wait and view Yahweh alone as their protector and deliverer. While these contrary tendencies undoubtedly tell us something about God, they likewise reveal something about the way his people are to function within the world.

Constraining the King

With a significant number of the war narratives canonically situated prior to Israel's request for a king in 1 Samuel 8, it is apparent that such a request places Israel's position as Yahweh's uniquely chosen people in jeopardy. Kings, after all, typically become self-serving, consolidating within their grasp all power and authority. This tendency, observable throughout the ancient Near East, lies behind the list of warnings that follows Israel's request. In reality, a king will institute a military draft, force the Israelites to work against their will, confiscate property, and

impose burdensome taxes (1 Sam. 8:11-17). While such royal practices may be common and even appropriate elsewhere, they are clearly not what the Israelites anticipate.

In order to prevent the actualization of these self-serving tendencies, kingship in Israel is uniquely situated within a set of theological parameters. According to Deuteronomy 17, Israel's kings were to avoid three practices so characteristic of monarchy elsewhere. First, they should not amass many horses, the attaining of which would signify military security. Second, they should not acquire many wives, a reference most likely to the marrying of foreign women in order to formalize international alliances. Such an act would symbolize political security. Third, they should not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold, the gaining of which would constitute financial security. Israel's kings, as such, were to redirect their energies in entirely new directions.

And what were they to do? Sit on the throne and study Torah day after day! In the words of Walter Brueggemann: "The biblical tradition and Israel in her reflection on monarchy are peculiar in affirming that the fundamental religio-political reality is not king but Torah, not human distribution of power, but divine vision for society."[13] This is, needless to say, a scandalous redefinition of power and monarchy. As Herbert Huffmon casually comments, the gods of the ancient Near East "bud into the affairs of earthly kings in order to oversee their activities, but to so limit kingly responsibilities is unusual indeed."[14]

Given these theological parameters, it is significant to note that two of the three relate directly to warfare. The prohibition against amassing horses is self-evident–Israel is not to base either her identity or security on military might. However, the prohibition against marrying many wives and thereby ratifying alliances also relates to warfare because it deliberately limits Israel's military maneuverability during moments of crisis. In the same way that the ruling nations of the ancient Near East stipulate that their vassals not enter into agreements with competing forces, so too are the Israelites bound by treaty to Yahweh alone. They were not to rely on anything or anyone

else. In *The Mighty from Their Thrones*, J. P. M. Walsh captures this same idea:

> The tradition insists on this: Yahweh wars on behalf of Israel. But what is Israel to do? The tradition is clear on this, too: "Be still" (Exod. 14:13-14). If Israel relied on military might they would be arrogating *mišpat* ("having the say") to themselves and rejecting the *sedeq* ("sense of rightness") of Yahweh. They would be living by the same sense of *sedeq* that caused the kings to amass armies and multiply horses and chariots: of *sedeq* rising, and validating obsession with security and freedom from risk. For Israel to rely on power and strategy would mean rebellion against Yahweh.[15]

Importantly, however, these theological parameters rarely prevented the type of self-serving tendencies so prevalent among kings elsewhere. As a result, the Old Testament repeatedly levels criticism against a vast array of violators. Within the so-called Deuteronomistic History, David himself, the paradigmatic king, is harshly rebuked for counting his fighting men (2 Sam. 24). Apparently, the taking of such a census is analogous to an aging person fretfully anticipating retirement, only to discover that a larger-than-expected return on an investment makes anxiety, and faith, unnecessary. David's troops, not God, ensure the quality of his advancing years. Similarly, the historian attributes the decline of Solomon's seemingly glorious reign to his blatant disregard of all three of these parameters (1 Kings 10:26-29; 11:1-13). While it is true, as M. H. Segal points out, that Solomon receives direct criticism only for his innumerable marriages to foreign women, the clear connections with Deuteronomy 17 make explicit editorial comment unnecessary.[16] Solomon self-destructed by absolutizing himself.

In the prophetic literature, related pronouncements appear with some regularity. Consider these:

> Their land is filled with silver and gold,
> and there is no end to their treasures;

their land is filled with horses,
and there is no end to their chariots.
Their land is filled with idols;
they bow down to the work of their hands,
to what their own fingers have made.
Isaiah 2:7-8

For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel:
In returning and rest you shall be saved;
in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.
But you refused and said, 'No! We will flee upon
horses"–therefore you shall flee!
and, "We will ride upon swift steeds"–therefore
your pursuers shall be swift.
Isaiah 30:15-16

Because you have trusted in your power
and in the multitude of your warriors,
therefore the tumult of war shall rise against your people,
and all your fortresses shall be destroyed,...
Hosea 10:13-14

In that day, says the Lord,
I will cut off your horses from among you
and will destroy your chariots; . . .
Micah 5:10-13

In each of these and other passages, Israel and Judah defy the principles embodied in Deuteronomy 17 and trust instead in horses and chariots. Significantly, such behavior is included in lists that also mention sorcery and idolatry in its various forms (Mic. 5:12-15).

Similar texts could be cited in which the establishing of treaties with foreign nations receives prophetic condemnation (Isa. 31:1; Jer. 2:36; 37:7-8; Hos. 5:13; 6:11; 8:9; 12:1). Isaiah 30:1-3 serves as an example:

Oh, rebellious children, says the Lord,
who carry out a plan, but not mine;

who make an alliance, but against my will,
adding sin to sin;
who set out to go down to Egypt
without asking for my counsel,
to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh,
and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt;
Therefore the protection of Pharaoh shall become
your shame,
and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt your humiliation.

In such instances, military alliances constitute a violation of Israel's covenantal identity, a deplorable compromise of their calling to "be still."

While it is true, as some have argued, that such passages criticize the misplacing of one's confidence in military might and alliances rather than war itself, the point remains that Israel testifies to a rather peculiar notion of monarchy and its employment of power. Once again, while this notion unmistakably tells us something about God, it surely implies something about the intended character of Israel in the world. As Willard Swartley suggests,

> The pervasive prophetic criticism of kingship with its military power indicates that the Old Testament points to another way, the establishment of justice through the Torah and the way of the suffering servant, which refuses and judges the military war.[17]

Imagining the Unimaginable

In spite of the attempts to reduce the troops and constrain the king, the Old Testament bears witness to Israel's increasing propensity to fend for herself. In the process, the king, whose task was to promote peace and justice, became instead the author of chaos. Such chaos brought with it a continuing prophetic critique as well as a deepening conviction that the same God who freed Israel from Egypt would at some point free her from the monarchical abyss into which she had fallen. Yahweh would

raise up someone who would succeed where previous kings had failed.

What gradually emerges, then, is a prophetic vision of a righteous kingdom ruled by a righteous king. For Isaiah, such a kingdom is characterized by endless peace, justice, and righteousness (9:6-7). Micah envisions hope for the weak and marginalized (4:6-13). Jeremiah speaks in terms of safety; people actually living with genuine security and confidence (23:5-8). In each instance, this quality of life will be guaranteed by an anticipated ruler sitting upon the throne of David.

Perhaps the most remarkable description of this longed-for kingdom appears in Isaiah 11:1-9. Seemingly grasping for appropriate metaphors, the prophet stretches language to the limits in portraying things to come:

> The wolf shall live with the lamb,
> the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
> the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
> and a little child shall lead them.
> The cow and the bear shall graze,
> their young shall lie down together;
> and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
> The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
> and the weaned child shall put its hand
> on the adder's den.
> They will not hurt or destroy on my holy mountain;
> for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
> as the waters cover the sea.

Everything has been turned upside down, and the unthinkable become commonplace.

Eventually, however, the disappointment of exile and the apparent fragmentation after the return no doubt caused considerable pause. Yet the imaginative glimpse lived on in apocalyptic depictions of things still to come. In Zechariah 9:9-10, for example, the anticipated king triumphantly enters Zion. Unlike earlier passages, which consciously associated the coming king with David, this ruler is decidedly unlike David in

certain respects. The king of Zechariah 9 lacks military might, and the horses and chariots of Solomon have given way to a colt. This king, so it appears, has intentionally disarmed. Upon his arrival, his kingdom will similarly disarm:

> He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
> and the war horse from Jerusalem;
> and the battle bow shall be cut off,
> and he shall command peace to the nations;
> his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
> and from the River to the ends of the earth.

In place of monarchical chaos, peace will carry the day.

Importantly, while many of these passages envisioning a peaceful kingdom focus specifically on Israel, various texts clearly present a glimpse of future peace in which the surrounding nations are also direct participants and benefactors. In Isaiah 19:18-24, for example, Israel and her longtime foes, Egypt and Assyria, share equally in divine blessing. Likewise in both Isaiah 2:1-4 and its parallel in Micah 4:1-3, the nations of the world mutually participate in the actualization of God's righteous kingdom. At that time, God will judge fairly between all people, and all will walk together in the ways of the Lord. Among other things,

> they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
> and their spears into pruning hooks;
> nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
> neither shall they learn war any more.
> Isaiah 2:4

Suggestively, the journey from reducing the troops and constraining the king leads eventually to disarming the nations. In Isaiah's mind at least, such a journey would progress far more smoothly and quickly if Israel would herself begin to enact the vision, for he concludes his oracle with a striking exhortation:

O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the Lord!

Rather than constituting a mere eschatological hope, beating swords into plowshares serves here as a daring appeal for God's people to enact that longed-for age of peace within the present world.

Issues for Reflection

The Old Testament, without argument, does not portray a pacifistic community. War predominates throughout the ancient Near East, and Israel clearly participates. Yet, the nature of the materials indicates that "something is in the works." By suggesting both an outrageous understanding of power and might as well as depicting an imaginative alternative of peace, the Old Testament does indeed bear witness to an emerging ideology of nonparticipation. From this, several implications can be drawn:

First, the life and ministry of Jesus, which for many serves as a paradigm of non-violence, need not be viewed as an absolute break from the seemingly militant orientation of the Old Testament. At the same time, neither must the Old Testament be considered an embarrassment for those who seek to embrace a theology of peace. While the Old Testament does not present a crystalized view of pacifism as such, it does present what Niditch refers to as an "extended and self-consciously critical treatment of warring behavior."[18] This treatment, in combination with a prophetic and apocalyptic vision of peace, provides the soil for a more developed theology of pacifism based upon the New Testament.

Second, that the Old Testament does in fact give witness to a non-violent alternative should come as no surprise to us in so far as Jesus himself expressed dismay over the failure of his fellow Jews to receive him. This rejection, so most commentators suggest, resulted from a Jewish expectation for a politically-oriented Messiah who would forcibly free his people

from Roman oppression. Furthermore, such an expectation must have arisen from an Old Testament context which predicted the violent overthrow of Israel's enemies.

The alternative question, however, focuses on the fact that Jesus apparently expressed surprise at being rejected. Why would he be so surprised if the Jews had no theological framework with which to recognize him? Indeed, the fact that recognition was deemed possible suggests an emerging view within the Old Testament of a king who would turn power and violence on its head.

Third and finally, one striking issue remains: What does all of this mean for the contemporary Christian church? To begin with, it is essential to affirm that the church, not the United States or any other nation, inherits the mantle of modeling the kingdom of God within the world. It is the church, therefore, that must reduce its power-oriented equipment, constrain its aspiring kings, and present to a warring world an imaginative alternative to violence, manipulation, and coercion. Doing so will involve at least these three things:

a. Serving as a prophetic-consciousness within the world, a consciousness that criticizes warring behaviors and challenges the violent policies that our respective nations so often embrace;

b. Promoting peace, both by articulating insightful alternatives to war as well as by actively supporting and engaging in non-violent ministries, even in the most war-torn areas of the world;

c. Modeling genuine peace within all levels of the church itself, even when working through difficulties and disagreements. A church continually at war with itself, as at times seems to be the case, has little to say to a warring world.

In reflecting upon Isaiah 11:6-8, Walter Brueggemann suggests that the images there are unheard of and abnormal; wolves do not live with lambs, cows do not graze with bears, and children do not play with poisonous snakes. "But then I look again," Brueggemann continues, "and notice something else. The poet means to say that in the new age, these are normal things. And the effect of the poem is to expose the real abnormalities of life, which we have taken for granted. We have

lived with things abnormal so long that we have gotten used to them and we think they are normal.[19]

Violence is a part of life, so everyone around us says. War is inevitable. Killing is everywhere. The abnormalities of violence and war, so drastically opposed to life as God intended it, have become so normal that the world cannot imagine anything else. The world cries out for alternatives. The world needs an imagination. Therein lies a portion of our task.

Yet this is precisely where the Church has often failed to leave its mark. Rather than decrying the evils of war, we seek to justify it. Rather than imaginatively and creatively exploring the possibilities of promoting peace, we settle for common realism and cope with what we presently have. Rather than providing a drastically different alternative that at least gives onlookers the opportunity to say, "There is a better way," we model more of what the world already sees in itself. A theology of peace, the groundwork for which has been laid in the Old Testament, might at first glance appear to be unrealistic and frighteningly abnormal. Admittedly, embracing it requires a renewed imagination.

NOTES

[1]Russell Watson, "Massacre in a Mosque," *Newsweek* (March 7, 1994), p. 35.

[2]Roland Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960), pp. 112-113.

[3]Ibid., p. 113.

[4]Ibid., p. 112.

[5]Ibid., p. 168.

[6]Quoted in Peter Craigie, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 33.

[7]Susan Niditch, *War in the Old Testament* (New York: Oxford, 1993), p. 134.

[8]Albrecht Goetze, *Die Annalen des Muršiliš* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1933), pp. 46-47.

[9]Ibid., pp. 194-195.

[10]H. Te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), p. 133.

[11]For a more complete collection of ancient Near Eastern texts relating to war, see Sa-Moon Kang, *Divine War in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989).

[12]Following the reading of the LXX for Judges 7:5, those who alertly knelt down and drank with "their hands to their mouths" were sent home. The MT preserves a less coherent reading, placing the phrase "with their hands to their mouths" in connection with the lappers in v. 6.

[13]Walter Brueggemann, *Living Toward a Vision* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1976), p. 92.

[14]Telephone conversation with Herbert Huffmon, Drew University, Madison, NJ (September, 1995).

[15]J. P. M. Walsh, S. J., *The Mighty from Their Thrones* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), p. 68.

[16]M. H. Segal, *The Pentateuch and Other Biblical Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), p. 79.

[17]Willard Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1983), p. 116.

[18]Niditch, *War in the Old Testament*, p. 138.

[19]Brueggemann, *Living Toward a Vision*, pp. 44-45.

Beyond the News: A Visual Media Review

By John W. Eby[*]

I remember hearing Orie O. Miller, an early leader in Mennonite Central Committee and an influential church leader in many areas, say that Christians are called to go into the world with a Bible under one arm and a newspaper under the other. To be faithful disciples, we need both a keen sense of what is happening in our world and a deep understanding of the Bible. We bring these qualities together in a life of discipleship, and in witness, service, and work for social justice.

The video series, *Beyond the News*, produced by Mennonite Media which just celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, is a wonderful resource to equip us to accomplish these goals. As the producer of the series says, they go "beyond the statistics, beyond the sensational, beyond the impersonal and beyond the comfortable to in-depth understandings of real situations from a faith perspective."

Each of the twelve videos in this series explores a relevant, complex, and often controversial issue about which Christians need to make decisions. The videos use story, analysis, and reflection based on real experiences to focus issues and to explore how various Christians have worked with them. In the most recent video, *Facing Death,* Moses Slabaugh at age ninety, a pastor and accomplished woodworker, describes how he made his own casket as a way to prepare for death. He kept the casket in his shop and showed it to many people, in this way opening up many significant conversations. This past spring he used the

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[*]John W. Eby is Professor of Sociology at Messiah College.

casket as his friends and family celebrated his life and death and worshiped God through the funeral service he had planned.

In a more tragic and painful confrontation with death, the video *Murder Close Up* introduces persons who experienced a murder of a family member. Their stories of how God is working in their lives to bring healing and forgiveness reflect a power that comes only from Jesus Christ. Sister Helen Prejean, featured in *Dead Man Walking*, and Howard Zehr who started the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP), discuss alternatives to the death penalty from a Christian perspective. In the video *Homelessness*, a sociologist describes social policies which contribute to homelessness. A formerly homeless man describes how he found stability by relating to a church which reached out to him when he was homeless. A member of that church describes how his understandings of homelessness and his attitudes toward homeless people were transformed when he learned to know homeless people personally.

The series does not shy away from difficult and painful issues. An award winning video, *Sexual Abuse*, features Carolyn Holderread, a psychotherapist, and true stories of sexual abuse dramatized from the point of view of both victims and perpetrators. Reports of violence from former Yugoslavia dominated the news from time to time in recent years. What public news agencies have not reported as well are stories of courageous and creative peacemakers working in the name of Jesus to find alternatives to violence. *Hope for Bosnia* reports their stories and helps unravel the complexities of that situation. *Immigration* puts faces on immigrants from Sudan, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Iran, and explores the complex issues relating to immigration. Some immigrants come to the United States to find freedom from political oppression. Others come to find a better life. Understanding immigrants will help churches reach out with ministries of hospitality to the "stranger" in their communities.

Rosemary Williams tells a humorous but serious story in *Money*. In order to stay even with her husband, a self-proclaimed conspicuous consumer, she bought a couch every time he bought a boat. Each couch could be identified with a

particular boat, one with the thirty-four footer, another with the forty-two footer. When a friend asked her why she had a couch in the hall, two in the living room, one in the basement, one in the extra room, and one in the bedroom, she began to realize that money was taking control of her life in ways she didn't like. The story has a sad ending: eventually she and her husband divorced because of arguments over money. The video *Firearm Violence* begins with a moving story told by the parents of a sixteen-year-old boy who was killed when he was caught up in gang violence in Denver. It explores the pervasiveness of guns in our society and various points of view on gun control.

Two videos on *TV Violence*, one oriented specifically toward how TV affects children, show the subtle ways TV shapes our values and the values of society. It makes violence seem almost routine, normal, and painless. A New York City youth gave voice to teenagers by interviewing them for *Parenting Adolescents.* These interviews were combined with interviews with adult experts in the field to give insight into adolescent lifestyle and parenting. A special section for youth leaders emphasizes the role of the whole congregation in supporting families. The video *Racism* identifies the unearned "privileges" white people have just because they are white. African-American people tell how racism has affected them in education, jobs and economics, the justice system, and the church.

The videos are not objective in the sense that they show with equal persuasiveness both sides of the issues. They don't. They have a point of view shaped by Anabaptist theology and reflect values and perspectives which are well known by Brethren in Christ. The series is structured to approach issues within a frame set by an emphasis on the Bible as God's word and guide for life. Faith is understood as following Jesus in a life of discipleship. There is an emphasis on the church as a community of faith which shares the good news through witness, peace, and service.

These perspectives are reflected in the frame used to approach issues and by the people chosen to articulate their experiences. The series begins with the assumption that Christians will approach issues in a different way than is common in society. It emphasizes both personal responsibility

and societal influences. And it takes the church very seriously, both in its role in providing a context within which Christians make decisions and as an important actor in society.

One theme that moves through the entire series is the theme of hard choices—choices about money, the use of TV, justice, love and forgiveness, involvement in social needs, violence, and death. Many of the choices are very personal in the sense that individuals, by confronting the issues, gain deeper understanding that leads to deepened convictions and more faithful action. The videos also recognize the social context of decisions and the responsibility Christians have to shape that context and, at times, to resist it. J. B. Phillips translates Romans 12:2, "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold." The videos recognize the extent to which individuals are influenced by social structures and values of society and the hard choices they make to follow different, biblical cues.

The importance of sorting out societal values from biblical ones is particularly evident in the videos that explore the subtle influences of TV and the potential of money to hold us captive. Dorothy Shank, a stewardship educator, points out how dominant money is in our society and how much we think about money and the things money can buy. The video on murder suggests a new way to understand crime and deviance, and invites Christians to think about the way failure to forgive traps and captivates people who choose to hold hatred and want revenge. A woman who saw her father stabbed twenty-four times and who herself was stabbed six times, asks, "Why kill people who kill people to show that killing people is wrong?"

As Christians who are salt and light to the world, we are drawn beyond personal actions to impact social policies and community opinion on issues like immigration, racism, homelessness, gun control, and the death penalty. A strength of the series is that it recognizes the interaction between individual actions and social structure, and that as it calls Christians to live lives with high standards of personal morality it also calls us to influence social policies which reflect God's will for the common good.

In addition to approaching issues from a churchly stance in

a way that focuses on the choices Christians make and that recognizes both personal and social dimensions of issues, the series uses a range of experts to draw on current research and knowledge. For example, a sociologist from St. Norbert College identifies social factors that led to an increase in the number of homeless people in the last several decades. In a move toward "normalization," institutions where disabled people lived were closed so that disabled people could live more normally in communities. However, community supports were not provided, leaving many people who did not have the personal skills or resources to live on their own with no alternative but to live on the streets. Urban renewal often replaced low cost housing with shopping centers or higher-cost housing, thus reducing the supply of housing for low income people. Howard Zehr is recognized as a national expert in the field of restorative justice. He emphasizes that our current justice system ignores the needs of victims of crime and in many cases brutalizes them. He suggests that it is important to think of crime as broken relationships and that restoring relationships is important for both victims and persons who commit crimes. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting, nor does it mean that people who commit crimes avoid facing the consequences of their actions.

George Gerbner from the prestigious Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania discusses his many years of research on the impact of TV on society. He is concerned with the obsession with violence as a solution to human, social, and family conflict, but even more with what he calls "happy violence." This is violence that does not show the real consequences. He also documents from his research the way TV creates and perpetuates stereotypes, particularly of racial and ethnic groups and of women.

The series is designed to be used by groups in the church. It is built on the Anabaptist understanding that answers to complex practical issues are found when groups of Christians study them together, led by the Spirit, guided by the Bible and assisted by the best information available. The videos are designed for group discussion in Sunday school classes and other small groups in the church. Most are thirty to thirty-five minutes

long, though several are longer. Each comes with a short study guide that provides an overview of the issue, questions and discussion starters for groups, and a list of additional resources. The study guide and videos are segmented for easy use in multiple sessions. That most of the videos are stories and experiences told by persons who lived them invites interaction and discussion. When information is portrayed with "talking heads," it is interspersed with visual images. The videos are provocative in a good sense. They raise issues and provide a point of view without suggesting simplistic answers, or answers to which all Christians will agree.

The production quality of the videos is high. They move along rapidly in a way that engages the audience. They are highly recommended for congregational use in any setting where members want seriously to work with current issues. Even though some were produced several years ago, they are not dated or obsolete. Each one stands alone, so they can be used individually. Or they can be used as a series in, for example, a quarter of Sunday school lessons.

The length and production year of each video are as follows:

Hope for Bosnia	30:00 Minutes	1993
Racism	25:00 Minutes	1993
Sexual Abuse	30:00 Minutes	1993
Firearms Violence	33:00 Minutes	1994
Homelessness	30:00 Minutes	1994
Murder Close Up	35:00 Minutes	1995
TV Violence & Your Child	33:00 Minutes	1995
TV Violence & You	30:00 Minutes	1995
Money	55:00 Minutes	1997
Parenting Adolescents	56:00 Minutes	1997
Facing Death	34:00 Minutes	1999
Immigration	54:00 Minutes	1999

The videos may be borrowed from the Mennonite Central Committee, P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501, or from the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Congregational Resource

Center, 2160 Lincoln Highway East, Box 5, Lancaster, PA 17602. Individual videos or the entire series may be purchased from Mennonite Media, 1251 Virginia Avenue, Harrisonburg, VA 22801-2497 (tel.: 800-999-3534). Purchase prices are as follows (as of August 1, 2001):

Any 1 video	$24.95 (US), $38.50 (Canada)
Any 2 videos	$44.95 (US), $69.95 (Canada)
Any 4 videos	$84.95 (US), $131.00 (Canada)
Any 6 videos	$119.95 (US), $185.25 (Canada)
Any 11 videos	$204.95 (US), $315.95 (Canada)

Book Reviews

MYRON S. AUGSBURGER. *The Robe of God: Reconciliation, the Believers Church Essential.* Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2000. Pp. 261. $14.99

Reviewed by Paul W. Nisly[*]

Evangelist, churchman, educator, and author, Myron S. Augsburger has his home in the Mennonite Anabaptist community, but he has had extensive experience in the wider evangelical and Christian communities — and in the non-Christian world. *The Robe of God: Reconciliation, the Believers Church Essential* reflects his deep commitment to a solidly biblical and orthodox faith, his wide experience in relating to both a churched and a non-churched audience, and his desire to help all believers communicate the gospel in winsome, authentic ways that speak redemptively to our contemporary culture.

The subtitle of his book suggests his thesis, namely, that "*Reconciliation* is . . . the central aspect of God's overarching covenant of grace" (p. 21). An important presupposition in Augsburger's argument is that an inadequate theology of reconciliation has led to a truncated understanding of the gospel and often to fragmentation within the church. A key text (among many biblical references which he cites) is 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, a passage which is particularly focused in this verse: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (v. 18).

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[*]Paul W. Nisly is Professor of English at Messiah College.

Augsburger links his understanding of the significance of reconciliation to his entire theological framework. God's sovereignty, for example, is fully accepted but not in the deterministic or even fatalistic sense which one sometimes finds in Christian circles. Rather, he suggests, "We need to understand God's sovereignty as being more personal and less philosophical" (p. 62). A practical outworking of understanding God's sovereignty in relational terms is Augsburger's perception of human freedom: "God's very sovereignty as self-determination means that he is not threatened by the decisions we make in the freedom God grants to us" (p. 69). Thus the paradox of God's sovereignty and human freedom is viewed within a relational framework.

Another important instance of the way Augsburger's focus on reconciliation affects his theology is his view of atonement. After briefly describing some of the classic formulations of atonement (the ransom, substitionary, and moral influence theories), he develops the relational theory with its focus on forgiveness, a forgiveness which is not simply a "pronouncement of release" nor a legalistic paying of debts which we humans owe. As Augsburger says well, "Forgiveness reconciles and releases people; it creates a new identity, a new relationship, a new lifestyle" (p. 102). Forgiveness from God thus is far more dynamic than getting rid of one's guilt or providing a ticket to heaven's gate.

Augsburger's focus on reconciliation permeates his entire book, whether he is discussing discipleship, baptism, the community of faith, our relationship to Jesus, or our call to mission. He ranges freely on his sources from Augustine to contemporary urbanologists, from Anabaptist history to current church practices, from personal experiences of evangelism in the United States to teaching ministries in Asia and Africa. Particularly important are his experiences as founding pastor of the Washington (D.C.) Community Fellowship, a multi-denominational church which is affiliated with the Mennonite Church. And the entire book is marked by the author's obvious

deep familiarity with and love for the biblical text which profoundly shapes his commitments and worldview.

Given a book so rich with insights, one is reluctant to offer any negative critique, but one small structural flaw is that there could have been more careful editing of the text to facilitate the flow of the book. At times the book seems more a collection of essays on the same topic than a unified work. One small example: in the early chapters there is much discussion of the basic concepts relating to reconciliation—as there ought to be—but there seems at times some repetitiveness in the development. In other instances, topics or places or events are "introduced" even though they have actually been mentioned earlier. Though slightly distracting, these minor flaws are insignificant as weighed against the overall achievement of *The Robe of God.*

Augsburger's final chapter, "Being More Itinerant in Mission," provides a good conclusion to the book and reflects his own extensive work in mission, a reconciling work which has been marked by commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and by sensitivity to the local context. Speaking of witness to Jews and Muslims, Augsburger writes, "We must share in conversation with [them] a genuine appreciation for their faith. Only as we understand and respect the values of their faith can we show how Jesus came to reconcile us with God and each other, and not primarily to found a religion" (p. 238). Myron Augsburger's irenic word is true to the spirit of reconciliation which this book fosters.

RICHARD S. TAYLOR. *God's Integrity and the Cross.* Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Publishing House, 1999. Pp. 160. $14.95

Reviewed by Arthur M. Climenhaga[*]

This treatment by Richard Taylor of the theological implications of penal satisfaction and the atonement is an interesting combination of a fairly brief presentation of a systematic theology of the atonement with an autobiographical presentation of his moving from a governmental position to a qualified penal position on the atonement. Taylor in his preface speaks of this as a "conversion" and notes particularly that he feels this was a more Wesleyan position than had pertained under the influence of John Miley's theological hermeneutic of a governmental position in the atonement.

Quite evidently in his earlier governmental atonement position, Taylor had reacted against the implications of a Calvinistic position known as the "penal satisfaction" position. Thus he states in his preface, "During most of that time, I was a typical governmentalist–thumbs down on any kind of penal satisfaction notion!" (p. ix). In his seminary duties as a reader of senior comprehensive exams, he became distressed by the cloudy grasp on such basic Christian dogma. This drove him to personal study of the Scriptures that showed him the need of a penal satisfaction hermeneutic within the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition.

In a sense, therefore, the nine chapters of the book are a development of such areas as:

> What kind of atonement and the issues arising from the same?

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The cross not an option, thus becoming the ground of the atonement's necessity.
Since death is a penalty, is penalty a Divine necessity?
The Blood as an imperative moving us toward a resolution, namely, becoming partakers of God's integrity.

While the book's treatment is comparatively brief and thus not really suitable as a primary text, I highly recommend it as a collateral requirement in such academic classes in seminary and collegiate biblical majors as Systematic Theology, Theology of Holiness, Biblical Hermeneutics, and allied fields.

In order to follow Taylor's development of the above on a broad level, every church leader, minister, administrator, deacon, Sunday school teacher, board and committee member, and small study prayer groups in the church should obtain a copy of *God's Integrity and the Cross* and study it thoroughly. Such study will ground us well in our understanding of the biblical concept of the penal satisfaction which is provisional and conditional in the atonement.

While such a brief review is mostly an introduction to the book, hopefully it will encourage the reader to get a copy and thoroughly study the same.

ROBERT S. KREIDER. *Looking Back into the Future*. North Newton, Kans.: Bethel College, 1998. Pp. 302. $25

Reviewed by E. Morris Sider[*]

Looking Back into the Future, the eleventh volume in the Cornelius H. Wedel Historical Series published by Bethel

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[*]E. Morris Sider is Professor Emeritus of History and English Literature, Messiah College.

College (Kansas), brings together sixty-six articles written by Robert S. Kreider from 1938 to 1998. The book honors a Mennonite scholar and churchman who is widely known for his creative mind, skillful writing, humanitarian concerns, and encouraging spirit. All of these qualities are reflected in this book.

The entries also illustrate the range of the author's interests and activities. Some are on educational themes (Kreider served as academic dean, later president, of Bluffton College, later as a professor at Bethel College). Other entries are on his experiences in a Civilian Public Service (CPS) camp in World War II and with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) following the war. The entries also include such disparate subjects as intercollegiate sports (which he favors), family and church heritage (they should influence but not impair us), violence, and people (including the story of James Lui, a Christian in China). All the essays show Kreider as a keen and sympathetic observer of human life.

The best way to understand the nature of this book is to refer to several of the selections. "Do You Hear the Children Weeping?" written in 1934 as a high school junior, establishes at the beginning the concern for poverty and suffering that appears in various articles in the book. In a somewhat histrionic voice (forgivable in a teenager), the young Kreider describes the plight of many children caught in the Depression of the 1930s, and praises Roosevelt's National Recovery Administration (NRA) for trying to address this evil.

In two pieces on Civilian Public Service (he provided leadership at the camp at Colorado Springs), Kreider describes the difficulties faced by conscientious objectors and commends "the good boys" for the manner in which they met them. He shows that much of later Mennonite leadership was forged in the challenges of CPS camp life.

The author played a seminal role within MCC after the war in establishing the Teachers Abroad Program (TAP). In an article written in 1962 describing the new program, Kreider

offers sixteen hints for those serving in it; the hints show a multicultural awareness in advance of those years. "Learn the customs and manners of the people among whom you live and work," reads one hint. "For example, in East Africa receive your caller into the house and offer him a seat. Do not meet him at the door and ask what he wants" (p.76). "Do not be shocked by ingratitude," reads another. "You are not serving abroad to earn appreciation. . . . Appreciation is often present but largely unexpressed" (p.76).

In his inaugural address as president of Bluffton College in 1965, the author insists that modesty and integrity are basic to higher education. "The educated person is not a snob," Kreider maintains. "He is reluctant to parade his learning. A good college is to be known not by the multiplicity of its courses but as Robert Hutchins says, 'by what it refuses to teach.' In many church colleges we . . . seek to be all things to all men—the temptation to play God" (pp. 80-81). In another essay he praises the Christian liberal arts college because it "holds an academic bias that all knowledge is interconnected, interdisciplinary, an intrinsic web of linkages and bondings: prairie ecology and the vision of the peaceable kingdom . . . the grace of the fast break in basketball and the artistry of "Swan Lake" . . . the final scenes of *Color Purple* and resurrection themes . . ." (pp. 232-233).

Not surprisingly, some entries show his apprehension of political power and its effects on people. In a moving letter written for the General Conference Mennonite Church to Richard Nixon prior to the president's resignation, Kreider said, "As the walls of your world close in on you, we beg of you to stand before God and then your people and to say with simplicity and truth, 'Here I am. . . . Forgive me'" (p.124). In a review of David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest*, Kreider condemns the war in Vietnam as a study in the arrogance of power, and points out that "one began to hear less about 'protecting the free world' and more words like these: 'No fourth-rate Asian power is going to push Americans around'" (p.122).

But more personal touches abound. In an essay in 1985, Kreider writes of children's views of nature and includes interviews with some twenty adults who recalled "their earliest years and their childhood discoveries of the ways of nature, breakthroughs of awareness, warm feelings of delight, awe in the presence of the mystery of God's creation. Here is the childlike spirit: wonder, joy, curiosity, gratitude, reverence, and a buoyant eagerness to tell others. Of such qualities is the kingdom of heaven" (p.218). A coronary bypass in 1989 taught him how to savor the moment with a caring family, books, and nature. A letter to a grandson in 1997 on his commencement from high school recalls the pleasant times the two have spent together, and expresses pride in his grandson's achievements and pleasure in his faith journey. As if to give some little balance to the letter, he adds, "And with all this, we are amused and indulgent of your imperfections: your inability to come to terms with the joys of salad and particularly fresh tomatoes" (p.299).

"Of all the gifts of learning, the queen of gifts is curiosity" (p.270). These words, contained in the author's commencement address at Bethel College in 1992, are a reflection of the speaker's own attitude toward learning and life. They help to explain why we have a life-time of wisdom distilled in this rich volume.

LOWELL DETWEILER. *The Hammer Rings Hope: Photos and Stories from Fifty Years of Mennonite Disaster Service.* Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2000. Pp. 184. $24.99.

Reviewed by Howard L. Landis[*]

As the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) reached its first half century of progress, it had to face a troubling question: how

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will this remarkable legacy of lay service be passed on to posterity? To be sure, some of the lore regarding the origins of MDS was encapsulated in *Day of Disaster* written by Mennonite historian Katie Funk Wiebe in 1975. As the millennium approached, it was felt that a more comprehensive history needed to be written–one detailing the conception and development of MDS as a major outreach ministry of constituent bodies of the Mennonite Central Committee. Thus, the MDS governing board asked Lowell Detweiler to write a more definitive history. This was a fortuitous choice. As director of MDS from 1986 to 1998, Detweiler was by virtue of experience and expertise well qualified to take on this assignment.

The Hammer Rings Hope will readily attract the reader's attention. It is packaged in a colored, glossy cover. The book's subtitle—*Photos and Stories from Fifty Years of MDS*—could be misleading. One might suppose, because of the quality and quantity of photographs (270), that one is looking at a classy photo album. However, Detweiler's narrative is a detailed treatise of the MDS saga from conception to the present–replete with maps, charts, and a rich trove of anecdotes, that is, human interest stories. Photographer Carl Hiebert is to be commended not only for the quality of the photos, but for the manner in which the photography beautifully fleshes out the MDS story.

Chapter One foreshadows the book's contents as the author focuses on the anatomy of disaster in terms of a community's response to a disaster that hit Hesston, Kansas, in 1950. This chapter deals with the precursors and origins of MDS. MDS had a very inauspicious beginning. The seed of the organization was sown early. As Katie Funk Wiebe has noted, the traditional Amish barn raisings were the granddaddy of MDS. As early as 1942, Civilian Public Service (CPS) personnel had been involved in disaster clean-up work. Detweiler's use of the mustard seed analogy is an apt description of this burgeoning organization. In *Day of Disaster*, Katie Funk Wiebe captures this dynamic growth in five words–"From Picnic to International Organization." What began as a little ripple at a Hesston Sunday

school picnic in 1950 was, ultimately, to reverberate throughout the world. At this picnic, Paul Shenk led a discussion on "What can we as CO's do to help our country and people in need now and in war?" (pp. 20,22). In relatively quick succession, a series of events led to the formation of an agency called Mennonite Service Organization. Key players in the process leading to an organizational structure were Peter Dyck, former MCC worker in Europe, and Peter Schrag, who represented the General Conference Mennonites. The author notes: "On December 29-30, 1955, the MCC Board at its annual meeting adopted the recommendation of the Disaster Coordinating Committee. Mennonite Disaster Service as a binational inter-Mennonite organization was officially born" (p. 25).

In Chapter Three, Julia Kasdorf, John A. Lapp, and other luminaries, explain the rationale for MDS and how it epitomizes the finest of the spirit and expression of the Anabaptist faith–love, mutual aid, and community (*kononia*). The author's major focus in Chapter Four is a global vision for disaster service, i.e., MDS goes international. For example, between 1956 and 1995, MDS was involved in Central and South America, Europe (Yugoslavia and Turkey), and Japan. MDS is now recognized by Congress as a key voluntary agency alongside the Red Cross and the Salvation Army.

Yet, remarkably for much of its life, MDS had a paid staff of one. Part of the real genius of this remarkable growth was the absence of bureaucratic trappings that usually impede the capacity of any large organization to implement its stated goals and objectives. MDS made a conscious decision to decentralize authority by giving the "grass roots"–local and provincial personnel–the autonomy necessary to make decisions. A strength of the book is the wealth of statistical and anecdotal material provided in the endnotes and appendix.

In light of recent apocalyptic events, the author's focus on eschatological motifs is timely. This particular focus is the theme of Chapter 14. Beryl Forrester, following service in St. Croix notes:

> The MDS project unit functioned in a way that made me think of what the church ought to be like. It wasn't utopia, just Christian brotherhood and sisterhood at its best. I'm convinced that if our congregations could somehow duplicate what happens in MDS units, the unchurched in our communities would be beating a path to the doors of our churches. There is something irresistible about Christians when they're totally dedicated to ministering in the name of Christ (p. 172).

An additional emphasis in the book is the decisive role that young people have played in MDS. For scores of young people, MDS service was an experience that expanded their vision. It was a period of personal growth as they stretched their psychological and spiritual muscles. The book also addresses the MDS service opportunities available to the "chronologically challenged." Virgil Kauffman suggests: "I still think it's the best way to retire. It's the most satisfying way. How else can you retire and meet so many people and feel like you're serving the Lord? And you go home tired and feel good about it" (p. 173).

This book addresses fundamental questions facing the contemporary church such as "how then should we live?" In this apocalyptic age, it has a sense of *kairos*.

News and Notes

Annual Meeting for 2002

The Brethren in Christ Historical Society will convene its annual meeting on Friday, June 29, at Messiah College, immediately prior to General Conference. At this meeting a book of biographies of Brethren in Christ women, past and present, will be released, along with other program features. This is a dinner meeting in the college dining room for which reservations will be needed. Further information as well as reservation forms will be available in the future.

Historical Society Reports

The following reports were intended for release at the annual meeting of the Brethren in Christ Historical Society on September 29. Given the nature of the occasion, such reports are always brief; they do not attempt to cover the range of the Society's work.

Executive Director and Editor's Report

In most ways, the Historical Society, under the direction of its Executive Committee, is continuing with the program developed over the twenty-three years of its existence. In outline, this program includes the following activities:

> Publication of three issues each year of the journal, *Brethren in Christ History and Life*

An annual Heritage Service at the Ringgold Meeting House on the first Sunday afternoon in June

Publication of books, most recently *Reflections on a Heritage* (a collection of readings) and *Canadian Portraits: Brethren in Christ Biographical Sketches*

Representation (two members) on the Advisory Board of the Sider Institute for Anabaptist, Pietist and Wesleyan Studies

Representation (one member) on EMALA (Eastern Mennonite Association of Librarians and Archivists)

Since our last annual meeting, Mary Ann Engle has followed Lela Hostetler in the office of Secretary-Treasurer. Dori Steckbeck joined as an additional member at the invitation of the Executive Committee which desired to expand its membership.

The Executive Committee has given approval to the publication of a new feature—a newsletter—to be distributed two or three times a year apart from the journal. The newsletter will carry such features as news items from the Historical Society, information on and news from the archives (provided by Dori Steckbeck), and announcements and reports of historical interests from congregations (e.g., congregational anniversaries, acquisitions of congregational archives, etc.). The newsletter will be distributed without charge to all Historical Society members, to each Brethren in Christ congregation in Canada and the United States, and to other groups or agencies interested in receiving the newsletter. We anticipate obtaining additional financial support for the newsletter so that funds from the regular operational budget will not be used to publish the newsletter.

We continue to be pleased by both the size of the Historical Society's membership and the support that we receive from members—financial and moral. Your officers join me in expressing appreciation for this support.

E. Morris Sider

Secretary-treasurer's Report, Operational Budget

BALANCE FORWARD – July 1, 2000		$11,793.23
RECEIPTS		
Memberships	4,700.00	
Sales	226.45	
Gifts	7,237.00	
Gift - Center for BIC Studies	1,675.05	
Postage/Journals to Pastors	750.00	
Interest	(929.28)	
Total Receipts		13,659.22
Balance plus Receipts		25,452.45
EXPENSES		
Printing	11,191.64	
Postage/Mailing	2,074.75	
Office and Secretarial	2,673.52	
M. Sider Festschrift	2,000.00	
Ringgold Heritage Service	125.00	
Computer/printer	2,159.98	
Miscellaneous	129.00	
Total Expenses		20,353.89
BALANCE – June 30, 2001		$5,098.56

Mary Ann Engle
Secretary-Treasurer

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IN THIS ISSUE

Front Cover: Ray M. Zercher's painting of the house on the Lancaster, Pennsylvania farm where he spent his childhood and youth.