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From the Editor

This usual mix of articles begins with an account of a courtship dating back to the late 1800s. In the article are reflected issues of the time for the Brethren in Christ: conversion, separation from the world, marrying non-Brethren in Christ, and more. The use of letters as the major resource gives the article a note of intimacy appropriate to courtship, despite the seriousness of content.

This article is a reminder of the value of letters in capturing the past. Beth Mark's work with letters written by her great-grandfather should be an encouragement to readers to search for old family letters and from them write informative articles.

S. Lane Hostetter was a valued president of the Brethren in Christ Historical Society. As president he exemplified those traits that all our Historical Society presidents have shown, including appreciation for our heritage, and good organizational and leadership skills. Not least, he brought to this position the well-earned respect of the Society's membership and a wider audience. Lane has been an example for all of us of how to build positive relationships. The author of this short biography, Norman Hostetter, gives us a good view of Lane's qualities and his contributions to the Historical Society, to the denomination, and to other groups.

Charles Jones is a leading authority on the Holiness movement, as evidenced in his publications, including indexes on the movement. In his article in this issue, he gives us a fresh look at the relationship between the Brethren in Christ, especially those in Kansas, and the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association. More than any group or individual outside the denomination, the Association influenced the Brethren in Christ to adopt the Holiness doctrine. Its continuing influence on the Brethren in Christ was strong, in

large measure because of the significant number of the denomination's young people who attended its school at Tabor, Iowa.

This issue continues the series on Brethren in Christ people who are poets and artists. Nathan Rosentrater, a junior and English major at Messiah College, was a member of the class in Brethren in Christ Life and Thought that I taught at the college during January of this year. During that time I discovered that Nathan wrote poetry. He agreed to submit a few of his poems for publication in this issue, and to write a short article on how his writing relates to his being a Christian, an exercise we ask all poets and artists in this series to do. As editor, I welcome samples of poetry and art for consideration in future issues of the journal.

Another series of articles introduced several issues ago is continued in this issue in Harold Sider's reflections on his life journey. A companion piece to this article is his brother Ronald Sider's article on piety and prayer. Both articles refer to their early family life and the role their parents (my uncle and aunt) played in their lives. Together their articles illustrate the element of piety that has been strong in the life of the Brethren in Christ.

In this issue, we return to a section entitled Essay Reviews. Entries in this section are longer than the typical book review; they sometimes review several books on the same or similar topic; and they allow the reviewer to do more than simply review the contents of a book. D. Ray Heisey, a recognized authority on communications and preaching, accomplishes these ends in his review of James Longacre's book of sermons. I join with Ray in recommending the purchase of this book by ministers, congregational libraries, and lay people alike.

E. Morris Sider

“From your Loving Isaac”: A Nineteenth-Century Courtship

*By Beth Hostetler Mark **

“Our courtship only lacks one thing to make it a good novel. I will let you guess what that is. I think ours would be alright as far as it has gone but it would not be complete.” Isaac Swalm

For sixty years a packet of late nineteenth-century love letters were stored away in the attic of the Isaac Swalm farm near Duntroon, Ontario. The letters and a photograph, discovered by Isaac’s son, Ernest John (E.J.) Swalm, were written by Isaac to his first love, Minnie Kelly.¹

These very personal letters of love and faith provide an intimate look at a young man, newly converted to the Brethren in Christ, who is trying to explain his conversion and “plain” lifestyle to his beloved (but Presbyterian) Minnie Kelly. The correspondence is a blend of typical love letters, including declarations of hope for marriage, and an explanation/defense of Brethren in Christ doctrines and practices in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The grammar and spelling in the quotations used throughout have not been changed.

Isaac Swalm’s Background

In the 1830s, Conrad Schwalm and his common-law wife, Mary Ruhl (Isaac’s grandparents), emigrated from Kassel,

* Beth Hostetler Mark is a great-granddaughter of Isaac Swalm and a librarian at Messiah College.

Germany, to Simcoe County, Ontario. The story of the young family's harsh first winter, as well as Mary Ruhl's subsequent near-miraculous conversion from nominal Lutheranism to Brethren in Christ (then known as "Tunkers" in Ontario) has been well documented elsewhere.² Following Mary's dramatic conversion, a Brethren in Christ congregation, Sixth Line, was established near the current village of Duntroon, Ontario.³

John Swalm, Isaac's father, unlike his parents (Conrad and Mary Ruhl Swalm), was a nonbeliever. It is not known whether his wife, Catherine Baker Swalm (also from Brethren in Christ background) was a believer.⁴ Isaac was just two years old when John, age twenty-nine, died of tuberculosis. Catherine Swalm subsequently married James McClean. However, in 1872, just seven years after her first husband's death, Catherine died, orphaning nine-year-old Isaac and his seven-year-old sister, Sarah Catherine.⁵ For reasons unknown, rather than being cared for by James McLean or the Swalm or Baker relatives, Isaac was taken in by the family of John and Margaret Kelly (Presbyterians), who lived on a nearby farm. (It is thought that Isaac's sister, Sarah Catherine, went to live with a family in the Stevensville, Ontario, area, 160 miles from Duntroon.)⁶ At the time Isaac came to live with them, the Kellys had an eight-year-old son and three young daughters.

Isaac most likely remained with the Kelly family until his upper teenage years when he moved out to become a live-in farm hand for one of his uncles.⁷ It is possible that some of the rental of John Swalm's farm, bequeathed to young Isaac, helped supplement the Kellys' income.⁸ Nonetheless, Isaac later reflected about his time with the Kellys, "I can almost say [Margaret Kelly] is my mother for she has always been so kind to me."⁹ It is not known whether Isaac attended the Kellys' church or the Sixth Line Brethren in Christ church. However, in his letters, there are hints that prior to his conversion, at least as an adult, he attended the Presbyterian church.¹⁰ In any case, as a young adult, Isaac was considered by the Brethren in Christ to be quite "worldly" in his dress and behavior and bore no resemblance to his plainly-clad relatives.¹¹

Minnie Kelly

When Isaac left the Kelly household, one of their now seven daughters, Minnie, was likely about ten years old. Several years later, when she was eighteen or nineteen, Isaac, now in his upper twenties, began to court Minnie. However, sometime in 1889 or 1890, Minnie broke off her relationship with Isaac and moved to Detroit, Michigan, with her older sister, Elizabeth ("Libbie"). In Detroit, it seems that Minnie and Libbie worked as household maids, although the 1891 Canadian census lists Minnie's occupation as "dressmaker."

On January 25, 1891, Minnie, now twenty, wrote a warm letter to Isaac, rekindling their prior relationship. For the next eight months, Isaac and Minnie wrote intimate letters to each other. Only Isaac's fifteen lengthy letters remain.

Isaac immediately replied to Minnie's first letter, noting, "It seems no task for me to write you even though we are not so familiar as we were a year ago to-day." In his third letter (in April), Isaac is effusive regarding Minnie's most recent letter: "Oh! Minnie, I could not tell you what joy filled my soul at that moment. . . . It seemed to me the most beautiful letter I ever received." In May, Isaac writes, "It seems to me that there was some higher power . . . that caused you to write to me. I believe it was the will of God and if God be for us who can be against."

Just one thing hampered the young couple's renewed courtship—Isaac's very recent heart-felt conversion (from Presbyterianism) to the Brethren in Christ Church and his adoption of its plain (and rigid) lifestyle. Towards the end of his first letter, Isaac inserts the following in a paragraph otherwise comprised of news and weather: "There is going to be meetings all this week in the Tunkard [Brethren in Christ] church. The two ministers [Fred Elliott and Samuel Baker] that were there last year are coming tomorrow."

On March 17, 1891, upon receipt of Minnie's second letter, Isaac comes straight to the point regarding his recent conversion experience: "I was glad to get [your letter] for this reason: I wanted to tell you my feelings since I begun to serve

the Lord, for I felt I should tell you. . . .” Noting his preference for speaking to Minnie in person, Isaac describes his acceptance of the plain lifestyle: “I thought it would be such a hard thing for me to come down to such a plain way but Glory to God when I became willing it was no cross for me.” Continuing, Isaac describes the revival meetings mentioned in his February letter: “There has been a good Revival carried on in the sixth line church [Brethren in Christ]. There was about twenty found peace to their troubled souls.” About his own experience, Isaac writes, “I will never forget the time He spoke peace to my soul. Oh! If I could only tell you the happiness and Love I had.”¹² Five pages into the letter, Isaac mentions Minnie’s place in relation to Jesus: “You know I thought a lot of you as a friend, but I have found one that is nearer and dearer to me than any earthly friend could be and that is Jesus.”

Concluding the second letter, Isaac raises the specter of a possible impediment to his relationship with Minnie: his conversion and change of lifestyle. “I want you to answer this and if you do not wish me to write any more let me know in your next for my part I am willing to write as long as it is appreciated.” Two weeks later, Minnie’s warm reply allows the courtship by correspondence to continue.

The remaining letters (allowing for inferences from Minnie’s missing letters) have the overarching theme of tension between the couple’s romantic love and Isaac’s need for Minnie to join the Brethren in Christ Church and to become “plain.” A somewhat related thread is Isaac’s ongoing fear that Minnie will break off their relationship when she sees him in person with his plain clothes, long hair, and beard. A further theme: Isaac’s observations about Brethren in Christ church life and beliefs and his thoughts about other denominations.

Isaac's Past and Present Love for Minnie

Isaac Swalm loved Minnie Kelly. His letters are affectionate and include phrases such as: "Good night dear!" In July, Isaac writes, "You spoke of kissing in your last letter. I hope the time will come ere long when we can kiss each other again as we did once." Minnie also expresses a desire to see Isaac in person: "You [Minnie] said you wished you could talk to me. . . . You said you hoped [we would meet again] soon."

Although Isaac has fond memories of their prior courtship, he also has regrets. In his second letter, he writes, "I shed many a tear over the way I used you but I know I am forgiven by you and by God too. Still it grieves me to think that I had been living in sin and leading others along in it too." In a later letter, most likely responding to an apology by Minnie, Isaac says, "You did not keep me from serving the Lord but if we had both obeyed our convictions the time we was at the Tea-meeting in the Presbyterian Church in Stayner we might have been happier to-day but 'God works in a mysterious way his wonders to perform'."

By April, Isaac has moved beyond past regrets and begins to broach the topic of marriage, telling Minnie, "I know I could live happier with you than anyone else." Continuing, he speaks of his dreams for the future: "I often think if we were married how we would read and talk together." In late April, he writes: "I feel to-night as though we should be married." In June, Isaac adds, "I love your soul as well as your heart and if it is God's will that we should be married I am sure I would try and be as good to you as I could."

The Way of the Church and Marriage

There are many references in the letters to Isaac's love for Minnie, but there are even more expressions of his concern about Minnie's church membership (Presbyterian) and her spiritual condition. In mid-April, Isaac addresses this issue in



Isaac Swalm before becoming Brethren in Christ (photograph courtesy of Jean Swalm). Like most Brethren in Christ at that time, Swalm preferred not to be photographed, thus no satisfactory pictures of him after his conversion exist.



Minnie (foreground) and Libby Kelly (courtesy of Jean Swalm)

response to Minnie's most recent letter: "So you think you could do anything to make me happy now. Well Minnie there is no one I love the same as you, and there is no one I can trust as I can you; but you belong to one Church and I belong to another and I know we could not get along very well on that point." In June, Isaac further specifies, "According to my belief I cannot marry you if you belonged to another Church. . . ." With his usual conflicting emotions, however, he ends the sentence with, ". . . but don't think I do not love you."

Regarding her personal salvation, Isaac tells Minnie, "You have not been as wicked as some." Nonetheless, even though Minnie presumably considers herself to be a Christian, he firmly believes that she must experience salvation as he has: ". . . you know we must all work out our souls salvation (by the grace of God) for ourselves. I would like to know the reason you do not." In reference to their future marriage, Isaac says, ". . . Minnie if we were married and you were truly converted I really believe we could live happy."

At times, Isaac's statements regarding Minnie's salvation contradict themselves. He makes it clear that she must have a conversion experience but in ten of his fifteen letters, Isaac asks Minnie to pray for him. For example, regarding his ability to teach a women's Sunday school class, he asks, "Pray for me Minnie that I may be more strengthened from day to day, and that I may explain the lesson in such a way that it would be acceptable to God." On another occasion, Isaac implores, "Now I hope you do not forget me when you are on your knees for I need your prayers that I might be kept faithful to my end." And lastly, a simple, "Remember me at the throne of Grace."

Isaac will not compromise in his belief that if they are to marry, Minnie must join the Brethren in Christ Church. He makes an interesting connection between church membership and forgiveness of sins: "I believe if you come down humble and willing to join this Church God will pardon you [y]our sins." He notes that he will marry her "only on the conditions stated before namely. That you would join my church." At another point, Isaac states, ". . . the only way to make the best

of it is for you to get converted and join with me, for . . . my conscience would not allow me [to] join any other [church]."

Becoming Plain

For Isaac, dressing plainly, as noted above, went hand in hand with becoming Brethren in Christ (and, with salvation, for that matter). About his own changed appearance, he writes, "I do not wear a tie or collar. I do not shave and my hair is getting long. . . . I know you will think I am very strange but I am far happier this way than I ever was in fine clothes."¹³ He further offers, "If there is anything you would like to know about my plain clothes or anything like that do not be afraid to ask me." Making certain that Minnie understands just how different he looks, Isaac more than once describes meeting acquaintances who did not recognize him due to his dramatic change in appearance. In one letter, Isaac writes, "Mary Buie did not know me on Sunday. Monday I was out to Stayner and I saw Neal McEachern and he did not know me going down [the road] and coming back he spoke to [me] and said there was a big change in me." He continues, "Then Charlie drove up and Neal says 'Do you know this Farmer?' (pointing to me) Charlie did not at first. . . ."

Isaac is clear that Minnie must adopt the required plain lifestyle if they are to be married.¹⁴ He understands the difficulty of this decision. In June, he writes, "Now dear Minnie consider it over carefully and prayerfully and see if you could come down so low as to wear the cap and bonnet. Would you be willing to forsake all your friends and stick to me if they were against you joining my church which I really think they will." For Isaac, there is no room for compromise: "If you think you could not come so plain why I will not be offended if you do not marry me."

Isaac is not ashamed of his appearance, as noted above, but he expresses concern that when Minnie sees him in person, she might change her mind about marrying him. In July, he writes, "Perhaps when you see me you might change your

prayerfully and see if you
could come down so low
as to wear the cap and bonnet.
Would you be willing to
forsake all your friends and
stick to me if they were agins
you joining my church which
I really think they will.
Now Mimmie please answer
this fully and may God direct
you to do what is right.
I was thinking if you really
~~think~~ meant to join the
same church as me how
would it be if we were to
be married this Fall and
we work out next Summer.
I could get that house
where Uncle Ben is living

A page from the letter concerning adopting plain clothes
(courtesy of Lela Swalm Hostetler)

mind [about marriage]." (This sentiment is echoed in several of Isaac's letters.) While denying that it is a concern, Isaac worries about Minnie's reaction to his appearance. Frequently, Isaac writes sentiments such as: "What did [Libbie, Minnie's sister] say about me. Did she say anything about my Hair or clothes. Don't be afraid of hurting my feelings for I do not care what people say."

Isaac writes to Minnie of his conversations with her mother and her sister Jen regarding Minnie's possible willingness to dress plainly. As if to reassure himself that the change will actually happen, in both cases, Isaac associates the potential change with Minnie's love for him. Following his conversation with Minnie's sister, Jen, he reports, "I told her if you would accept me in my plain clothes and all other things you must have a deep love for me and if that was the case I think we would live happy." In his conversation on the same topic with Margaret Kelly, Minnie's mother, Isaac uses the identical phrase: "you [Minnie] must have a deep love for me. . . ."

Gender Roles

Responding to Minnie's specific questions, Isaac expresses his views regarding the role of women (and men) in the marriage relationship, reflecting both Brethren in Christ views as well as cultural norms of the times. In one letter, he writes, "You said would I scold you? Well you must not cause me to make any promises but I don't think you will mind any scolding." In another letter, Isaac makes it clear that he expects to be the head of the household, or "the boss." "I will try and make you a[s] happy as I can of course you know that I expect to be boss both inside and out. . . ." Softening this statement somewhat, he continues: "I don't think there will be any trouble about that for you will try and do what is right and so will I if God gives us grace." Regarding the household itself, Isaac notes, "I would want the house plain and everything common."

I want to tell you this that
I will not be able to keep
you like a city lady but
if you are willing to come
down in this humble way
and accept me I will
try and make you a happy as
I can of course you know
that I expect to be boss
both inside and out but I
don't think there will be
any trouble about that for you
will try and do what is right
and so will I if God gives us
grace. I would say let us
be true followers of the meek
and lowly Saviour and I

A page from the letter concerning marital relationships
(courtesy of Lela Swalm Hostetler)

Brethren in Christ Practices and Beliefs

Side by side with Isaac's attempts to persuade Minnie of her need for salvation are rich, newsy descriptions of late nineteenth-century Brethren in Christ beliefs and practices. For the historian, these letters provide details not easily available. Because his conversion was so new, Isaac describes in detail the revival meeting, his conversion, his plain lifestyle, his application for church membership, and his baptism. Isaac also writes of church life, including Sunday school, and of his (and the church's) interaction with other denominations.

Conversion, Baptism, and Church Membership

Mention has already been made of Isaac's conversion during a winter revival meeting led by Fred Elliott. Isaac credits this conversion for his newfound love for everyone: "There was some I thought I could never love but when I had this love shed abroad in my heart I had a love for all mankind." In April Isaac tells Minnie that opportunity was given during the Good Friday service for "any one wishing to join [the] Church. . . ." Noting that thirteen individuals made application to join, Isaac further explains the process: "You see when they make application they have to tell how the Lord pardoned them and if they think fit they will receive you if you are willing to obey the commandments. I was one that made application[. O]f course we are not a member of the church until we are baptized which will be administered in June if the Lord is willing and we are spared." In a subsequent letter, Isaac corrects an apparent misunderstanding on Minnie's part and cites the church's beliefs. "I only made application to join the Church and for Baptism. In the Apostles time they had to be baptized first and then join the Church and that is the way the Brethren do. Baptism is the first commandment to observe after we are born again." Isaac also mentions that he has not yet taken "the Sacrament," understood to mean Holy Communion.

In a May prayer meeting, Isaac publicly gave his conversion story. Several non-Brethren in Christ neighbors attended, including three of Minnie's sisters: Jennie, Maggie, and Nellie Kelly. With an eye towards evangelism, Isaac tells Minnie, "Thanks be to God that I had the privilege of speaking of God's goodness to me in their presence. I spoke and made a short prayer."

Isaac writes in anticipation of his baptism and of Minnie's possible presence. "The Love Feast will be here on June 6th and if it is the Lord's will I will be baptised there. I would like it if you would be here then if you could. I wish you were to be baptised too." Once again, Isaac asks Minnie to pray, this time for a blessing on the love feast: "Minnie, remember us in your prayers that we might have a season of refreshing from the Lord. That is why they call it a Love Feast." Regarding the love feast itself, Isaac explains, "you would likely hear a sermon on Baptism." He further notes that as part of the love feast, the congregation will meet every night of the week. Fred Elliott, the winter evangelist, returned to preside over the love feast events. Isaac's son, E. J. Swalm, later wrote: "One of the largest classes to ever join the Brethren in Christ Church in [the Nottawa] district at one time" joined during this love feast. He noted: "The baptism service featured two officials administering at one time." Isaac records that fourteen individuals, including himself, were baptized.

On the last evening of love feast, following a fellowship meal, participation in the act of feet washing preceded the Lord's Supper. During a visit with Minnie's sister Jen, Isaac defended the practice of feet washing after Jen insisted that it was not a biblical command. Isaac reports to Minnie: "I said Oh! Jennie don't say that and I just opened the book and read part of the 13 chapter of St. John's Gospel to the end of the 17th verse and I said to her isn't that as plain as words can make it."

Sunday School

In 1890, the year prior to Isaac's conversion, the Sixth Line congregation, led by Charles Baker, began a Sunday school. E. Morris Sider notes that Baker believed that the large number of converts following the 1890 revival "needed instruction in the faith, which he and his colleagues considered could be done by means of a Sunday school."¹⁵ Isaac's letters provide interesting insights into the new Sunday school which he says had an average attendance of sixty. Isaac observes, "Some people think we did very wrong in opening up a new Sunday school but I don't think so. May God help us that we may do all things to His honor and glory. In the cities or towns every Church have their own Sunday schools and why not in the country." This defense refers to the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Sunday school, which met at the same hour and which had previously been attended by Sixth Line's members.¹⁶

As previously noted, Isaac became a Sunday school teacher very soon after his conversion. Sunday school teachers were apparently elected by Sunday school members. About the election, Isaac writes, "I was the last one that was moved and I had the first vote and the whole school rose for me." Isaac served in two capacities: "I have a class of small boys besides and when the Ladies Bible Class teacher is absent I have to teach it. . . ." Interestingly, Isaac began teaching adult women, many of whom would have been long-time church members, before he joined the church himself. In May, he tells Minnie: "Last Sunday I taught the ladies Bible class for the first time. I felt nervous and my inability to teach such a big class."

Other Denominations

Although Isaac frequently protests that he does not condemn other churches, in fact, he does—at least main-line (particularly Presbyterian) denominations. In one letter he writes, "Minnie do not take it hard of me but Churches now

days they do not keep the commandments hence they have no promise. How can we be a follower of Christ if we do not do what he told us to do. I know Minnie you . . . will think I am very prejudiced but if I did not feel it my duty to tell you, I would not." In a subsequent letter, Isaac states, "I do not condemn other Churches but the Lord showed me I could not join them and be his follower." Responding to Minnie's sister Jen's statement that there were "as good Christians in other churches as in [the Brethren in Christ]," Isaac says, "I . . . could judge no person. I said if they do not obey the commandments they have no promise." Following this harsh statement, Isaac makes a rare allowance for God's grace in judging those who are not Brethren in Christ. He says, ". . . God can be merciful to whom he will."

Regarding the soundness of Brethren in Christ doctrine compared to that of other churches, Isaac states that he joined the Brethren in Christ "because I thought it was the nearest to the Scriptures. . . ." In this context, he challenges Minnie: "If you think any other church is nearer why join it and I will be willing to give you up but let me add this Search the Scriptures prayer-fully and God will show you what is required of you." Isaac also compares the Brethren in Christ to the early church martyrs. "The Martyrs claimed that there was only one Church . . . when I read their Faith it corresponds with the Brethren in Christ. . . ." He continues, noting that it was against the rules of the martyrs to marry outside their church.

Somewhat contradicting his comments regarding other denominations are Isaac's more collegial comments regarding the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church (MBIC), which had very similar beliefs to the Brethren in Christ.¹⁷ Isaac, and presumably other Brethren in Christ members, occasionally attended MBIC services. However, Isaac also has some criticism for this denomination as well, specifically about the age of baptism: "I was at the [MBIC] Camp-meetings two nights and that was enough for me. They baptized 33 but they were all children but about 9 or 10." One can infer from this statement that for the Brethren in Christ at that time, the

approved age for baptism and church membership, was considerably higher.

Isaac expressed some further resentment towards the Mennonite Brethren in Christ congregation. It seems that the Sixth Line Brethren in Christ congregation and the local MBIC congregation at one point alternated hosting a Sunday morning service. Isaac records, "The Mennonites have Church too this morning. They know it was our turn to have it but they did not ask us to lift our appointment so there will be services in both Churches." Softening his tone, he adds, "But God can be present everywhere at the same time." E. Morris Sider notes that there was a rivalry between the two congregations: "Exacerbating the rivalry were the livelier services in the Grange hall, as well as the attraction of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Sunday school at a time when the Tunkers [Brethren in Christ] had none." Due to these factors, some Tunker families joined the Mennonite Brethren in Christ congregation.¹⁸

Isaac is aware of the large amount of church/faith-related content in his letters. He acknowledges to Minnie: "Perhaps my letters are mono[to]nous to you; all about religion. I can't help talking of God's goodness to me." In his final letter, Isaac again speculates, "Maybe you will be tired of so much religion."

The Novel's Conclusion

In August, Isaac reflects: "Our courtship only lacks one thing to make it a good novel. I will let you guess what that is. I think ours would be alright as far as it has gone but it would not be complete. Yes Minnie I hope our days may be happier in the future, and that they might be happy in the Lord is my prayer, so that we might have an entrance into that Heavenly Jerusalem where all tears shall be wiped away."

During the summer months, Isaac continues to hope for a happy conclusion to his courtship of Minnie. Yet, his level of hope fluctuates, partially based on Minnie's willingness to

return home. At the end of May he begins pressing Minnie regarding marriage: "I would like to know if you were satisfied with what I said about our getting married. I would like to know if you intend to get married this Fall or would you rather wait a couple of years please give me your full desires." In early June, he continues, "I was thinking if you really meant to join the same church as me how would it be if we were to be married this Fall. . . ." Isaac notes that he would like Fred Elliott to perform the wedding ceremony (should they get married).

At the end of June Minnie tells Isaac that she prefers to wait a year to marry. In a rare expression of disappointment and loneliness, Isaac responds, ". . . if you think so, I suppose I will be satisfied, but I thought I would have a home and some one to talk to as well, one that would share my troubles." Given the postponement, Isaac says, "I think it is necessary that we should see one another this Fall and talk the matter over." In July, Isaac met with Minnie's mother to ask if she had any objections to the marriage (she did not). In the same letter, anticipating Minnie's return visit, Isaac suggests, "Do not get any very stylish clothes for I would rather if you would be as plain as you can."

In Isaac's final letter, written on August 30, he is both concerned and hopeful. On the one hand, he tells Minnie, "I think it very necessary to see each other for there are many things I would like to talk about, before I would like to bind ourselves again." For the first time, Isaac implies that his church may not approve of their courtship. "You know I am going a little against the doctrine of our church or rules of our church. I should not marry one outside unless consented by the Church." Noting again their need to talk in person, he adds, ". . . if we consider it best not to marry, why there'll be no harm done." On the other hand, Isaac assures Minnie of his continued love for her: "Don't think that I have grown cold towards you for it is not the case. I love your *soul* as well as your heart and I would not like to deceive you in any way for we have all to appear before the judgment seat of Christ there to give an account of the deeds done here." He asks one last

time, "Have you came across anyone you love as much as me and that you feel you could live as happy with and serve God faithfully. . . [?]"

Most likely, Minnie returned to Ontario in September. One can only speculate as to what transpired when she and Isaac met. It seems probable that despite her love for Isaac and her desire and promise to marry him, just as Isaac feared, Minnie could not take the step of becoming plain and Brethren in Christ. The letters of Isaac Swalm to Minnie Kelly illustrate the personal ramifications of the Brethren in Christ Church's belief in separation from the world. Given that Isaac's salvation was integrally woven in with his adherence to the Brethren in Christ, he had but one choice, voiced frequently in his letters: "According to my belief I cannot marry you if you belonged to another Church."

Epilogue

As the reader knows, Isaac chose to keep the letters that Minnie returned to him. He also kept her photograph. Although the Swalms have remained friends with the Kelly family to the present, the last living Kelly in the area does not know what happened to Minnie following her break up with Isaac.¹⁹ In 1896, five years after these letters were written, at the age of thirty-three, Isaac married Alice Sammons, with whom he had two children, Ernest John and Sarah Jane Pearl. Ironically, prior to marriage, Alice was Mennonite Brethren in Christ. Widowed in 1908, Isaac married Alice's sister, Sarah Sammons, in 1909. Sarah lived less than a year. In 1912, Isaac married Barbara Horner, who was originally Brethren in Christ; she also preceded him in death.

Isaac Swalm died of cancer at the age of sixty-six. The letters Isaac wrote to Minnie tell the beginning of Isaac's story with the Brethren in Christ. His obituary provides the end of that story: "Bish. [Isaac] Swalm had a marvelous conversion thirty-seven years ago. At which time he united with the Brethren in Christ Church in Nottawa District, where he

served God, and the church of his choice in a true and loyal manner. Always manifesting an exceptional zeal for the advancement of the Lord's cause. He was conservative in church polity, but never dogmatic or unreasonable. He served the Church in the ministerial capacity for nearly seventeen years, and as Bishop of the district nearly five years. His removal by the hand of death is a heavy loss to the Church at large, to the district which he served so energetically, to the home, and community, where he had the confidence of practically every one, and where he wielded an influence for good such as perhaps few men exert."

Isaac and Alice Swalm's son, E.J. Swalm, became a well-known evangelist and bishop of the Canadian Conference of the Brethren in Christ. Their daughter Pearl worked for a time at Messiah College and was an evangelistic tent meeting assistant and long-time Sunday school teacher. Isaac's grandchildren and several of his great-grandchildren have been active members of the Brethren in Christ Church.

NOTES

¹ Isaac Swalm's letters were subsequently passed on to E.J. Swalm's daughter, Lela Swalm Hostetler, who shared them with her daughter (the writer of this article), who currently has them. Copies of the typed transcript of the letters reside in the Brethren in Christ Archives in Grantham, PA, as well as in the Canadian Brethren in Christ Archives. Interested readers may request a copy of the transcript from the author at bmark@messiah.edu

² E. Morris Sider. *The Brethren in Christ in Canada: Three Hundred Years of Tradition and Change* (Hamilton, Ont.: Canadian Conference of the Brethren in Christ, 1988), pp. 16-18.

³ The congregation established exists today as the Stayner Brethren in Christ Church.

⁴ Jean Swalm, e-mail to Beth Mark, June 4, 2009.

⁵ Later in life, Sarah Catherine Swalm (Saylor then Jones) used the nickname "Kate."

⁶ Jean Swalm interview, July 2007. Jean recalls hearing these details about Isaac and his sister (after Catherine died) from her

father, E.J. Swalm. She does not know with certainty at what age Isaac went to live with the Kellys and at what age he left nor that his sister lived with a family in Ridgeway.

⁷The 1881 Canadian Census lists Isaac (age eighteen) as part of the Melchi Swalm family (Isaac's uncle). Since Melchi's children were all younger than Isaac, the author assumes that Isaac lived there to help with the farm. Melchi Swalm's farm was across the road from the Kelly family. In subsequent years Isaac worked for/boarded with at least two other uncles: Conrad Swalm and Samuel Baker.

⁸Whether Isaac technically owned John Swalm's farm as a child is not known. At the time the letters were written, Isaac was working at his Uncle Sam (Cober) Baker's farm, while renting his (formerly John Swalm's) farm to his uncle Conrad Swalm. From *The Historical Atlas of Simcoe County Ontario* (1871), reprinted (Port Elgin, Ont.: Cumming Atlas Reprints, 1975) we know that James McLean and Catherine Swalm McLean lived on what was John Swalm's farm. It seems that following Catherine's death, James McLean did not make a claim of ownership on the farm. In the 1890 edition of the *Farmer's Directory for the County of Simcoe* (included in the above atlas), Isaac Swalm's name appears on the original John Swalm farm lot. Isaac was twenty-seven at the time.

⁹All quotations by Isaac Swalm are taken from fifteen letters written to Minnie Kelly between February 3 and August 30, 1891.

¹⁰In one letter Isaac refers to "our church," in a context meaning his and Minnie's church (prior to his conversion).

¹¹Jean Swalm.

¹²Ernest John Swalm. *A History of the Brethren in Christ in the Nottawa District, 1878-1978*. (Stayner, Ont.: Stayner Brethren in Christ Church, 1978). E.J. Swalm writes of his father's conversion experience during the 1891 series of meetings at which Fred Elliot gave the invitation each evening. "My father was gloriously saved during that divine visitation of power in conviction, repentance, and conversion. I heard him describe numerous thrilling incidents occurring during those hallowed days." Isaac Swalm's conversion story is very similar to the experience of other Brethren in Christ, as described in Sider, *Brethren in Christ in Canada*, p. 69: "As testified to by many members, the process began with the sinner becoming keenly conscious of his sin and of being in a lost condition. This condition weighed heavily on the sinner's heart (creating a state of conviction), the more so as he or she considered what it would mean to yield to God. Finally, after much struggle, the sinner began to

obey, among other ways by showing repentance, making confession and restitution (repayment) for harm done to others, and changing habits and patterns of living. Having done all this, the sinner reached a crisis, which he resolved by exercising faith in Christ and receiving the forgiveness of sins. Then great joy filled the former sinner's heart for now the load of sin was lifted from him; he now was a member of the family of God. He made his new life in Christ known to the church by rising in a meeting and declaring his intention to be a child of God and to be obedient to the Word."

¹³ Sider, *Brethren in Christ in Canada*, pp. 77-78. Sider notes that in the nineteenth century, Brethren in Christ men "wore long jacket coats reaching nearly to the knees, with a split tail in the back and an erect (or military) collar." Further, men were to grow beards and part their hair in the center. When debating the issue of long hair with Minnie's sister Jen, Isaac supports his argument by quoting Philippians 4:5: "Let your moderation be known to all men."

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 78. "Women wore long dresses of dark colours—black, blue, brown without figures and gathered at the waist. Over the top part of the dress they placed a separate piece covering the shoulders: The piece came to a point at the middle of the body both in front and back and was held in place by pins." On their heads, women wore prayer veilings (or "coverings"). "Over the top of the covering women wore a bonnet when out of doors, both to protect the covering from the weather, and relatedly, to preserve the sanctity of the prayer veiling."

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁷ Harold S. Bender. "Mennonite Brethren in Christ." *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*. 1957. [retrieved May 5, 2009], available from <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/M465ME.html>. The Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church (MBIC) was formed in 1883 from joining two denominations: the Evangelical United Mennonite and a Brethren in Christ group in Ohio, known as the Swankites. The latter broke with the Brethren in Christ in 1938. The MBIC, with its "emphasis upon evangelism and aggressive work, conversion and Christian experience with a warm, rather emotional piety . . .," and nonresistance and nonconformity, shared most beliefs and practices with the Brethren in Christ. The Mennonite Brethren in Christ denomination later became the United Missionary Church and currently carries the name Missionary Church.

¹⁸ Sider, *Brethren in Christ in Canada*, p. 21.

¹⁹ The writer has been unable to locate any subsequent local newspaper announcements (marriage, death, etc.) to document Minnie Kelly's continued residence in the Duntroon, Ontario, area.

S. Lane Hostetter: Servant Leader

*By J. Norman Hostetter**

The Historical Society of the Brethren in Christ Church is now thirty-three years of age. Many people have contributed to its success, including to its publications. S. Lane Hostetter, who served as president from 1992 through 2005, is clearly among this number. Through his years of pastoral experiences and evangelism, his work with Christian publishers and bookstores, and his denominational administrative experience, Lane brought a wealth of church and business experiences to his administrative leadership of the Historical Society.

Family History

Lane also brought to the Historical Society administration a long family history of service to the Brethren in Christ Church. The Hostetter name has been a part of the Brethren in Christ Church since its founding in the late eighteenth century. Jacob Hostetter, born in 1799, was one of the church's first bishops. Lane's grandfather, Christian Newcomer Hostetter, a grandson of Jacob, was a twentieth-century minister of the church who began his ministry in the Manor, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, congregation in 1903. He served in several pastoral, administrative, and

* J. Norman Hostetter, an educator who spent much of his career as an administrator with the State University of New York, has written on the Hostetter family for this journal. He also wrote the biography of Carlton Wittlinger for the recently released book *Embracing Scholarship, Piety and Obedience*, published by the Brethren in Christ Historical Society (2009).

educational appointments, including chairman of the Foreign Mission Board and president of Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home (now Messiah College). Three of his four sons—Christian, Jr., Henry, and John—followed in their father's footsteps. Through the 1960s, they served as bishops, pastors, educators, evangelists, and administrators as recorded in many denominational records.

Lane's father, Christian, Jr. (known as C. N. Jr.), was elected to the ministry of the Manor-Pequea District in 1920. Soon thereafter, as a single man he left the family Manor Township farm and began his pastoral ministry at the Refton Brethren in Christ Church. The church first rented from the Church of the Brethren; the services were conducted on a rotating basis with the other Manor-Pequea District congregations. Within a few years, the church was attracting parishioners from the surrounding community and the ministry of young Christ (pronounced Crist) was thriving.

During his pastoral work, C. N., Jr., was also a tent evangelist. His innovative pastoral work, preaching ability, and warm personality contributed to successful meetings wherever he served. His diary entries reflect his efforts to seek first the kingdom of God.

Lane's mother, Anna Lane, was the daughter of Samuel and Mary Lane who operated the Millway Hotel near Lititz, Pennsylvania. As a teenager, Anna spent many hours waiting on tables and serving drinks from the bar. The hotel was a boarding house that provided meals to residents and customers from the community.

In her senior year at Lititz high school, Anna began teaching commercial subjects. Within a few years, she also became a waitress at the United Zion Church Home in Lititz. While working there, she accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Savior and joined the small, conservative church. Samuel and Mary Lane were not pleased with their daughter's conversion and her subsequent adoption of the church's plain clothes requirements. The disagreement led to Anna's decision to leave home. In the next few years, she lived and worked among the United Zion people.

One Sunday morning Anna gave a talk to the Annville United Zion Sunday school. S. R. Smith, founding president of Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home and earlier a member of the United Zion Church, was in the audience. Upon hearing her speak, Smith invited Anna to come to Messiah Bible School as a student and as teacher of commercial subjects. When she protested that she had no money, Smith insisted on helping her. She accepted his invitation and arrived on campus in the fall of 1916. The next year, C. N., Jr., a Messiah student who did secretarial work for his father, the denomination's Foreign Mission Board secretary, registered for one of her classes.

For the next several years, Christ and Anna became better acquainted through social activities at the Bible School and while teaching Sunday school at the Lancaster Mission. Over time, the friendship became serious and the couple was married in Anna's home in November 1922. By the time of her marriage, Anna's parents seemed reconciled to her "plain ways"; they hosted the wedding in their home, and served a sumptuous dinner. In those days, weddings were not held in Brethren in Christ churches, and Christ thought it best to be married in her home (rather than his) to please her parents.¹

After the sale of the Millway Hotel, the Lanes became part owners of a paper mill business in the Lititz area. Samuel was also a Lancaster County tobacco broker, the big money crop of the county in the first half of the twentieth century. Tobacco provided a good living, not only for the farmers who grew it, but also for those who bought and sold it.

Throughout the depression era of the 1930s, the Lanes were successful managers of money and business.² Samuel Lane, Anna's brother, was a mail carrier and a great uncle was a dentist. When Anna and Christ needed money to build their Refton house, they borrowed part of the money from the Lanes and part from Christ's Uncle Dave, a tobacco farmer living on the Jacob Hostetter farm near Salunga, Pennsylvania. Through their support of Anna, the Lanes contributed to the ministry of the family at the Refton church.

Prior to his marriage, Christ had turned to selling for an income. He first sold stereoscopic sets, a job he did not enjoy due to the pressure on people who could not afford such equipment. The selling of peanut butter for the local Mennonite minister/businessman was more to his liking, and peanut butter eventually became a staple food for his four boys. However, to provide more time for his growing church responsibilities, he changed to a more seasonal job of selling calendars. Christ was an excellent salesman—his winsome personality and his plain clothes (which seemed to generate some confidence in his customers) contributed to his success.

Christ and Anna became the parents of four boys during their pastoral ministry in Refton. C. Nelson was born in 1923, S. Lane in 1926, D. Ray in 1927, and Glenn Lane in 1931. Anna, who disliked nicknames, gave her sons short names and expected them to use their second names. Except for the youngest, Glenn Lane, the boys have been known by their second names.³

From 1923 to 1934 the four Hostetter boys were nurtured in the family, church, and small community environs of Refton. Christ and Anna cultivated a large garden, and kept chickens to supplement their income and to provide food for the table. The boys attended the local grade school. They learned to weed the garden, gather the eggs, feed the chickens, and clean the chicken pens, all types of work they followed in later years as they made their way through school and early jobs.

Physically active, the boys enjoyed their softball games. Some of the athletic talent must have come from their mother for Lane remembers the times she played with them. In an outline story of his youth, he fondly recalls walking with the entire student body to another one-room school for a field day and how thrilled he was to play on his school's team, "even though I was in a low grade."⁴

Lane was also impressed with a trip he took with his father to pick up the new Model A Ford car. Maybe it was the pleasure of receiving an ice cream cone that fixed the occasion in his mind. He also remembers the time when men erected

the tent for revival meetings on the John Slaymaker farm near Hessdale.

Although not all memories of those early years were positive for Lane, those years contained important learning experiences. For example, in the second grade, Lane skipped school one day which led to a spanking from his teacher, Miss Jones, and to a second one at home. On another occasion he stole candy from Reinhart's store and was instructed by his father to return the candy, confess his action, and ask for forgiveness. His father walked with him to the door of the store, but Lane went inside alone and confessed to the storekeeper.⁵ School and family discipline were firmly administered in the Hostetter household.

In 1934, when Lane was eight years old, his father became president of Messiah Bible College and the family moved to Grantham, Pennsylvania. Instead of living in a small community, the boys lived on campus among older students and faculty members. He and his brothers rode tricycles on the sidewalks of the college campus and watched the students play tennis and softball. The daily routines of caring for chickens, helping with the gardens, and doing other household tasks were much the same as in Refton. During the first year, the boys attended the one-room school in Bowmansdale. In the second year they transferred to the Center Square school where Ed Pote was the teacher. Again, Lane notes with satisfaction the athletic events during the field days between one-room township schools. And in these pre-teen years, Lane became a delivery boy for the *Harrisburg Evening News* in the Grantham community.

C. Nelson, the oldest of the boys, attended Jabbok Bible School in Oklahoma and Messiah Academy. Drafted during World War II, he served in alternate service in Puerto Rico where he married a fellow worker, Esther Miller. After the war, he completed his college degree at Goshen College before entering mortuary training and becoming a funeral director in southern Ohio. Following the sale of the business, he became director of the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS),

organizing teams of workers responding to natural disasters around the world.

D. Ray, the third son, is best known in the church circles as the sixth president of Messiah College. During his administrative service of thirty-three years, the campus enrollment grew to more than 2,500 students, and the physical plant was greatly enlarged. Following his presidency, the chapel was named the Hostetter Chapel to honor the sixty-four years of college presidential service by the Hostetter family—Christian, 1917–1923; Christian, Jr., 1934–1960; and D. Ray, 1964–1994.

Lane's youngest brother, Glenn, was a teacher, a civil war history scholar, and the assistant headmaster of two private academies in Iowa and Wisconsin. He died in a 1964 automobile accident.

Lane entered Messiah Academy in September 1939, the beginning of what might be described as Lane's restless decade—the 1940s. His father was extremely busy with college business and, during the summers, with completing his own formal education. He was involved with denominational administrative meetings with local and national governments on the issues surrounding World War II conscientious objectors. He was often away from home and was not always available for on-site family consultation.

Lane was a good student when he focused on his studies, but his learning experiences were distracted by sports, a negative attitude about the church, and many social activities. His insistence upon wearing a necktie when such apparel was hotly debated among church leaders led to conflicts with his father who wanted his boys to abide by the church's rulings.

Even though this and other conflicts affected his study, Lane respected many of his teachers. His Latin teacher, Anna Climenhaga, was one of his favorites. He was one of many boys who behaved poorly in Mary Hoffman's English classes even though Lane thought she was a good teacher. He later made a special trip to visit Miss Hoffman to ask forgiveness for his unacceptable behavior, to which she responded magnanimously, "O Lane, you were a good boy." He was

indebted to Beth Winger (Frey) for teaching him how to play tennis. He learned much from singing tenor in Earl Miller's vocal groups and toured the midwest Brethren in Christ churches one summer with The Four Majors, a quartet in which his brother Ray sang bass. He respected his Bible teachers, Dr. Jesse Lady and Mrs. John (Emma) Climenhaga. And he was completing his high school experience when C. O. Wittlinger and K. B. Hoover arrived on campus to begin their long Messiah teaching careers. Lane was unable to graduate with his 1943 high school class because he lacked one-half credit, but he completed the work and graduated in 1944.⁶

By this time there were several main interests in Lane's life. The prime interest was sports activity. He played on local teams whenever possible and attended professional baseball games. The college and community environs provided ample opportunity for joining baseball, softball, and basketball teams. His enjoyment of competition extended to the Churchtown baseball team, softball teams around Grantham, and basketball with the different teams formed among the college students. He also loved to attend the baseball games of the minor league Harrisburg Senators with one of his cousins and Charlie Crider, one of his close friends.

Lane best describes the next five years of his life in his memoir under the heading, "War-Love 1945-50." In the winter of 1945 as World War II was ending, he was drafted and began his Civilian Public Service (CPS) as a conscientious objector. In the next year he served in three locations: Luray, Virginia; Tiffin, Ohio; and Medaryville, Indiana. When he was off-duty, he played softball with the CPS team and enjoyed singing with a CPS quartet and chorus which toured the midwest Mennonite churches.

Lane lacked his own transportation and often hitch-hiked on intrastate highways, especially when making social visits around Chicago. He seemed to be unmindful of the dangers in late night returns to the Chicago Brethren in Christ Mission for lodging. There were other problems when hitchhiking through small Indiana towns. Draft age young men not wearing army uniforms in 1946 were suspicious characters,

particularly if they were “bumming rides.” Lane learned this the hard way by spending one night in an Indiana town jail before he could verify his identity.

After his release from Civilian Public Service, Lane returned home and registered part-time for college-level course work. He maintained his own lifestyle, slept at home, but was on the move in Harrisburg and Mechanicsburg during the day and into the night. He struggled to make ends meet and bounced among jobs such as parking lot attendant, dish washer, salesman, and seasonal worker for the John Minter Shepherdstown Greeting Card Company. For the last three years of the 1940s, he was engaged in sports activities in most late afternoons and evenings. Coaching the Messiah Bible College basketball teams (twenty-one wins and seven defeats) for three years, playing baseball in the Cumberland County Twilight League, and coaching and playing softball for the Grantham softball team in the Cumberland County League were physical and satisfying experiences. Tired, he often picked up his cousin for a late night ride to the Dillsburg Diner to satisfy his hunger with a fifteen-cent fried egg sandwich and a coke. On occasion, he missed Miss Poe’s college sophomore English Literature class that came too early the next morning for a young man weary from physical labor and athletic competition. However, he passed the class with flying colors.

Also in the late 1940s, tensions increased between his father and the three younger sons over religious issues. The tensions arose over the desire of their father to see a Christian commitment by the sons who seemed uninterested in church service. He scheduled more time with them and took Lane, Ray, and Glenn on a trip to the western United States, a trip that was appreciated by each of the boys. Sometime after the trip, Christ spent twenty-nine days in fasting and prayer for a Christian dedication for each of the boys. As he observed the boys dedicate their lives, he was pleased that their commitments were strengthened by marriages to fine Christian women.⁷

Lane met his future wife, June Miller, at Messiah Junior College. They became serious about their relationship during a college class trip to New York City where their first date was at Jack Wyrzten's Word of Life Rally. They were married on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1950, in the Palmyra, Pennsylvania, Church of the Brethren. His father officiated, his brother Ray was best man, and June's sister, Naomi, was the bridesmaid. Lane always thought of himself as a dreamer, and his marriage to June fulfilled one of those dreams.

After their marriage, Lane, who did not own a car, borrowed his father-in-law's Studebaker to take June to the apartment he had rented in Grantham. They moved to the Treona apartment a few months later and walked to Keefer's store for groceries. Lane walked to work at the Shepherdstown Greeting Card Company located in one of the old mills in Grantham. Later, as an ice cream truck driver for Mark Winger's frozen food company, Lane began his career as a salesman, a vocation he followed for the next forty years. Lane and June welcomed the first of their three daughters, Barbara, born at Seidle Hospital in Mechanicsburg, on December 20, 1952.

Pastoral Ministry

In 1953, Lane accepted an invitation from Erwin Thomas, sales manager of Evangel Press, to become manager of the Christian Light Bookstore in Nappanee, Indiana, where the Brethren in Christ publishing house, Evangel Press, is located. Lane enjoyed the bookstore experience. He liked to meet people. For the next five years, he learned the bookstore business. On August 15, 1955, Lane and June added their second daughter, Debra, to the family.

During this time in Nappanee, Erwin Thomas and Lane became good friends. They enjoyed many coffee breaks and traveled together to Christian Booksellers conventions and denominational meetings. Their friendship continued after

Lane left Indiana as they and their wives fellowshiped over meals in restaurants or ice cream shops.

One of Lane's employees at the Nappanee Christian Light Bookstore was a member of the Madison Chapel Church in Wakarusa, Indiana. Madison Chapel is a union church with pastors serving from several denominations, including Baptists and Brethren in Christ. Through the employee's efforts, Lane accepted an invitation to share a devotional in the midweek service. Two deacons and the Sunday school superintendent served as the church administrative board. Sometime after Lane's devotional message, they extended an invitation to him to be their pastor.⁸

After receiving the invitation, Lane counseled with his father and stated matter-of-factly that he did not have a call from God to preach. His father replied, "Sometimes the call of the church is the call of the Lord." After Lane considered this advice and granted that it might be true, he accepted the assignment on a temporary basis. This "call to minister" was the beginning of Lane's pastoral work.

As Lane's ministry developed, he appeared to follow in his father's footsteps. Both were bi-vocational ministers. As pastors, they received modest, if any, compensation for their pastoral ministry and supported their families through their skills as salesmen. Both men conducted revival meetings and preaching missions for local churches. Through many years of service, both were active in church administration at the regional and national levels.

Lane was well acquainted with the life of a minister's family. However, he had no formal theological instruction or ministerial training. He quickly learned that being in charge of ministerial services required a greater knowledge of pastoral procedures than those observed while sitting passively in the pew. For example, the independent union church allowed new converts to choose their mode of baptism, and three young men chose to be baptized backwards by immersion. Lane recalls: "I had always seen trine immersion (three times forward on knees) so I practiced [backwards immersion] on June in the bathtub. One of the young men was over six feet

tall and the baptistry in the Wakarusa First Christian Church was small, but everything went all right, but only by a couple of inches.”⁹

In his memory book, Lane relates this story of a Madison Chapel family: “There was one African-American family at Madison Chapel. . . . Brother Holley could not read or write, but he loved the Lord. He could pray and testify. . . . One service as the rain came down in the cornfield across from the church, he thanked the Lord for a ‘hundred dollars worth of rain.’ He was one of the ‘thankingness’ men I ever knew.” One daughter was in Lane’s Sunday school class and he officiated at her wedding. When their first child was born they named him Lane.¹⁰

Lane has other memories of this small Indiana church. “I remember one night during an evangelistic meeting when it sounded like the roof of the small country church was going to be blown away. . . . We found out later a tornado was confirmed in the church’s vicinity, and was thought to have gone right over the church building.”¹¹ The Madison Chapel ministerial learning experience was perhaps the best training an inexperienced minister could have received at the beginning of a promising ministerial career.

In 1958, Bishop Henry Ginder and the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Church Board, invited Lane to serve as pastor of the Lancaster Brethren in Christ Mission. Lane, June, and family returned to Pennsylvania and Lane became the third generation of the Hostetter family to serve the congregation. His grandfather, C. N. Hostetter, Sr., had been overseer of the Caroline Street Mission when he was Manor-Pequea District bishop. In the 1920s, his father and uncles were closely associated with the Sunday school. Through this contact, C. N. Hostetter’s three sons, C. N., Jr., Henry, and John, married young lady teachers and workers in the Sunday school. Here in Lancaster Lane and June completed their family circle with the addition of a third daughter, Lori, on October 12, 1961.

Lane’s ministry was strongly evangelistic. Greg Starr has written, “His messages often concluded with an invitation to seek God and often there was a response.”¹² The Sunday

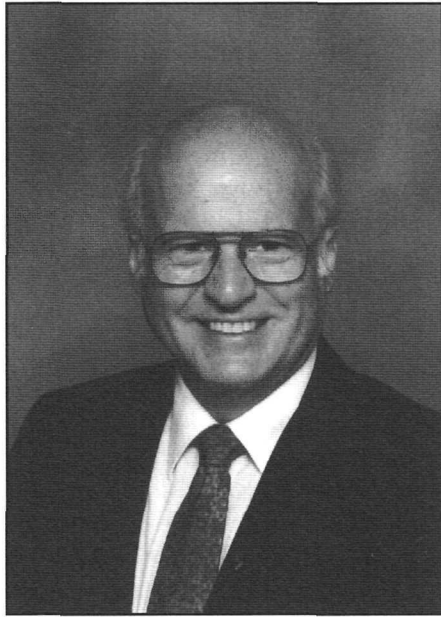
morning worship service became the center of his preaching ministry, and it was common for twenty or more unsaved and unchurched people to attend the services. His ministries of evangelism, visitation, and personal witness added many people to the membership rolls. The 1959 average attendance of 144 increased to 226 by 1962.¹³

The weekly ministry of the church as proposed by the pastor and staff kept the pastor and parishioners on a very busy schedule. Wednesday evenings were set aside for home visits by church members. Thursday evenings were devoted to Bible study, an important activity in the spiritual growth of new converts and church members. The pastor made frequent hospital visits and arranged for four men to join him in local prison visits. Lane often visited inmates, particularly the relatives of church attendees, who lived in distant prisons such as the federal penitentiaries in Philadelphia and Bellefonte.

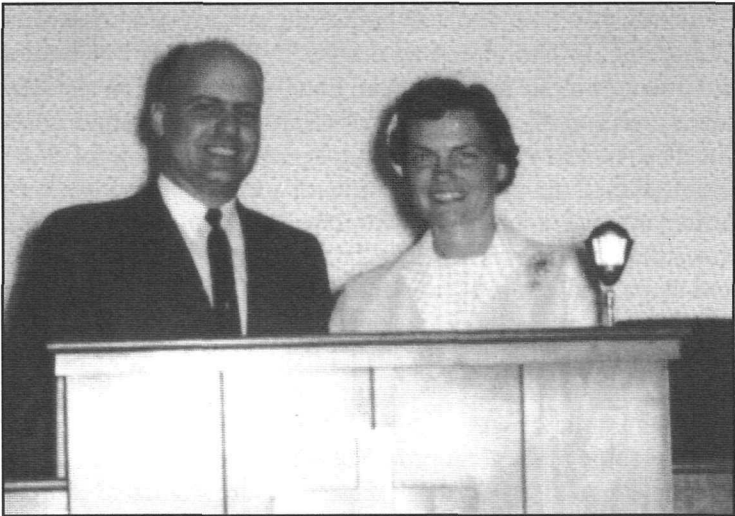
However, the visitation program did not always produce the expected results. Lane writes: "One Christmas morning, I picked up John at the prison and the gifts he had for his family who were anxiously waiting for his release. I urged him to go in and greet his family by himself and I would bring the gifts. Evidently his wife had celebrated the anticipated release on Christmas eve and was dead drunk."¹⁴ The family celebration did not occur as planned, but Lane's effort to bring them together is a good example of the visitation ministry.

The visitation program and invitations to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour led to inquiries and correspondence with the bishop about requirements for church membership. At the time, the Brethren in Christ Church did not accept divorced and remarried couples. Lane and his church board believed that the only requirement for membership was a testimony of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and that membership in the church family was necessary for total nurture of the newly converted believer. Above all, they wanted to make everyone feel welcome in the total program of the church.¹⁵

Lane's ministry at the Lancaster church was based upon simple, heart-felt messages which presented the claims of Jesus Christ. His diligent program of visitation and personal



S. Lane Hostetter (except where noted, all photographs in this article are courtesy of Lane and June Hostetter)



Lane and June Hostetter in the Lancaster church during their ministry to the Lancaster congregation

witnessing, plus his warm personality all contributed to an effective ministry which met the needs of many people. The small Caroline Street congregation provided a good core of willing workers, and the organization of the weekly program led to an influx of people who had not known the love of Christ or had fallen away.

Lane had learned his sermon outline techniques from his grandfather, C. N. Hostetter, Sr. He often stayed with his grandparents in the summer when his parents were pursuing their education and church work. He played in the room where his grandfather would write out his weekly sermons, an uncommon practice in those days. When the time came for Lane to prepare sermons, he remembered his grandfather's careful preparation and he too began the practice of writing out his sermons. Typing on half sheets of paper, front and back, single spaced, with the significant scriptural references at the top, he recorded when and where each sermon was preached. Often, when the sermons were preached again, new paragraphs updated the contents.

For example, "A Letter to the Church at Ephesus" was first preached at Caroline Street in March 1963 and, with additions and modifications, was preached for the forty-third time in October 1996, probably at Dillsburg, Pennsylvania, where he was conducting a revival meeting. Based upon Revelation 2:1-7, Lane summarized his main points thus: "The church [was] at work, laboring, patiently persistent, refusing to tolerate evil, or false teachings, faithful in service and not letting down. If Jesus talked about us at [Dillsburg] that way, this would certainly be high praise." And yet, there was one small complaint: "You have left your first love. . . . The Ephesian Church was orthodox in creed and deed—but it was cold as ice. Their opposition to evil was so intense that enthusiasm for right was frozen." He concluded with a number of illustrations about the Christian life, with applications to the Christians who may have lost their first love.¹⁶ The sermon with illustrations was typical of his evangelistic messages preached in revival services and regular worship services.

(Parenthetically, Lane's grandfather was well known for his sermons based upon the book of Ephesians.)¹⁷

In 1962, after serving as a pastor for nine years, Lane was ordained to the ministry in the Brethren in Christ Church. He had not actively pursued ordination since he had not completed a college degree and felt he did not qualify by church educational standards. In his mind, he was content to be a "lay preacher" after the model of D. L. Moody. However, Bishop Ginder reasoned that his work with bookstores and his access to a large library of books were satisfactory substitutes for the formal education requirements; therefore, he urged this step of consecration. On April 18, 1962, Bishop Ginder, Lane's father, C. N. Hostetter, Jr., his uncle, John Hostetter, and Robert Neff, the Lancaster Director of Youth for Christ, conducted the ordination service. It must have been a joyful occasion for Lane's father who had prayed and fasted so diligently more than ten years earlier for the salvation of his sons.

Lane encountered many different responses to his ministry. Periodically, he served as chaplain at the Lancaster General Hospital. He often prayed with patients when his offer to do so was accepted. One day the person at the hospital desk received a call which requested that the next minister go to the room of a terminally ill patient. "I found the lady trying to tear her way out of an oxygen tent. Upon presenting the claims of Christ to her she screamed 'I have no sins.' After trying to help her, I called a relative and they said they could have their minister try to get through to her. However, she died that night."¹⁸

The Hostetters also experienced humorous times, some resulting from lapses of memory. While Lane was mowing the lawn one Saturday morning, June received a call that Lane had forgotten a wedding. "I shaved and showered and felt like crawling up the aisle. After the wedding I received a \$20 bill—the most I had received for any wedding up to that time."¹⁹

Lane carried a burden for the salvation of his uncles in his mother's family. After unsuccessful attempts to lead his great

uncle, Dr. Cameron Lane, to the Lord, he asked his father to counsel with him. Following his father's counsel, he led his uncle to the Lord and baptized him, a man in his nineties who died soon afterwards.

Lane had a different experience with his Uncle Sam Lane. Without a profession of faith, Uncle Sam asked to be baptized. After Lane counseled him about God's plan for believing and receiving Christ before baptism, he received Christ and was baptized. "I baptized him in the kitchen sink. Uncle Sam was a retired mail carrier and poker player, with a reputation in Lancaster County. He died at the age of 101."

During Lane's Caroline Street mission pastoral service, he continued his work with Christian bookstores as an independent salesman representing a number of publishers. Compensation for this work contributed to the family livelihood. He met many Christian bookstore owners and employers in different geographical areas during his two or three days of travel each week. This gift of selling contributed to Lane's positive outlook on life although he regretted the time away from his family.

Lane also conducted many revival services during this time in Lancaster. Reading through Lane's sermons reveals that evangelistic messages were at the heart of his ministry. He averaged about three meetings each year in churches located from Abilene, Kansas; to Orlando, Florida; to Refton, Pennsylvania, the church of his childhood.

Managerial and Sales Ministries

After six years at the Lancaster Brethren in Christ Church, Lane and June resigned from the pastorate. The heavy schedule had taken a physical toll on both of them, and they decided to leave the full-time pastoral ministry for personal reasons. They embarked upon a life of multiple ministries which included salesman for publishing companies, bookstore ownership, interim pastorates, revival meetings, preaching missions, and denominational fundraising assignments. And

they were parents to three lovely growing girls who needed attention and support as they settled into their new home in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

The home at 306 Monroe Street became the center of family activity and Lane's sales operation. The volleyball games in the backyard drew the neighbors and their children to evenings of fun and relaxation. The three girls learned to swim and became better swimmers than their father. The family enjoyed trips to Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, and to Stone Harbor, New Jersey. The Memorial Day Miller family get-togethers at the Fredericksburg, Pennsylvania, mountain cabin highlighted the beginning of summer activity. The family has many memories of those days at the Monroe Street address as the girls were growing up, attending school, and learning the lessons and routines of life. After the girls made decisions about their Christian walk, Lane thanked the Lord for the privilege of baptizing the two older ones in the Millersville, Pennsylvania municipal pool during a steady "shower of blessing" rain.

Lane returned to full-time bookstore work to support his family. From 1964 to 1980, his primary focus was selling to and managing Christian bookstores. He began working for Christian Publications with supervisory responsibility for a number of independent salesmen. As a salesman, he contacted bookstores for both Christian Publications and Evangel Press in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New Jersey. In March 1969, he and Eldon Schroeder, the general manager of Christian Publications, opened a new Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, bookstore with Lane as manager.

Lane and Eldon became good friends and were partners in another small business venture, Imperial Products, for a few years. As Lane recalls, they "often took coffee breaks together, traveled to conventions together, sang in the car as we traveled, planned and talked business, talked about books and spiritual things and enjoyed our fellowship. I owe much to Eldon for his friendship and his Christian example in various ways."²⁰

After ten years with Christian Publications, Lane became the Standard Publishing Company's representative to Christian bookstores in the Northeastern United States. He not only sold products to bookstores, but he also became owner of two stores, one in York, Pennsylvania, and one in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Eventually he sold one of the stores to Christian Light Bookstores and donated the other to the same company in exchange for a ten-year annuity. In 1979, his success as a salesman was highlighted when he received national recognition as Salesman of the Year at the Christian Booksellers Association's annual convention in St. Louis, Missouri. It was a special occasion as Lane received congratulations from the Zondervan founders.

Lane's bookstore work and daily travel were central to his life, but only a part of his interest. During this time he conducted thirty-five revival meetings in Central Pennsylvania involving twenty-eight different congregations, including Grantham. His successful evangelistic campaigns were recognized by the denomination when he served as the General Conference evangelist in 1969.

Of particular note are the revival services Lane conducted in his father's church. In the late 1960s, Lane's father, then pastor of the Palmyra Brethren in Christ Church, invited him to be the evangelist for his congregation. These revival occasions were rewarding experiences for both father and son. The personal difference over spiritual matters from Lane's younger years was now past, and the father-son team united in conducting these preaching missions. One of Lane's vivid memories is the sound of his father sobbing as people came forward to the altar.²¹ Within a few short years, his father suffered debilitating strokes and was bedridden for the remainder of his life. The memories of those meetings must have been extremely rewarding for his father as he lay unresponsive in Messiah Village nursing care for many years.

Moreover, Lane contributed his time and advice to worthy Christian businesses that produced educational materials sold throughout the stores. For twenty-three years he was a member of the Board of Bible Visuals whose mission is "to

help people effectively communicate the Bible using illustrated lessons, stories, and songs, which are both flexible and interactive. . . to help both children and adults come to salvation, learn basic doctrine, grow in Christ, and have a mission focus."²² He served as secretary of the board and then president for eight years.

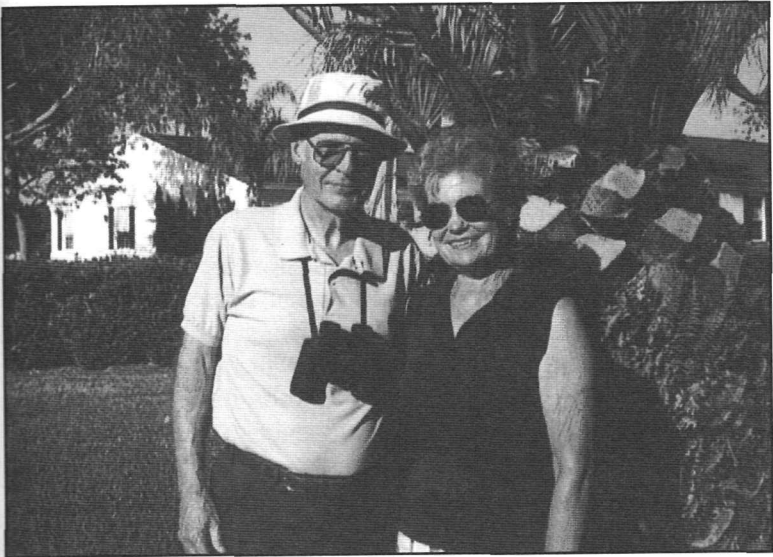
During his bookstore work, Lane served as interim pastor for several Brethren in Christ churches within driving distance of his home. These assignments extended from several months to almost a year. They included the churches at Dillsburg, Mechanicsburg, Bellevue Park, and Skyline View.

Lane received many invitations to speak to church groups and local businesses, and to participate in the administration of church conference activities. He spoke at family campfires, minister retreats, family banquets, Youth for Christ rallies, and summer camp youth retreats. He was a speaker for camp meeting youth, and gave devotional messages for employees of organizations and businesses. He was assistant moderator of the denomination's regional Susquehanna Conference, and, on one occasion, gave the Allegheny Conference sermon, described as excellent by one who attended.²³ On the national scene, he was honored one year to be the featured speaker for a group at the Christian Booksellers Association convention in St. Louis, Missouri.

Throughout his ministry, Lane served twenty-one different congregations of other denominations as the speaker for extended revivals or preaching missions, rally day services, family camps, Sunday worship services, or as a teacher for Sunday school classes. Denominationally they included the United Methodist, Church of God, United Brethren, Church of the Brethren, Lutheran, United Christian, Assembly of God, Evangelical Congregational, Presbyterian, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Mennonite, and Mennonite Brethren in Christ. This ecumenical fellowship contributed to Lane's overall community outlook and his work as Historical Society president.²⁴



The Hostetter daughters. Seated, Barbara (left), Deb (right), Lori standing



Lane and June in Florida in retirement years

Denominational Administrative Ministries

In 1980, Lane left his bookstore work to become Director of Public Relations and Development for Messiah Village, one of the denomination's retirement homes. He entered the world of fundraising, planned giving, will planning, charitable gift annuities, and unitrusts. He enjoyed assisting people in the writing of wills and in planning for their financial futures. He knew that personal finance must be handled in confidence. Even though he did not always agree with their ideas, Lane respected the individuals with whom he worked.²⁵ His pastoral experiences and extended contacts with church members through revival services made him a trusted advisor among Messiah Village residents and church constituents.

Messiah Village also tapped Lane's ministerial experience when they made him interim chaplain and pastor in 1985. Again, he was recognized for his administrative work and placed on the Village Administrative Board, serving from 1988 to 2000. Added to these assignments, Lane continued one of his life's joys by conducting nineteen revivals during this six-year period.

Lane's business talents did not go unnoticed by the denominational leaders. In 1986 they persuaded him to supervise the church's bookstores, scattered across the denomination. Lane worked from an office in the church headquarters and made regular visits to thirteen stores located primarily in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Ontario. Occasionally, he journeyed to California and the midwest to visit the two western and two midwest stores.

Lane was appointed denominational Director of Planned Giving in 1990. His general fundraising work with many individuals was good preparation for the broader work of reminding church members of opportunities to invest in ongoing church programs. He conducted Planned Giving clinics throughout the denomination from California to Pennsylvania and Maryland where he emphasized the tax advantages that benefitted both the giver and the church. He served in this appointment until his retirement in 2001.

As Lane approached his eightieth birthday, he reflected on his life and recorded things he wished he had done more effectively. He regretted the decision to forego formal college education and seminary training. He thought he should have done more personal witnessing to individuals about Jesus. He felt he should have given more time to his family, but the pressures of pastoral work, revival services, and traveling salesman did not allow him as much time at home as he would have desired.

Lane balanced his regrets with a list of life's enjoyments. He acknowledged that his marriage to June and succeeding family joys have been very satisfying. His dreams for himself were fulfilled by his pastoral service, evangelistic meetings, and bookstore ownership experiences. His chief joy in life was helping persons become Christians, directing them to Bible study and helping them to learn about the Christian life through Bible study and prayer. He always enjoyed performing a service for others.

Ever the athlete, Lane, even late in life, takes great pleasure in individual and team sports. He is an avid reader of the newspaper sports pages and follows "religiously" the successes and failures of certain professional teams. Today, with aging problems, he is satisfied to watch sports programs on television and to observe the birds from his porch with his binoculars. He has had time in recent years to read novels, interesting biographies, and the daily newspaper comics.

Historical Society President

In 1976, sixteen General Conference attendees met to form the Brethren in Christ Historical Society. With others, they adopted a constitution in 1978 "to encourage the study and research of Brethren in Christ life and thought; and to provide a medium for the exchange of ideas on the historical, theological, and contemporary life of the Brethren in Christ." The principal medium of exchange became the society's journal, *Brethren in Christ History and Life*. In the December

2008 edition of the journal, Luke L. Keefer, Jr., summarized and celebrated the Historical Society's thirty years of historical research, theological ideas, and contemporary life.²⁶ Notably, the journal has had but one editor, Dr. E. Morris Sider, during its thirty-year history.

In 1992, Merle Brubaker, then president of the Historical Society, completed his term of office and chose not to accept another term. The Executive Committee had several qualifications in mind for the office of president. He or she should be highly regarded and well known in the denomination with proven administrative ability. All previous presidents—Owen Alderfer, Arthur Climenhaga, and Merle Brubaker—fully met these criteria.

The Executive Committee began to focus on Lane Hostetter, whose life and work met each of the criteria. He had wide contacts within the denomination and was well known and widely respected in the church through a significant range of ministerial, business and managerial experiences. Lane topped the list of candidates for the presidency, and he accepted the committee's invitation.²⁷

Always a Brethren in Christ Church member, Lane knew the church well and brought to the Historical Society's presidency a broad understanding of its history, people, and theology. A loyal church member, he did not hesitate to challenge denominational rulings when he thought such rulings conflicted with biblical teaching. The Executive Committee members noted and appreciated this knowledge and experience as Lane continued his presidency to the end of 2005.

Lane's administrative skills soon were evident to the Historical Society's Executive Committee. The committee met only two times a year with a full agenda. Lane skillfully conducted the committee's work so that on most occasions, business was completed in one session.²⁸

Members of the Executive Committee noted Lane's ability to conduct meetings. "He was pleasant to work with, decisive in his efforts to move the agenda along, showed a sense of humor, and was very good in following up on committee

decisions.”²⁹ One member noted his personality characteristics as they contributed to the committee meetings: “He was conscientious, punctual, resourceful, with a listening ear. I was never made to feel that what I had to say was unimportant whether in [committee] meeting or [with him] privately. He had the power of discernment—if the thinking of the committee was going in a certain direction, he would bring up a different view of the issue and we would realize that his view was better, and we would ‘end up’ following his view.”³⁰

The president not only presides at the Executive Committee meetings, but also assists the committee and executive director in making personal contacts and arrangements for dinners, speakers, heritage celebrations, book release events, travel to historic sites, and annual meetings of the Historical Society. Since many plans must be formulated and scheduled months (and even years) in advance, when the Executive Committee concludes its meetings, the communication between the president and the Executive Committee is of vital importance to the health of the Historical Society.

During Lane’s presidency, Historical Society contacts increased with two denominational groups with close historical, theological and cultural ties to the Brethren in Christ. Members of the Old Order River Brethren and the United Zion Church have contributed to interdenominational relationships through articles in the Historical Society’s journal, membership on the Historical Society’s Executive Committee, and joint heritage meetings. The Society president and executive director worked with these denominational groups and with the General Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church to plan heritage events that contributed to a better understanding of their common theological heritage.

Lane assisted in the improvement of the administration of the Historical Society. Until his presidency, the editor had served as both editor and manager and prepared agendas and reports, maintained membership records, sent out renewal letters (and frequent reminders to tardy renewers),

corresponded with a variety of people on Historical Society matters, and more. "Lane helped us to see that all of this was actually the work of two offices—an editor and an executive director. While the same person continued to fill the now separated roles, it was helpful to be able to do so under two different 'hats.' Most importantly, when at the beginning of 2008 Glen Pierce joined the Executive Committee, the system was in place to easily assign him the role of executive director while retaining the editorship for the other officer."³¹

The editor, E. Morris Sider, also noted Lane's availability for consultation. The two of them met frequently in the Bailey Street coffee house at Messiah Village to discuss items which needed attention and to prepare agendas. Lane proposed articles that were eventually published, including Norman Hostetter's "Called of God to a Holy Work: The Life and Times of Christian Newcomer Hostetter and Ella Neff Hostetter" (April 2005); Paul Hostetler's "Knowing [Our Lord] by Doing" (August 2007); and Greg Starr's "From City Mission to Suburban Congregation: A History of the Lancaster Brethren in Christ Church" (April 2005).

During Lane's presidency, the Society increased by approximately 200 members, published ten books and joined in the sponsorship of another. While the publication of Joan Clucas's book, *We All Love Dr. Virginia*, came after his presidency, Lane had persuaded the Executive Committee to publish this small book about Virginia Kauffman as a means to interest juveniles in church history and missionary work.³²

Lane's leadership role with the Historical Society prepared him for appointment as Chair of the Center for Brethren in Christ Studies. During Lane's presidency the Center merged with Messiah College's Sider Institute for Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan Studies, which plans yearly conferences on topics of interest and importance to the Brethren in Christ Church. Topics such as "Caring for People in the Congregation" and "Ministry and Post-Modernism" illustrate the focus of these conferences. Speakers include denominational leaders, Messiah College professors, writers and professors from other denominations and colleges, and



Lane passing the presidency of the Brethren in Christ Historical Society to Emerson Lesh, current president (courtesy of Brethren in Christ and Messiah College Archives)

members of the Historical Society. Many of the papers from these conferences have been published in the Society's journal *Brethren in Christ History and Life*.

Later Years

In June 2001, after a fulfilling life of service to God and the church, Lane and June decided it was time to retire. In 1997 they purchased a condominium in Bradenton, Florida, and enjoyed three to four months of sunshine instead of the cold and snow of Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. Living near their daughter Lori and son-in-law Bob in Bradenton, Lane loved the spring training baseball games, bird watching, and reading books. In 2005, when the travel became burdensome, they sold the condo and remained in Pennsylvania for the winter. Because of his failing health, Lane served notice to the Historical Society of his desire to be relieved of its presidency. He chaired his last meeting in September 2005, but continued to serve on the Executive Committee until 2008.

In a tribute to Lane the Executive Committee noted: "Your leadership has been easy to follow. You did your work without self promotion. You led with good humor and efficient dispatch so that our committee meetings were enjoyable events." And the editor, E. Morris Sider, was grateful that "you always made yourself readily available for consultation."³³

Clearly Lane has fond memories of his work with the Historical Society. "I enjoyed so very much learning to know and fellowship with and work with Dr. E. Morris Sider who has been the key person relating the history and life of the Brethren in Christ Church and its trends since the establishing of the Historical Society. Also, it was a privilege to fellowship with the members of the Executive Committee and I appreciated the blending of our minds and the beauty of Oneness after the business decisions were made. (It helped to eat together the tasty desserts the ladies prepared!)"³⁴

Lane and June have lived full lives of service to Christ, the church, and the Historical Society. The legacy of their ministry is evident through the miracles and testimonies of those they have loved and served along the way.

NOTES

¹ Most of this biographical material is based upon E. Morris Sider's *Messenger of Grace: A Biography of C. N. Hostetter, Jr.* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1982), pp. 37-45.

² Telephone conversation with C. Nelson Hostetter, January 14, 2009.

³ Ibid.

⁴ S. Lane Hostetter, "My Memories," typewritten, n.d. p. 4. (Writer's files).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., p. 5

⁷ E. Morris Sider, *Messenger of Grace*, pp. 228-230.

⁸ S. Lane Hostetter to the writer, February 11, 2009. (Writer's files).

⁹ Hostetter, "My Memories," pp. 26-27.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Gregory C. Starr, "From City Mission to Suburban Congregation: A History of the Lancaster Brethren in Christ Church," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (April 2005), p. 52.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Hostetter, "My Memories," p. 27

¹⁵ Starr, "From City Mission to Suburban Congregation," p. 54. In 1968, a denominational study conference, convened to discuss and study the topic, "Who Are the Brethren in Christ and What Do They Believe?" ended with the troubling thought that a convert to Jesus Christ may not be accepted into church membership. See Carlton Wittlinger, "Why Are We Here?" *Notes and Queries in Brethren in Christ Church History*, p. 37.

¹⁶ S. Lane Hostetter, Sermon Notes, "A Letter to the Church at Ephesus," p.3. (Writer's files).

¹⁷ *Evangelical Visitor*, April 4, 1910, pp. 14-15.

¹⁸ Hostetter, "My Memories," p. 28.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p.10.

²¹ Hostetter, "My Memories," p.29.

²² Bible Visuals Web Site, Box 153, Akron, Pennsylvania, 17501-0153.

²³ Email, Dorothy Jean Sollenberger to the writer, December 20, 2008.

²⁴ Hostetter, "My Memories," p. 13.

²⁵ Email, Esther Ebersole to the writer, April 23, 2009. Esther was Lane's secretary while working at the denominational headquarters .

²⁶ From Luke L. Keefer, Jr., "Celebrating Thirty Years of Publishing *Brethren in Christ History and Life*," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (December 2008), pp. 507-508.

²⁷ E. Morris Sider to the writer, November 4, 2008.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Interview, Lela Hostetler, October 2008.

³⁰ Email, Dorothy Jean Sollenberger to the writer, December 20, 2008.

³¹ E. Morris Sider to the writer, November 4, 2008.

³² Ibid.

³³ *The Newsletter of the Brethren in Christ Historical Society*, Vol. V, No. 1, p. 2.

³⁴ S. Lane Hostetter to the writer, June 24, 2009.

Co-incident of Piety and Conviction: The Brethren in Christ and the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association

*By Charles Edwin Jones **

The coming of the Brethren in Christ to Kansas is related in the following words in *History of Kansas*, published in 1883: "The number of new settlers coming to the county kept increasing each year until 1879, when one of the most complete and perfectly organized colonies that ever entered a new country arrived in Dickinson County. In point of numbers and equipment it far exceeded anything that had preceded it. All told, they numbered nearly three hundred persons. The leaders of the movement had been traveling through Kansas for some time seeking a location and finally decided upon Dickinson County. When they had selected the lands for the colony, they immediately went to work and had a large frame building erected in Abilene, 28 x 80 feet, for the accommodation of the colonists upon their arrival, until suitable buildings could be erected upon their lands. On Friday, March 28, 1879, the first company arrived in Abilene, which consisted of thirty persons from Frederick County, Md., and on Saturday morning, upwards of two hundred arrived from Lancaster, Cumberland, Dauphin, Lebanon and Franklin

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counties, Pa., and these were followed by others. In religion they are what is known as 'River Brethren,' and in order not to be deprived of their privilege of worship, they brought with them a minister, Rev. Benj. Gish, and a bishop, Rev. Jesse Engle, so that from the time they started, there was a perfect church organization in the colony. The colony divided on its arrival in the county, some settling north of the Smoky [Hill River], and some south, in the vicinity of Belle Springs. They brought with them fifteen car loads of freight, and in noting their departure from Pennsylvania, the *Marietta Times* said that they took with them not less than \$500,000 in money."¹

In ways not present in the relocations which had preceded it, the time and setting of migration of River Brethren from the homeland counties in the valley of the Susquehanna to Dickinson County, Kansas, posed challenges to the mind of the Brethren in Christ none could have foreseen. No observer, even from the vantage point of more than a century and a quarter, can reasonably question the measures taken by planners of the migration to Kansas of fifteen households to insure continuance of the century-old traditions of doctrine, discipline, and lifestyle which they had developed with the approximately 276 southeastern Pennsylvania Brethren in Christ households they left behind.² Elders could anticipate some (but by no means all) of the challenges posed by other religious traditions and by the majority culture. What they could not anticipate was the impact on themselves and their children of day-to-day interaction with the "world" of Abilene.³

Nor could they anticipate the impact which contact with apparently like-minded "Christ-against-culture"⁴ groups, such as the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association of Tabor, Iowa, would have: groups with similar standards which sprang from different roots and which (in making ethical, behavioral and vocational decisions) relied more heavily on the discernment and conviction of the individual than on the judgment of the church. Though not organized until fourteen years after the initial migration to Kansas, it was this group (whose spiritual aspirations and standards of conduct

resembled in so many ways those of the River Brethren) that was to re-shape much of thought and practice of the church first in Kansas, and later throughout the entire brotherhood.⁵

At the time nowhere could challenges to received usages of the River Brethren have been more expected than in a locale such as Dickinson County, Kansas. Scarcely seven years removed from notoriety as a violence-ridden cow town,⁶ Abilene had settled down. The focal point of lands which resembled in many ways the lands near the Susquehanna from whence they had come, the locale was destined literally to witness transformation of the mind of the Brethren in Christ. Here, despite valiant efforts to shore-up received teaching and discipline, the distinctive convictions of the collective church witness, which had been the movement's hallmark, were destined to be lost. It was the breakdown of the regimen of collective consensus-building among the River Brethren of the diaspora in Kansas and elsewhere which prepared the way for acceptance of the conviction and mission-driven Wesleyan-holiness piety of the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association by many of them in the next decades.

Seemingly minor changes in traditional structural and institutional arrangements had the effect of transforming the brotherhood. For example, River Brethren whose grandfathers had stood shoulder to shoulder against building plain houses of worship such as the one for which Matthias Brinser⁷ had been excommunicated three decades earlier, were themselves by 1887 deserting the spaces in barns and dwellings in which they from time immemorial, week-by-week, had worshipped.⁸ They were apparently unaware that, with this and numberless small changes, they were exchanging the dynamic of a common mind for conformity.

These changes and dispersion and distance made widespread consensus (let alone deeply-held conviction) an elusive goal. By inquiries to General Conference and district councils, and (from 1887 on) through the columns of the *Evangelical Visitor* whose editorial offices were in Abilene from 1891 through 1902,⁹ the immigrant generation of River Brethren in Kansas strove, to a large degree successfully, to be

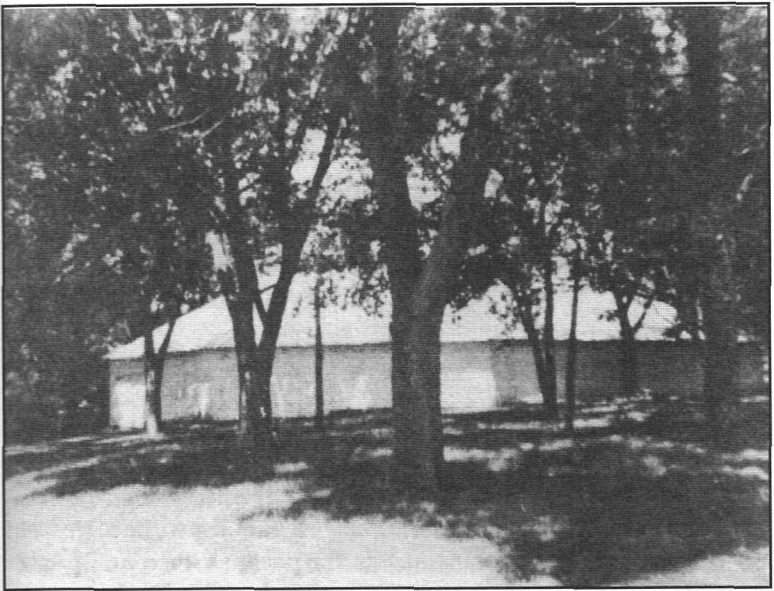
of a common mind. For their children, a generation removed from the Susquehanna homeland, such an achievement was to prove far more elusive. For them, many of whom experienced almost daily interaction with the outside in education and business, consistency often appeared to spring more from submission to the elders than from personal commitment. For the young, heartfelt consistency and conformity was to prove much harder to come by.

During these years, issues, such as the perils of prosperity, marriage outside the brotherhood, the prayer veiling, the use and trafficking in tobacco and alcoholic beverages, as well as the pitfalls of the teachings of the Watchtower Society (later called Jehovah's Witnesses) came repeatedly before district councils and General Conference. No place is the ineffectiveness of official strictures in stemming the impact of the outside upon the young more apparent than in the lives and associations of the sons of Jacob Eisenhower.

In attempts to attract outsiders to their general merchandise store at Hope, Kansas, Dave and Abe Eisenhower flouted Brethren "inconsistencies" by offering laces and other vanity items, by employing a milliner, and by selling tobacco.¹⁰ That Dave and his wife, Ida,¹¹ should later join Henry Engle, editor of the *Evangelical Visitor*, 1896–1899, in studying and spreading Russellite¹² teachings anathema¹³ to them, served only to enhance the attractiveness to River Brethren in Kansas of the Wesleyan-Holiness, conviction-driven piety of the Hephzibah¹⁴ Faith Missionary Association of Tabor, Iowa.

This group, which was incorporated in March 1893 in the southwestern Iowa town of Glenwood by George Weavers, L. B. Worcester, and other backers of an orphanage and missionary training home conducted on the faith principle, was soon established on a forty-acre farm on the outskirts of the town of Tabor nearby.

An English immigrant and a Union veteran, George Weavers (1840–1914)¹⁵ had served a number of years as a Baptist pastor and evangelist in southwest Iowa. During a pastorate at Percival through the agency of a couple of women



The tabernacle of the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association (courtesy of the author, as are the remaining photographs in this article)



The Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association building in Yokohama, Japan (see note 29)

in the congregation and a copy of the *Guide to Holiness*¹⁶ given to him by Deacon Yates, he was led to search the Scriptures and, as a result, to seek entire sanctification. Already a John the Baptist-type preacher,¹⁷ the deep consecration which accompanied receiving the experience served only to fuel George Weavers' fervor, a zeal which, ever increasingly, was to characterize his ministry.¹⁸ Such might also be said of his future son-in-law and closest associate the Knox, Iowa, schoolteacher Leonard Beecher Worcester (1863–1926),¹⁹ son of a Cumberland Presbyterian minister, who about 1888 professed entire sanctification during a meeting Weavers had conducted in that community. The simplicity and single-minded zeal and aggressiveness of these men and others at Tabor would be a magnet drawing scores of Brethren in Christ to their cause in the decades to come.

The River Brethren arrived in Kansas with two age-old, unquestioned traditions intact: technologically-progressive farming and a self-supporting ministry. The difference between the \$130 per acre some had received for land in Pennsylvania and Maryland and the \$7.00 per acre they had paid in Kansas²⁰ brought them great prosperity, resulting in economic distinctions which threatened to rend the fabric of the brotherhood in the county. Its powerlessness before complaints made to and sustained by the North Dickinson District Council in 1882 "stating that the rich brethren have not the sympathy and mercy for the poor members which they should have,"²¹ lay in the background of renewed concern for holiness as an antidote to worldliness and materialism, and as the dynamic for soul-saving which characterized the life of the brotherhood in the next three decades.²²

One most certainly not included among the rich Brethren was Noah Zook, the owner of 160 acres (with a \$2,500 indebtedness) and dairy herd of fifty, who with his wife, Mary, and eight children were "living in a very small house—a small kitchen covered with shed roof and not plastered and a small room, perhaps 10 x 12 feet and two bedrooms just large enough for one bed each, no cellar, no upstairs."²³ Appointed (with Avery Long) by the 1888 General Conference to

evangelize in areas where few or no Brethren in Christ lived, Noah Zook was called to be absent for as much as six months at a time, leaving the work of the farm to his wife and older children.²⁴

From Michigan, the focus of outreach shifted to Kansas where, during a tent meeting²⁵ at Junction City in 1894, he first came into contact with the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association when L. B. Worcester and his wife²⁶ volunteered to join the revival effort. Although the audience response to the Worcesters—"Some leaped, some shouted, some laughed, others danced for joy"—was unlike that elicited by any River Brethren he had ever seen, Noah Zook was forced to admit: "This man and his wife seemed to be filled with the Holy Spirit."²⁷ Had the evangelist sensed any hint of life-changing ramifications for him, for his family, and for the Brethren in Christ in general of this seemingly chance first encounter with the Hephzibah Faith leader, he had but a few months to wait. For that fall, in response to what each believed to be the call of God to Japan, Worcester and twenty-four-year-old Tabor student Fred Smelser²⁸ set out overland to the west coast, stopping overnight at the Zook farm north of Abilene en route.²⁹

Thinking back on what his guests had said at table that night, the evangelist wondered if his son David³⁰ was justified in believing that the community which had sent out Worcester and Smelser was in fact the model of piety and faith-driven self-supporting mission in action so needed by the Brethren in Christ. Noah Zook's visit to Tabor a few months later served only to confirm the rightness of his son's evaluation both of its methodology and its practitioners. There he was pleased to report he found "a very plain self denying people," similar to his ideal for the Brethren in Christ, "both as to their way of living and their dress, discarding all useless ornaments and evil habits," and having, he believed, "much of the true spirit of humility" and "powerful in prayer."³¹

Tabor was not alone. Meetings Noah's son, David, conducted a few months later at Zion church north of Abilene during a ten-day stopover with his parents en route to Japan



Laura and Ira Eisenhower, aunt and uncle to Dwight Eisenhower

were to be similarly blessed. There, the young evangelist reported: "The Lord wonderfully manifested his power. Many were convicted of their need of the second definite work of grace in their hearts" and "many were at the altar and sought," as he himself had, "to have everything taken away that would hinder them in receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost,"³² the true source of power of service. For David Zook and for the dozens of Brethren in Christ who followed in his steps to Tabor and beyond, this teaching was to be the very foundation stone of the Spartan life and sacrificial ministry to which they believed themselves to be called. It was this fruit of deep personal consecration (recognition of the special callings of individuals) which made any viable church-backed missions outreach possible, as well as the secret behind the reclamation and sending forth, among others, of the Eisenhower brothers, Ira³³ and Abe, and their transformation into the "fiery" and effective advocates of holiness.

The presence in South Dickinson County of the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association was the product of a rift in 1904 in the Rosebank congregation, in which George Weavers' preaching against wearing the prayer veiling,³⁴ seems to have been an issue, and included Ira and Laura Eisenhower³⁵ and his sister, Catherine Haldeman. But this undoubted irritant seems in no way to have stemmed the flow of "the called" to Tabor, where (if judged by the number of prayer coverings alone)³⁶ the Brethren in Christ presence was undiminished.³⁷

Then there were those River Brethren whose faithfulness to ancient truths shone as a beacon, such as Miss Emma Herr who was principal of the Bible Training School from 1902 to 1929³⁸ when failing eyesight forced her to retire. She was "a very qualified teacher" from Kansas "who perhaps did more for the school," said Paul Worcester, "than any one person." David Zook's cousin, Elder Jacob M. Zook,³⁹ was president (1926-1944) of the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association. During his presidency, in 1936 a clause was added to the Association's statement of principles declaring "our conviction . . . that all war is wrong, and that no war is

justifiable according to the New Testament.”⁴⁰ The conviction behind this declaration—itsself proof that the yeast of anti-war, an age-old staple of the River Brethren mind, had indeed leavened the whole lump—was then and would continue to mark largely voiceless dispersed former adherents of the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association in Holiness churches long after the decade and a half then remaining to the Association had passed.⁴¹

NOTES

¹ William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), p. 686.

² In 1880 the Brethren in Christ consisted of 864 households in the United States and Canada. Of this total 415 were in Pennsylvania of which 276 were in the five counties (Lancaster, Cumberland, Dauphin, Lebanon, and Franklin) from whence the majority of the Dickinson County, Kansas, colonists came. Of the remaining 449 households, 165 were in Ohio, 146 in Ontario, 68 in Illinois, 1 in Wisconsin, 23 in Indiana, 15 in Kansas, 11 in Iowa, 8 in New York, and (although no River Brethren remained in Frederick County from whence some had come) 7 in Maryland. See Carlton O. Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience: the Story of the Brethren in Christ* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1978), pp. 555-556.

³ The focus of Dickinson County had shifted from cattle to grain within the decade. See Craig Miner, *West of Wichita: Settling the High Plains of Kansas, 1865-1890* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 1986), p. 36.

⁴ Phrase coined by H. Richard Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951).

⁵ See Paul W. Worcester, *The Master Key: the Story of the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association* (Kansas City, Mo.: Printed for the author by the Nazarene Publishing House, 1966).

⁶ Violence and bloodshed, which from 1867 to 1871 had come to characterize Abilene as a railhead for Texas cattle drives, were brought under control by measures taken by Marshal “Wild Bill” Hickok, whose services (no longer needed) were terminated on

December 13, 1871. The next year the bulk of the cattle trade shifted to Ellsworth and points further west. See Floyd Benjamin Streeter, *Prairie Trails & Cow Towns: The Opening of the Old West* (New York: Devon Adair, 1963, c1936), pp. 70-92.

⁷ See Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 134-137.

⁸ In Dickinson County, following the lead of Abilene in 1884, were Bethel twelve miles northeast and Zion seven miles north in 1887, Rosebank near Ramona in 1890, Belle Springs in 1891, and Newbern in 1892. See Wilma I. Musser, "Brethren in Christ Churches in Kansas," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (August 1991), 157-164.

⁹ See Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 262-268.

¹⁰ Recounted in Gladys Dodd, "The Early Career of Abraham L. Eisenhower, Pioneer Preacher," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 29 (Autumn 1963), p. 236.

¹¹ The parents of President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

¹² For teachings of Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916) and of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, forerunner of Jehovah's Witnesses, and the response of the Brethren in Christ to the attraction of Henry Engle, Dave and Ida Eisenhower, and others to them, see Gladys Dodd, "The Religious Background of the Eisenhower Family (Thesis (B.D.)-Nazarene Theological Seminary, 1959), I. 221-243; and Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 155 and 265-267.

¹³ Upon referral from the Kansas district council, the 1891 General Conference declared the principles of Russellism "pernicious and misleading." Ten years later a request to General Conference for reconsideration by an "impartial" committee resulted in refusal to reopen the matter. See Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 155.

¹⁴ A reference to the restored Jerusalem in Isaiah 62:4 (AV): "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken . . . ; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah . . . ; for the Lord delighteth in thee. . . ."

¹⁵ At some point the "s" was dropped from the spelling of his name. Later usage is illustrated in the designation of the church building in Tabor constructed after his death as Weaver Memorial Chapel (and from 1949 on as Weaver Memorial Church of the Nazarene). See Worcester, *The Master Key*, pp. 18, 28 and 61.

¹⁶ A journal published in New York which, continuing the teaching of its founding editor Phoebe Palmer (1807–1874), stressed the primacy of thorough-going consecration as prerequisite for assurance of entire sanctification. Widely used in the North American Holiness movement by those trying to assist seekers after entire sanctification, the so-called “altar terminology” relied heavily on Matthew 23:19b (AV): “the altar . . . sanctifieth the gift.” It would become central to the focus of followers of Weavers and Worcester as well.

¹⁷ The epitaph on his tombstone at Mount Zion southeast of Tabor would read: “A man not afraid to preach the truth.”

¹⁸ The effectiveness of Weavers’ advocacy of faith healing and public confession of sin during three evangelistic tours in South Africa between October 1895 and 1902 remained fixed in the memories both of nationals and established missionaries decades afterward. For information concerning the tours, see Worcester, *The Master Key*, p. 37. For the style, impact and content of Weavers’ preaching, see James B. McCord, *My Patients Were Zulus* (New York: Rinehart, 1951), pp. 42-44.

¹⁹ Vice president of the Association, editor of *Sent of God* and Bible teacher, L. B. Worcester recruited and accompanied faith missionaries to the Orient in 1894, 1898, and 1905. See Worcester, *The Master Key*, pp. 25-28.

²⁰ Carolyn Kimmel, *No Turning Back: The Inspiring Stories of the First Brethren in Christ Missionaries* (Grantham, Pa.: Brethren in Christ World Missions, 2007), p. 3.

²¹ Entry in council records for 1882 quoted in Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 111.

²² The re-worked article on sanctification adopted by the General Conference in 1910 replaced the gradualism of the 1887 article with one delineating sanctification as the “grace of cleansing completed”: a second crisis (though it did not use the term) in a process of sanctification begun in justification which would be preceded in all cases, advocates believed, by a thorough-going consecration of all time, talents, and treasure to the Lord. See Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 246-247.

²³ Quoted from “An Appeal,” by Isaac Shockey in the *Evangelical Visitor* (February 1, 1889). See Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 112, 126.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 167-168.

²⁵ The tent meeting, a startling evangelistic innovation for them, had been introduced among the Brethren in Christ only four years before by Jacob Eisenhower, father of Dave, Abe, and Ira, and the grandfather of the future president. See Dodd, "The Religious Background of the Eisenhower Family," l. 167-169.

²⁶ Georgia, twenty-one-year-old daughter of George Weavers, had been song leader in her father's meetings near Knox, Iowa, in which Leonard Beecher Worcester learned of, sought, and professed to experience entire sanctification. See Worcester, *The Master Key*, p. 25.

²⁷ Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 237.

²⁸ The parents of Fred Smelser, a cripple from birth, had given their bright son an early education better than the average Iowa farm boy of the day as an aid to broadening occupational choices. He had been converted three years earlier at Athelstan, Iowa, under the ministry of George Weavers who had invited him to come to Tabor to assist in the printing office. See Dodd, "The Religious Background of the Eisenhower Family," l. 189-190, 356.

²⁹ Leaving the next day the two continued cross-country to Rocky Ford, Colorado, where they were able to sell their rig for all but \$25 needed for their train fare to San Francisco and for ship passage from there to Seattle and on to Japan. Standing on the pier in Seattle, Worcester was reputed just to have received reassurance of the steadfastness of his partner's faith when a stranger appeared with required amount. Embarking on January 16, 1895, they proceeded to Japan and the establishment of the Hephzibah Faith Mission on Theater Street in Yokohama. In 1901 Fred Smelser married Mary Long who was to be his companion in ministry for the next eighteen years. (Mrs. Smelser was the sister of Jeremiah I. Long, notable in the annals of Brethren in Christ missions for having chosen in 1897 to accompany Worcester to Japan after "having declined an invitation to become second man" in the church-backed "Jesse Engle mission party" then bound for Africa). For biographies and testimonies of converts of their own and kindred missions, see Mr. and Mrs. F. L. Smelser, *Miracles of Grace in Japan* (Kansas City, Mo.: Franklin Hudson Publishing Co., 1908). For Worcester and Jeremiah I. Long, see Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 237-238. For Worcester's and the Smelsers' ministries in Japan, and

for Fred Smelser's later ministry in the homeland, see Worcester, *The Master Key*, pp. 38, 41-44; and "A Brother of the Lord (Fred Smelser)," by Gladys Dodd in *A Kindled Flame: Holiness Bible School, Gravette, Arkansas, 1927-1997* (Gravette, Ark.: Gravette Holiness Bible School Alumni Association, 1997), pp. 130-133. Smelser taught and served as de facto superintendent of the Holiness Bible School at Gravette, Arkansas, from 1928 to 1944.

³⁰ David (1872-1941) was to serve in Japan from 1896 to 1898 and from in India from 1898 to 1934 under the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association. Three other children of Noah and Mary Zook, who also served under the Association, died of disease on the field: Sara (1874-1900) in Southern Rhodesia; Eber (1875-1900) in India; and Rhoda (1881-1908) in India. All apparently remained Brethren in Christ. Of the first Brethren in Christ named, only Frances Davidson, Jesse and Elizabeth Engle, Adda Engle, Barbara Hershey, and Alice Heisey were unrelated to the Zook family. See Kimmel, *No Turning Back*. For Brethren in Christ with ties to the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association, see Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 235-237.

³¹ Quoted from "Home Again," by Noah Zook in *Evangelical Visitor*, April 1, 1895, p. 106. Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 230, 253.

³² Quoted from "Enroute for India," by D. W. Zook in *Evangelical Visitor*, February 1, 1896, p. 37. Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 236, 254.

³³ "The fiery evangelist," the phrase which in 1966 Paul Worcester used to describe Ira Eisenhower under whose ministry, at the altar during a revival meeting at Mount Zion Church southeast of Tabor in the fall of 1912, he as a nineteen-year-old had found peace: "It was there God forgave all my sins and healed my backsliding. From that day to this, I have served the Lord." Reiterated in Worcester, *The Master Key*, pp. 52-55.

³⁴ Dodd, "The Religious Background of the Eisenhower Family," l. 201.

³⁵ Gladys Dodd, who knew Mrs. Eisenhower well, said Katie kept her prayer covering "planted virtuously and firmly on her stubborn Dutch head until the day she died in 1930." Dodd, "The Religious Background of the Eisenhower Family," l. 339.

³⁶ In describing Brethren in Christ women students at Tabor, Paul Worcester showed no understanding of the reason for the prayer veiling: "Many of the ladies with their little white caps . . . came to the school," but "I never remember any preaching against the wearing" them. "The Tabor people were pleased, however, when [some of] the girls decided to remove the caps." See Dodd, *The Master Key*, p. 32.

³⁷ Probably not less than one-fifth of the approximately 130 workers the Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association had sent forth by 1951, when it was forced to disband, had ties to the Brethren in Christ. See list in Worcester, *The Master Key*, pp. 38-40.

³⁸ Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 237. Emma Herr is pictured without the prayer covering in Worcester, *The Master Key*, p. 33.

³⁹ In 1901, J. M. Zook and his wife, Mary, and A. L. Eisenhower and his wife, Anna, had been incorporators of the Jabbok Faith Training Home and Orphanage near Thomas, Oklahoma Territory. See Dodd, "The Early Career of Abraham L. Eisenhower, Pioneer Preacher," pp. 242-243.

⁴⁰ Paul Worcester, grandson of the founder, Civil War veteran George Weavers, attributed the action to Brethren in Christ influence. For text of the anti-war clause and Worcester's analysis, see Dodd, "The Religious Background of the Eisenhower Family," l. 354-355.

⁴¹ One after another it turned work over to other agencies: that in China and Japan to the Oriental Missionary Society; that in India to the United Missionary Society; that in South Africa to the Church of the Nazarene; and that in Haiti to the Wesleyan Methodist Church, most of the churches and an Indian school at Hot Springs, South Dakota in 1948. The Bible school, the camp meeting, and the church in Tabor united with the Church of the Nazarene two years later.

Dipping My Foot in the Vast Waters of Poetry

*By Nathan Rosentrater **

I can remember sitting next to my mother on the velvet-padded piano bench in our family's living room, listening to her play, basking in the rhythm and sound of the instrument while her fingers softly touched the keys. Little more than a babe and not yet able to talk, I felt, though I did not fully grasp, a sort of connection with the language of music, harmony and symmetry, and naturally I desired to enter into it myself. Although I knew no words to express my solidarity with the music gracing my ears (or any words at all), I discovered the sound "dah" which enabled me to join in with the music, matching each "dah" with a beat and note of the music I heard. When I say I discovered "dah," I do not so much mean that I created it, but rather that it slipped out of me as a response to my inner resonance with the sound.

I first and primarily "dahed" along with the songs "Jesus Loves Me" and "I Love to Tell the Story" while my mom played the piano and sang the real words with me. Thus, even before I could talk, I possessed an interest in the sounds and rhythms of words and lyrics. Thankfully, my mother and my father nurtured me musically and verbally by exposing me to God-honoring songs and writings. Accordingly, to this day I cherish old hymns; their typical combination of beautiful music, well defined rhythm, rhyme, and significant Christian

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content have struck a chord with me since I uttered my first “dah.”

While I did not begin composing ballads, sonnets or hymns while in my crib like a Mozart-esque prodigy, the love of poetry secretly smoldered somewhere down inside me. My first original officially documented rhyme dates back to 1996–1997. Like many children of my age, I entertained a slight unease about darkness. In an attempt to provide comfort as well as a helpful reminder for myself to safeguard against nighttime timidities, I composed the following saying: “Sleep tight while the night light's bright.” Rather than puzzling over a blank sheet of paper, deliberating over whether or not to employ consonance so liberally as I did, or experimenting with various rhyme schemes or formal poetic structures, I simply rolled off of my tongue the words that danced and rung inside my head. In that moment, poetry was untouched and precious, an almost involuntary expression of an inward sentiment, clothed in the innocent and giddy rhyme of an eight-year-old child.

Exposed to hymns at an early age, I subconsciously came to associate poetry with music and vice versa. They seemed to combine so flawlessly; I soon discovered that I could compose music and lyrics (poetic and/or rhyming) separately and join them together into one new entity. My propensity for musical composition and my love for words converged when I was about eight years old. Having taken some piano and electric bass lessons, and having taught myself to play the drum set, I began to compose songs and lyrics. My first composition (recorded with my brother) was titled “Heaven” and retold a story of my mother witnessing to a neighbor, followed by a description of Heaven and a call to repentance in the chorus. The first half of the chorus simply declared, “Believe in Jesus, to go to Heaven.”

Admittedly, the simple theology of that composition may spark some debate; in fact I would offer clarification for the chorus were I distributing the song to people now. Yet, regardless of singing a slightly incomplete theology, I was

using my writing for good, to proclaim gospel messages to the best of my ability.

Another one of my earliest songs dubbed "Care Bear" (yes, I agree the title sounds silly) proclaimed simple gospel messages about Christ, his love in caring for his own, bearing their burdens, and ultimately dying on the cross for sins.

Seduced by rhyme, I quickly became enthralled by rap music and I purchased several Christian rap albums. Soon afterward, I bought a Gemini turntable (for record scratching) with money I had saved up and I recorded some of my own rap songs with recording equipment at home. I recorded the rap tracks "I love Jesus," a song about my coming to know and love Jesus, and "Allegiance," a song about pledging my allegiance to Jesus Christ rather than to an earthly kingdom, namely the United States. During my early days of writing and recording songs, I loved to tell the story of Jesus' love and greatness.

Somewhere along the line, however, my lyrics became more, though not entirely, preoccupied with other matters of life, struggles, interesting experiences, heartbreak, regret, and girls. I strayed from my roots and left God an increasingly small allotment in my lyrics. I became quite self-focused in my music and the words of my compositions featured me and my experiences more than they did God. My trend of self-absorbency in my music naturally carried over into my poetry; a certain crush dominated the subject matter of my experimentation in and pioneering of this new (to me) verbal medium for the first few years.

I remember the day I dipped my foot into the vast waters of poetry; it was the summer of 2004 in Japan on a mission trip. Having worked hard on little sleep for several days, my body made me settle down by giving me a cold. I stayed in the missionary's home to recuperate while the others on the service team left early in the morning to clean up flood damage. All alone in the upstairs room in the afternoon, lying in my sleeping bag, I found a pencil and opened my notebook to see what would happen. It was love or affection that drove poetry out of me. I did not know it dwelt within me exactly,

but it basically forced itself out of my being. My thoughts and feelings had to be set free and poetry was the vessel by which they escaped.

Years later, even the poems not concerning that old crush, memories and emotions, mostly centered upon me and my feelings of self-pity and regret. I told a new story, a story of myself, of disappointment and loss, rather than testifying to the hope, joy, contentment and new life in Christ. I had not yet internalized and followed Apostle Paul's example of "forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead." I wrote and thought like one of those Apostle Peter described who had "forgotten that he ha[d] been cleansed from his past sins."

As I wrote more, I began to experiment with different rhyme schemes and styles. Additionally, poetry functioned for many years as my word-smith shop in which I attempted to craft unique phrases and my library in which to discover new words. Writing a poem was an adventure or expedition seeking titillating and seldom-used words to enhance my vocabulary and consequently my expressive capability. More recently, I have dabbled in a few new poetic forms and have fashioned poems in varying meters.

From the beginning, poetry functioned as a vehicle for self-expression, a release, a way of thinking through deep emotions and thoughts, drawing them out of my soul and deep places of my mind. While poignantly expressing my inner thoughts, my intricate verbiage concealed intimate and incredibly meaningful elements; the work of my hands spoke powerfully back to me, summoning snippets of old quotations from friends and foes, golden or tattered memories of a faded childhood, combining them into an emotional force evident to me, yet significantly hidden from others. Since my poems were so personally oriented and one word or phrase contained several layers of intricate and specific meaning, they would come across as vague to most readers, failing—both intentionally and unavoidably—to communicate the same connections and substance to other readers that my poems did to me.

Reflecting on my past after having taken several college English courses with Dr. Crystal Downing at Messiah College, I have come to recognize the commonality of human attraction to poetry and rhyme. It seems that the poetic characteristics hardwired into most of us express themselves in various ways. First of all, our invention of terms like zig zag, riff raff, and pitter patter, indicates an innate attachment to poetic qualities. In another instance, the rhythm and tone pattern of the phrase “na na na na boo boo” almost universally registers in people's minds as a taunt; we somehow equate rhythms, sounds and word patterns with certain emotions, memories, and connotations. Even our everyday speech naturally follows a falling and rising pattern of iambic meter.

Having been enlightened to these facts, I have come to realize the power and potential inherent in poetry to connect with and impact a wide range of people. I have discovered that my poetry can amount to more than mere words on a paper, satisfying my appetite for rhyme; it actually possesses the capacity to speak to people effectively and serve as a unique and potent tool to present the truths of my faith. I have witnessed very talented musicians turning away from their Godly roots, and I think to myself about their wasted talent. I look at poets with incredible imagination and evocative proclivity, but who live lives and write poems that are empty, bereft of power, and distant from the desires of the Creator. Their negative example spurs me on to maximize my humble poetic aptitude for the kingdom of God.

Spending time in silence listening to God, I have clearly understood him on several occasions urging me to write songs and words for him, for his kingdom and glory, rather than burying my talent in the ground as it were. I do not want my lyrics and poems to edify only myself and be stripped of their potential impact on the world. At this point in my writing career, I am endeavoring to write my poems and songs accessibly—without useless multiple layers of intentionally cloaked and purely personal meanings—so that other people may easily understand them and that the messages of my words (or God's words through my lyrics and poems) might

impact people, inspiring them to serve the Lord. I know my words will prove more powerful, more beneficial, and more worthwhile now and eternally if I let God use me as a channel, a pencil, to transcribe his words and heart to others. By his grace, God has returned me to the place where I love to tell the story of Jesus and his love in my music and poetry once again.

From Rome with . . .

Hearts! Flowers! Kiss! Stomachy butterflies
 in-fluttering. Crimson carnations crowned
 with white, sweet trifles boxed and bound with bows
 hallowed, adorned as with holy halos.
 While Cupid's darts—desire—hearts confound,
 Lascivious Juno on bier lies,

On Dead, the humble saint in Flaminus,
 Bed made a sepulcher, too holy he.
 Red, Red the blood that spattered, cruelly shed,
 Spurts from his careworn, battered, rolling head.
 Love's martyr, kissed by pain, drab, memory!
 Slavering buzzards' veneration: dross.
 Likewise the spurious homage paid fourteen,
 Garbs Love and Faith in scant, lewd rags obscene.

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Rainy Day

I've been saving back an umbrella
 waiting for a rainy day
 on which with kin or bellé
 a word and walk to take.

Mellifluous the syllables
 Which sing inside my ear.
 But sweeter still the murmur
 Of drizzle din we hear.

Descending: cleansing purity
 Washing away all timidity
 From thoughts inside an estuary
 Soaring, swirling, swooping, wanting to be free.

I've been saving back an umbrella
 And the time has finally come around.
 My sole companion, no stolid Estella,
 But the rain's soft, serene, pattering sound.

Epigrams

Your kingdom come Your will on earth be done,
 Just not by me, my wife, my friends, my son.

I loved my neighbor as myself today;
 I built high walls to keep him far away.

Always Reaching (lyrics to song recorded in summer
 2009)

The first exhilarating breath in our lungs, set a pattern for
 chasing after wind, to be
 Remembered and pleased while we're young, to reach a
 pinnacle underneath the sun.

Always reaching out for what we do not have. Elusive.
 Chase the life and fortune of another man.
 Disappointed . . .

My kingdom come my will be done, on earth my only
heaven. All pleasure now for lesser gain. Lies feigning
God for good exchanged.

Has anyone focused his eyes, on the interests of Jesus
Christ? Are we seeing naught but
Darkness with our eyes, while the moth and rust devour
our lives?

Always reaching. . . .

Your Kingdom come Your will be done, on earth just as in
Heaven. Your wonders may all
Lives proclaim, (and) in reverence glorify Your name.

Your Kingdom come Your will be done, on earth just as it
is in Heaven.

(Some inspiration and references from Ecclesiastes,
Matthew 6, Romans 1, Philippians 2, etc.)

Reflections on a Lifetime Journey

*By Harold Sider **

Early Years

I was born into a family with Brethren in Christ ancestors going back for six generations and to parents who were consistent in following the practices and doctrines of the Brethren in Christ Church. As a first-born child I was given plenty of attention, but I experienced many fears. I remember fear of dogs, and I was afraid of going to the barber, because he might pull my hair. As a five-year-old boy, I was made afraid by the then current news of Japan invading China. Could war come here? These fears contributed to my “going forward” in a revival at our church, at the end of the service. After my confession and prayer, I claimed by faith that I was “saved.” My fears were gone.

Later that year, our family moved back to the home community of the Siders, where the Wainfleet Church included many uncles, aunts, and cousins. The one-room elementary school was ruled by Mr. Elsworth, who had begun his teaching career at that same school when my father was a student there. Although other Brethren in Christ students attended the school, there was some negative stigma in being called a “Tunker,” the commonly used name for Brethren in Christ in Canada at that time.

* Harold Sider, now living in retirement in Upland, California, was principal of Western Christian schools and a deacon of the Upland Brethren in Christ Church.

Although I was a good student and had some good friends, the desire to fit in contributed to a time when I deliberately denied my position as a Christian, by including swear words in my conversation and trying a few puffs on a cigarette. This was all kept from my parents. Fortunately, there were other revival meetings when I confessed my sins and again committed to do what was right.

Confession also meant restitution and confession to the one sinned against. A hard one for me was to go to Mr. Elsworth and confess that I had lied to him. My experience with him was typical. For chewing gum, I was pulled to the front and stood in the corner with my back to all, a lesson to anyone who might also be tempted to this activity. After a *long* time, he came back to me and said, "Where is the gum?" I motioned that it was in my shirt pocket. My lie was that I had found a crack and made that the home for my spent gum. With my father's help I went to Mr. Elsworth with my confession and he promptly forgave me.

The Wainfleet congregation is remembered for its typical pattern of worship, not unlike other Brethren in Christ congregations. Men sat on one side and women on the other. Songs were sung without help from any instrument. When it was prayer time, all members knelt facing the back. Evening services usually had a time for testimonies. Young people were expected to share occasionally, as were adults, with a word about their current spiritual status. This was one of the most difficult things I was expected to do.

Sunday school classes were separated for boys and girls. Remembered are faithful teachers who had the same classes year after year. The boys looked forward to picnics at their teacher's home.

My high school years were war years. Despite gas rationing, my parents sacrificed so I could spend four years at our church school, then called Ontario Bible School, now Niagara Christian Collegiate. Certainly the dedicated teachers and the Christian influence had a tremendous impact on my life. Fortunately the student body included students from other denominations. Friendship with students from differing

backgrounds broadened my perspectives. There were also times of revival where my Christian faith and my commitment to follow the Lord were strengthened.

In the year after high school I received my call for military service. There was no question in my mind that military service was not for Christians. Therefore I applied as a conscientious objector and was surprised when my request was denied. An appeal before a judge was preceded by sincere prayers, and prayers were answered. For the next two years I was in Alternate Service assignments. This involved farm work, an opportunity to share in the care of 800 horses being shipped from Baltimore to Poland, and then work in a John Deere assembly plant, with part of my earnings going to the Red Cross. It was a great time for expanding my view of the world.

I followed the denomination's position on plain clothes, but I seldom found it difficult not to wear a necktie. It was not a big issue for me. At the end of our senior year at Ontario Bible School, my close friend, Roy Sider, and I both ordered new suits with clerical vests, thus obviating the need for a necktie. Not until I was a college freshman was I given a "Frosh" tie to wear, and warned to have it on before coming to the dining hall for dinner. Again, this was not a big issue, and I complied.

College years, spent at a secular college, did not threaten my faith development over my formative years. Here I spent four years living in a dormitory, with two classmates, whose Christian faith was not like mine. Jack was a faithful Roman Catholic and Chuck was from a Methodist background. Jack was married after the third year; Chuck and I stayed together for four years. We still keep in touch. Jack passed away some years ago. On most weekends, I spent college years away from the Brethren in Christ.

A chance meeting with a fellow student led me to a local Baptist Church that he attended. He was an Air Force veteran with a wife and small son. When they learned that I could fit into a male quartet which had just lost a member, I became a part of York Road Baptist Church for most of four years.

My friend, Ralph Nelson, was a year ahead of me in college, but he and Miriam and his congregation took me in as one of them. Not only did the quartet open doors for me, but also several of the church girls were available when I needed a date for a college function. When it came time for me to graduate from college, a farewell time was spent with church friends. I was presented with a Bible, with the inscription "In remembrance of the years of sweet fellowship in the Master's service."

I maintained my membership with the Wainfleet Church during college years. On one occasion at a Wainfleet revival I again went to the altar to pray for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. After prayer and counseling, I claimed anew my willingness to let the Holy Spirit occupy the throne of my heart. This is still my commitment to God.

Upon conclusion of college and teacher training, I returned to teach at the same Christian school I had attended. In respect to those with weak conscience, I again followed tradition by not wearing a necktie.

At a twenty-year college reunion, when memories were being shared, I was encouraged when one of my former classmates said he remembered me because I did not do homework on Sunday.

He Leadeth Me

As I look back on my life, I see the hand of God leading me, sometimes through open doors. At other times he led through closed doors. In hindsight we often see how God's plan is always best.

I first look at my parents who were committed to serve as missionaries, but returned to their home community of Wainfleet in 1933. The Home Mission Board had assigned them to the Iron Springs congregation in Pennsylvania, but the Great Depression left too little money to maintain their mission. They returned to Canada with three sons and no income.

Through difficult days they were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Lois, following the births of Neale and Ronald, and a gradually increasing ministry. Blessings have been for them and for their children who grew up in a community with a strong church, good schools, and an extended family. Each of these children grew to be responsible Christian adults.

As the first-born child, I was taught much at home. At Mr. Elsworth's one-room school I was able to complete through grade eight in only six years, thanks to Mother's home schooling. Despite financial limitation I was sent to our church school in Fort Erie, gaining great benefit from my parents' sacrifice. After graduation I had no vocational plans. Following an academic program, I enrolled for grade thirteen at Welland High School. This prepared me for college, but where? And why? Since there was a shortage of teachers, there was an option of taking one year at Normal School to obtain a credential for elementary teachers. With little thought of other options, I enrolled in September 1945 at Hamilton Normal School.

The first weeks went well, including visits to local elementary schools. I was enjoying life with a buddy sharing a room as guests of a grandmother living near the school. Then on October 30, I received an official notice to see the principal. The purpose of the meeting was to inform me that I was being discharged from Normal School because of a health problem. What a shock! The health problem was an ear infection which was being treated.

What could I do? I well remember going to a nearby park with my books. I was depressed. Then a lone man, who seemed to be a transient, came over to me and asked about my depression. I was glad to share my story. He proceeded to give me some needed encouragement. This included a look at all the possibilities available to me. I have often thought that he might have been a real angel in disguise.

A few weeks later I went to a special meeting at Ontario Bible School. During some free time, I was approached by John Hostetter, who was then president. He seemed to know about my frustration and offered me a new challenge. A high

school teacher was needed. Would I be interested in preparing for this position? When I acknowledged an interest, he proposed the following: If I would commit to this proposal, Ontario Bible School would share my college costs for four years, with repayment being my service as their science teacher for at least four years. It did not take long for me to accept this as God's will for my life. God had closed one door and opened another.

In the fall of 1947, I enrolled in the academic program of the Ontario Agricultural College. Since they did not require the grade thirteen courses I had taken, I was ahead of many of my classmates, the majority of whom were war veterans. I followed my four years at Ontario Agricultural College by a year at the University of Toronto's Ontario College of Education. After the year of instruction and directed teaching, I felt ready for a career as science teacher at what was now called Niagara Christian College (NCC).

Four years at NCC were a great beginning for a teaching career. I much enjoyed living with the boys in the dormitory, along with my teacher role. Living a single life was good, but there was something missing. God had greater things in store. At the 1953 General Conference, held at NCC, a common cousin introduced me to a California girl named Ardys Charles. We shared in little more than an introduction at that General Conference. However, we arranged to meet again at the next General Conference held at Messiah College. Here we spent more time together and I had the feeling that this was the one with whom I could share my life. After the Conference, Ardys joined my parent and me in the drive up to Wainfleet. Here we had several days together before she took a plane home to California. Near the end of August, I drove my car to Detroit and picked up a new Ford for delivery to an auto dealer in Los Angeles. I cruised into Upland a few days later and spent three or four days with Ardys before going to Los Angeles for a flight home.

During the 1954–1955 school year, we shared by letter and telephone. Most significantly we made plans for another meeting at Christmas. I drove my little British-made Morris

Minor on my second cross-country trip. We announced our engagement and made plans for a June wedding.

The next General Conference was at Upland. I made my third trip across country in the same compact car. With me were my parents and most of my possessions in a rack on top of the car. Immediately after Conference we were married in the Upland church. Through some challenging discussion, we had decided to make our first home in Upland. As we learned to know each other better, we were convinced that God had led us to be together. Our common heritage in the Brethren in Christ Church and similarities in background made our adjustments easier, despite both being past the usual marrying age. My commitment to NCC was met, and I looked forward to God's next place for me to serve.

During the summer of 1955, I found summer employment with Sunkist Citrus and learned where many groves and packing houses were still big business. At the same time I was searching for a teaching job in September. Again we felt the leading of our heavenly Father when I was given a contract to teach in a large public high school in Riverside as a chemistry teacher. This proved to be a good match with my interest and experience. After one year of driving from Upland, we bought a small house in Riverside and moved there for my second year as chemistry teacher. Our family also increased to three with the birth of a son, Bruce.

When my second year of teaching was nearly over, I was given a contract for a third year at Riverside. At the same time, Dr. John Z. Martin approached me with the offer of becoming the science teacher at Upland Academy, a church-sponsored Christian high school. I viewed that as an opportunity to again share in a Christian school. The major problem was the reduced salary offered. At NCC I was accustomed to a salary lower than in public schools. However, I now had a wife at home with a baby and another child on the way. We also had our home in Riverside to consider. After much prayer and deliberating, we decided that I should return to teaching in a Christian school. The Lord would help us with our needs, and he did. For my third year in California, I was



Wedding portrait of Ardys (Charles) and Harold Sider (all photographs in this article are courtesy of Harold and Ardys Sider)

driving to Upland every day and some evenings while Ardys was missing her friends in Upland. The birth of our daughter Donna kept her quite confined at home.

The Lord is faithful as we follow him. At the end of my third year living in Riverside, we were given the opportunity to move to Upland in housing provided by Upland College. For the next two and a half years, Ardys served as school nurse, dorm mother and college dean of women. I took on the additional challenge of becoming a teaching principal. Our children benefitted by having many college girls to share their care.

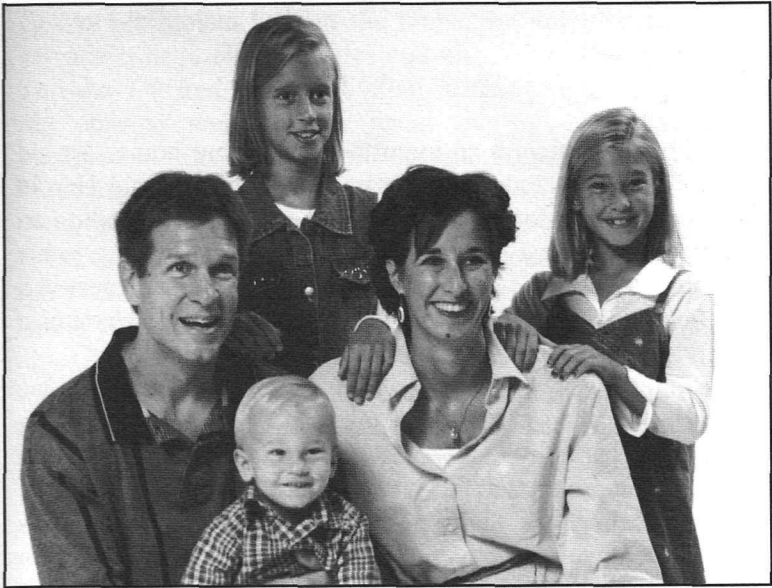
After the 1962–1963 school year, Upland Academy became Western Christian Schools. We were able to sell our Riverside house and purchase a house only a block from the Upland church. How blessed we are as we continue to enjoy this Upland home.

The story of how Upland Academy became Western Christian Schools is another story of God's leadings. From our perspective, it is a series of miracles. During more than forty years of service as a "teaching principal," we have seen the school grow, now serving several hundred students on each of two campuses. We are thankful that we could be a part of the growth and expanded ministry of the school.

Since coming to Upland as a teacher in 1957, I have observed and experienced God's guidance in the process of moving the Brethren in Christ institution, the Upland Academy, to become Western Christian Schools. It was a series of seeming miracles that made possible the opening of Western Christian High School in September of 1962 as an independent Christian school. As principal-teacher, I had reasons to seek God's help and guidance. In addition to studying and earning a Masters Degree in education, I joined a young organization called California Association of Christian Schools. We planned and carried out a fall convention each year to help our teachers and programs become "first rate." In addition to being one of the members to sign our original Constitution, I served as treasurer for several years. Through



Sider family photograph. Left to right: Donna, Harold, Ardys, Bruce



Bruce Sider's family. Standing: Jenna (left), Daniela (right). Seated, Jordan with parents Bruce and Pam

growth and mergers, we became the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI).

Western Christian Schools now has campuses in Claremont and Upland, including preschools and a home schooling support program, with a total enrollment of about 1,500. Our Upland campus is new to us, and is less than a mile from our 1920 beginning in the original Upland Brethren in Christ church. My role with other Christian Schools broadened my vision and led to my sharing in accreditation work. Over a period of about fourteen years, I participated as a member of the visiting team for ten schools, including Lutheran, Adventist, Baptist, and Reformed schools, the last six as committee chairman.

As a retired couple, we now look back on a lifetime of ministry with Christian families, Harold as educator and Ardys as office nurse with a Christian doctor, then as a nurse in a Christian retirement home. Our children are now in their productive years, following the Lord in the areas where he has called them.

In reflection, I can only say, "God has been our guide."

Music in the Family

Music was always an important part of our home. An old picture album includes a photograph of four-year-old Harold preparing to sing for his mother and a guest. He is standing on a small stool with a song book in his hand and bowing to his receptive audience. I am told that when an expected guest in a neighboring church did not arrive, I was brought to share as a special singer, for which I received a \$5.00 honorarium.

Singing was also a part of Mr. Elsworth's school. One year most of the students were taken to Port Colborne to sing in two-part harmony in the United Church. Some time later we repeated the program at the Welland church.

Our father was the song leader at our church, but his involvement went far beyond this role. Shortly after our return to Canada he became a part of a male quartet, which became

known as the Wainfleet Gospel Four. These men met in their various homes to sing, just for the joy of singing gospel songs. We boys soon learned the songs too. Before long we had a Junior Quartet. This quartet included both me and my brother Neale. These young men were good enough to be invited as guest musicians. We once sang at a Youth for Christ rally. Other trips to sing included at summer camp meeting, at a youth conference in Pennsylvania, and at a skid row mission in Detroit. We also sang for a number of Christian radio broadcasts. We had matching suits which included the clerical vest with no necktie.

Within our home we enjoyed singing and instrumental music. Another cherished picture, taken in our living room, shows Mother sitting in her easy chair with a contented smile as Lois is playing the piano, Ronald is playing his accordion, Harold and Neale are both playing their violins, and Dad is adding the bass on his trombone. This group performed once, as I remember, in the Buffalo Mission Chapel. Four-part singing was common; it was the way we sang in church. Learning to read music came naturally in this family.

As we moved beyond the home, we enjoyed sharing in various college choral groups and choirs. During my year at Toronto, I shared in the high school music program along with my science work. As a result of my informal music background, my high school teaching credential included vocal music as an area in which I was qualified to teach.

We also learned to appreciate classical music; the best remembered is Handel's "Messiah." Despite limited finances, our tradition was to drive to Toronto before Christmas to listen to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and to hear a professional choir sing this masterpiece. What a thrill to hear this great music in the atmosphere of Massey Hall! Although we have shared in singing and hearing "The Messiah" many times, it never loses its thrill.

Church Loyalty and Responsibility

At about eleven years of age, I, along with brother Neale and others, were baptized in the cold waters of Lake Erie. As practiced at that time, baptism was followed by church membership. This included a public testimony of salvation and a commitment of loyalty to our church and its practices. I had the belief that our church was closer to the biblical teaching than any other. I agreed to support it.

As a church member, the love feast services were of great importance and spiritual blessing. At the love feast each one was expected to give a personal testimony of one's faith and walk with the Lord. The communion service included breaking a piece of communion bread to give to the one seated next to you, and the process was repeated. One cup of grape juice was shared by a couple of rows of communicants. Following was the feet washing service. Since men and women were in separate sections, feet washing proceeded along the row of participants. After the feet were washed and dried, a holy kiss was shared to conclude the ceremony. Love feast also included meeting other young people from other congregations, and sharing in some delicious meals in the church basement.

Sunday evening services at Wainfleet often began with a Bible lesson or topic presented by a young person. This might also include special music (a duet, quartet, etc.) sung by the youth.

As I matured in this church, I was given the job of Sunday school secretary. It became my job to collect the offering envelopes from each class and to count the money. Since our preachers were self supporting, there were no regular church offerings, but Sunday school offerings were significant. It was also my responsibility to order quarterly supplies from the E V Publishing House in Nappanee, Indiana.

At times I shared in summer vacation Bible school. A notation in my diary describes the problem I had with thirty junior high boys meeting in the parking shed, built for horses in an earlier generation. The next afternoon I was given an

assistant. At the time of my moving to California, I was teaching an adult men's Sunday school class at Wainfleet. And I was also representing our congregation on the Wainfleet Township Sunday school convention planning committee, an inter-denominational group. I also served on the regional youth committee. I remember the Wainfleet church as a place where young people were welcomed and given opportunities to serve.

As adults we have been lifetime members of the Brethren in Christ Church. In the first year of our marriage we drove to Pasadena where Ardys was a member of the Brethren in Christ congregation there. After our move to Riverside, where there were no Brethren in Christ churches, we visited various Riverside churches, but felt at home at none. We then drove to Upland on most Sundays. At the beginning of 1960, we moved to Upland. Within a few months of our move to Upland, I was teaching a junior high Sunday school class, singing in the choir, and serving on the church board. Ardys also sang in the choir and helped in the nursery.

In the years that followed, we served as deacons, and at different times I served on several of the church boards, and as congregational secretary. One of my most difficult duties as secretary was during a time when there was division in the church and eventually the pastor resigned.

I served the national church as a member of the Board for Schools and Colleges. This was related to my positions with Upland College Academy, which, as noted, became Western Christian Schools.

Healthy in Body and Soul

During my years as a student, from elementary through college, I was not athletic. Organized sports were not promoted at our church. With most of our members engaged in farming or other physical labor, physical exercise in sports was somewhat viewed as a waste of time. At Ontario Bible School little or no emphasis was placed on athletics. Not until

I became a teacher did I realize that physical exercise was necessary to maintain a healthy body.

Living at NCC in the boy's dorm, I purchased a bicycle for a faster trip to the administration building and science room. I also enjoyed getting out on my ice skates when the creek was frozen. Skating on the Niagara River, however, was never permitted. Exercise in the fresh air did help me stay healthy. Moving to California opened up new opportunities for outdoor exercise. On my first Labor Day in California, my wife led me on my first hike to the top of Mount Baldy, which towered over our horizon. The all-day hike was exhausting and also left us with bad sunburns, but it opened my eyes to the mountains. In the years that followed I have not only hiked for exercise, but as a place to escape the pressures of being a teaching principal.

Following some good advice, I began a program of running on the local high school track. I have three second-place medals from running in an annual 10-K race. When my daughter asked for my permission to ride her bicycle the twelve miles home from our Western Christian High School, I agreed and did it also. From this experience I took up riding the bicycle to school on many occasions. I kept at this until I was able to complete a 100-mile course in one day.

My hiking also expanded when I went with a group to the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Our goal was to see evidences of its recent formation. While this evidence seemed questionable, I was hooked on the hiking possibilities there. Over the next twelve years, I led groups hiking to the bottom of the Canyon. A number of church people were able to join me in one of these trips. My hiking days are now limited to our local mountains. The sight of local mountains will never lose its appeal.

Living in Upland, we are within a short drive of the ocean, mountains, and desert. Chester and Elizabeth Eckman introduced us to low-cost over-night camping in the local mountains with very modest equipment. We bought a tent and Coleman equipment, and enjoyed camping trips to Yosemite, Sequoia, Kings Canyon, and beyond. We later purchased a

one-third share in a camping trailer with the families of Ray Musser and Henry Miller. With this we made at least two cross-country trips as well as local camping. When the children were gone, we drove across county visiting family and friends. Still later we visited our missionary son, Bruce, in Guatemala, Argentina, and Spain, and our missionary sister, Lois Jean, in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Other travel opportunities led us to participate with friends Mim and Ernie Climenhaga in at least four Elder Hostel programs around California, as well as other trips together. Two trips for the senior week at Camp Kahquah were high times of fellowship and worship. Ardys and I also shared with a group from our church on a Holy Land tour, including visits to sites in Turkey, Athens, and Rome. Our first trip to Hawaii was with a Western Christian music group visiting various Hawaiian churches and staying in their homes.

Our recreation is often work. When we bought our Upland house, an avocado tree was in the back yard. We surrounded our house with fruit trees. On one side are oranges, lemons, and grapefruit. On the other side and at the back are apricot, nectarine and peach trees, boysenberry bushes, fig and persimmon trees. Their care is my recreation. We thank the Lord for fresh fruit for most of the year.

A Fascination with History

My love of history began in tenth grade in a World History class at Ontario Bible School taught by Carlton O. Wittlinger. He challenged us to try to understand why events that we were studying happened. To understand why is what makes history interesting. When in grade thirteen, I received my only A grade in history.

My interest was increased when my father shared his knowledge of our ancestors. When he was a student at Messiah Bible College, he was assigned the project of searching his family tree. He never completed this assignment, but I and others joined in the research. In 1984, our book, *Two*

Hundred Years with the Siders, was published, as compiled by Ron E. Sider, a distant cousin. This 350-page book traces the descendants of Jacob Sider, one of the early River Brethren. Jacob's father, Georg Seider, was a 1752 German immigrant to Pennsylvania. His son Jacob, with wife and two infant children, migrated to Canada in 1788 as part of a small group of River Brethren who settled in the Niagara area. A National Historical monument in the area northwest of the city of Welland records this event. Our book attempts to identify all of the descendants of Jacob and Mary (Winger) Sider.

No doubt there is a correlation between my involvement with Sider ancestors and descendants and my service as archivist for the Pacific Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church, as well as for Western Christian Schools.

Reflection on Christian Stewardship

Ardys and I, having grown up during the depression years and in families where money was always scarce, began our married life in a one-room apartment, which had a small kitchen and a bathroom. The bed, as part of the living room, was folded into the wall during the day. The rent on such an apartment we could afford. From the beginning of our married lives, we shared all income and followed some simple rules. First, we gave a tithe to "the Lord's work." In later years we increased our giving as we were able. A second rule was to maintain a simple lifestyle, not buying what we could not afford. The third rule was always to keep some money for a possible emergency.

After a year of simple living, we had almost enough money for a down payment on a small, "starter house." In this house, we had two bedrooms, so we took in a friend, a new teacher, to share our new home. After two and a half years in this house we were invited to move to Upland and live in the girls' dormitory where Ardys could serve as dorm mother, as school nurse and as Dean of Women. We no longer had to drive to work. Again, our expenses were moderate, even less

that the modest wages received from Upland College. After renting, later selling, our Riverside house and changing our employment, we bought our present home in Upland, expanding it a year later for our growing family.

Sharing this information is in no way boasting of what we did. It was God's love that kept us from major illness and disasters, and guided us in the application of our three rules of finance that we tried to follow.

In our mid years I purchased a few gold coins as a long-term investment. Somehow I was led to compare that purchase with the biblical story of the talents, but I was doing just what the Lord condemned. When we received some inheritance money, we therefore invested in a three-bedroom house to be used as a rental. Some years later a friend moving back east offered us a property he owned with two houses. We now had three families we treated with our well wishes through major illnesses and other trials. Eventually we were able to sell these properties, one to a former renter, who is still our friend.

Today our gold has long since been sold and our retirement money is invested primarily in two Christian organizations, one being the Brethren in Christ Foundation. In both cases the money is used to pay for church buildings, parsonages, and Christian schools. We continue to believe in God's providence when we do our part.

A Testimony to God's Leadership

Most Christians would agree on God's omniscience and his omnipotence. We believe that he is all-knowing and has all power to intervene in the affairs of men and women. We also recognize that divine intervention in our daily lives is very rare. A gospel song of years gone by begins with the words, "He Leadeth Me, O Blessed Thought." Can we not expect him to be our lifetime leader? Few Christians have experienced God's vocal voice giving directions, and would be "scared to death" if it happened.

From our experience, we see God's hand in closing doors to our plans. For me this was followed by other open doors to greater blessing. Many times I was forced to make decisions without any feeling of God's guidance, but by prayer and an open mind, I believe he guided me in making the right decision.

When I was first introduced to Ardys Charles, I had no reason to seek her friendship. Over a period of two years we developed the common conviction that we were ready to join our lives together in marriage. The years have confirmed that it was God's will. When we faced the decision of where to make our home, we sought God's guidance and made the decision which we feel has been confirmed in our life together. Another major decision was the challenge to leave a public school position for one in a Christian institution, at a much lower salary. Again we have seen blessings resulting from this decision in the lives of many young people.

Smaller decisions are more plentiful, and we may not have always decided correctly, but we believe that in most cases God, through his Holy Spirit, led us to the best choice. We now seek with confidence his guidance through the uncertain years of the future with the conviction that all is well. God is still our unseen leader.

Pietism, Prayer, and People of Prayer

By Ronald R. Sider *

Carlton Wittlinger's history of the Brethren in Christ Church bears the title *Quest for Piety and Obedience*. In his book he wrote that Pietism was one of three renewal movements that influenced the formation of the Brethren in Christ Church. Prayer was important in the Pietist movement, and also in the Brethren in Christ Church, whose members have been people of prayer.

This article will relate some prayer stories. Many readers could do the same. Such stories can help us remember and appreciate our heritage and strengthen our faith. I shall write about prayer in the lives of our forefathers, grandparents, other pietists, missionaries, the Sider family, and my mother, who was a woman of prayer.

Forefathers and Grandparents

Prayer was a natural part of daily life for our forefathers and grandparents. Perhaps they needed prayer more than today's Christians. Their medical doctors could diagnose illnesses but had very few effective medications for treatment (no antibiotics).¹ In Brethren in Christ families, when children became sick their parents prayed, and prayer was often the only treatment.² During the Great Depression people prayed

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for food when husbands were unemployed and cupboards were bare. Our parents and grandparents have told us these stories, and later in this article I shall relate one. We know that some of our forefathers prayed both before and after meals. This was true in my grandfather Sider's household. Family devotions were often held in the morning and in the evening, and sometimes even three times daily.³

My mother has written about family devotions in the home of her uncle when she was a small child. "We lived near Uncle Peter Climenhaga⁴ and I liked to go there and stay overnight with cousin Abbie. I liked to share in their family worship. They ate breakfast in the kitchen, but before breakfast they would gather in the dining room. . . . Uncle Peter, Aunt Annie, and eight children (two had already married). Someone would bring a pile of Bibles from the kitchen cupboard and give each a Bible. Uncle Peter would give the scripture reference and each one would take a turn reading verse by verse. If anyone let his mind wander and was not ready to read his verse—that was too bad, you missed your turn, but more than that you felt disgraced. I was only seven or eight and I really liked to take my turn with the rest."⁵

My cousin, John R. Sider tells this prayer story about our grandfather Sider's barn fire: "My father, Calvin Sider, related this story of an answer to prayer. It was a warm summer day when Grandpa Sider's barn caught fire. Nothing could save the barn, but the situation was very serious because the fire was so intense, fanned by a strong wind that blew the flames toward the house. Paint was beginning to peel from the side of the house facing the barn. Neighbors had already come to watch and/or help, among them Anna Sider from the next farm. This Anna Sider, with my father's mother, also Anna Sider, went into the house, into the pantry which faced the burning barn. These two Annas prayed, asking God to change the direction of the wind. God answered their prayer, the wind blew away from the house, and the house was saved."

Pietism in Other Denominations

Other denominations were influenced by Pietism. In England the Wesley brothers are a good example. John Wesley described his conversion in his journal where he wrote, "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt that I did trust Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given to me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the laws of sin and death."

One can visit Wesley's house in London, England. It is a moving experience to stand in the prayer room where John Wesley at 4:00 a.m. began his day with prayer and reading Scripture. "Here then I am," he wrote, "far from the busy ways of man. I sit down alone. Only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book. . . ."⁶

The great composer, Johann Sebastian Bach, although he did not agree with the Pietists concerning church music, did agree with many of their basic principles, and demonstrated this in his music. Christoph Wolff, in his recent, highly regarded biography of Bach,⁷ writes: "The pietist movement within the Lutheran Church of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which emphasized devotional godliness, and the spirit of Christian living beyond the level of doctrine, deeply influenced the church in virtually all Lutheran lands and congregations. A large number of the cantata texts set by Bach reflect the absorption of Pietist language and ideas." Later Wolff writes, "Bach's personal bible shows heavy underlining, annotations, and many other traces of regular use." His library included many religious books and several Bible commentaries. We know that he wrote the words, "Soli Deo Gloria" (to God alone be the glory), or the abbreviation (SDG) at the end of every composition he wrote.

William Hamilton, of Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, wrote an article entitled, "J. S. Bach as a Theologian," in

which he notes that Bach's musical settings of biblical texts interpret these texts and clarify their meaning. In the article's concluding paragraph he writes, "Bach is a great theologian. He is this for the only reason that a theologian can ever be great: He considers it his sole duty to interpret the words of Holy Scripture and to bring forth their deepest meaning for his time."⁸

While I was a student at the Eastman School of Music from 1954–1958, I became acquainted with an Anglican clergyman from Canada who was a staff member of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. After his death his wife wrote a biography entitled *At Home with the Murphys*. One chapter, "Our Vital Breath," tells how prayer was a vital part of their daily lives.⁹

In addition to morning and evening prayers, this couple prayed naturally at various times throughout the day. They prayed while walking on the sidewalk to a meeting (keeping eyes open), while talking on the telephone, and in the car before starting out, asking God's blessing and protection. "There was no place," she writes, "where we did not pray—yes even in the bathroom! Sometimes Maurice called from upstairs, 'Honey, would you come up here a minute, please?' When I had climbed the stairs his lathered face appeared in the doorway. 'I have to be out of the house in ten minutes, sweetheart. Would you sit on the tub and pray about this meeting?' Then, enumerating specific requests, he scraped his face while I prayed aloud. His eyes were open, but his soul was on its knees."

Missionary Prayer Stories

In the book, *My Story, My Song*, many Brethren in Christ missionaries share their autobiographies, including some prayer stories.¹⁰ Ruth Byers writes: "I and a group of girls were walking a dusty path across the veldt to a village where a teenage boy sick with fever had been placed in a crude grass enclosure outside the village to die. His face brightened as we

entered. There beside him lay his Bible. He reached out to touch it, and with a faint smile on his lips said, 'Jesus is my healer.' We identified with his faith, joined him in earnest prayer, and quoted scriptures. The girls carried the news back to school. Prayer gripped the student body. God honored their faith, for the fever broke and the young man was restored to health. Later he trained as a teacher and preacher. He and the fine Christian girl whom he married have been a blessing and challenge to the Tonga people."

Mary Eshelman writes about her husband: "As a young minister, Charles had been scheduled to hold tent meetings in Canada, but he had no money to travel there. He thought his parents would give him some money for the fare. He packed his suitcase, sure that his father would help, but he walked out the door without receiving any. He said goodbye to his parents and prayed for God to supply his need. As he got nearer to the station a stranger stopped him and said, 'I'm impressed I should give you some money.' It was enough for his ticket."

Mary related another illustration of her husband's faith. This time the setting was Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). "We had gone to Bulawayo for medical help. We unexpectedly had to stay all night at the YWCA in Bulawayo. Charles told the lady in charge of the YWCA, 'We will return and pay our bill before we leave for the mission.' His plan was to get our mail; surely we would receive money in the mail to pay our bill. We opened each letter eagerly, but letter after letter contained no money. Finally we came to the last one and I said, 'There can't be any money in this one because these people are poor.' Charles said, 'Open it.' Enclosed was enough money to cover our bill. Charles lived by such faith always, and God was always faithful."¹¹

Harvey Sider relates this incident that occurred when he was a missionary in India. "One of the greatest spiritual victories in my life occurred at the time of my being bitten by a snake. . . . I will never understand what happened. I still praise the Lord, for I believe He had a very clear hand in the healing process. I am also grateful for having had medicine on hand. But the fact that four hours elapsed before I began to get

the typical poisoning sensations indicated that the poison had already begun to work through my body. That these symptoms lifted almost instantaneously about two hours later underscores the fact of God's healing power in my life. I was extremely interested, of course, when the villagers said, 'That snake never bites (it is not aggressive), but if it does, a person never lives!'"¹²

Ben Stoner writes out of his experiences in mission work in New Mexico. "Over the years I have learned to know men who have gone to prison for crimes they have done. One of these men is Williamson Sandoval. He spent five years in the New Mexico State Penitentiary in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I wrote to him often and visited him a few times—a trip of over 300 miles with a four-hour visit makes a long day (sometimes visits were just two hours). Once when I visited Williamson he was sitting with his head down and did not respond very much. By the time I had been there ten minutes I knew something was very wrong. So I told the guard and he immediately called for help. They took him out and led me to another place to find out what I knew. Then they said I could go.

"I had been in the building about thirty minutes and now I was walking out with no ride expected for an hour and a half. I talked aloud to the Lord, 'Why did you allow me to come all this way for a fifteen-minute visit when I was expecting two hours?' The Lord answered in my mind, 'I just used you.' 'What do you mean, you just used me?' 'Ben, you often ask me to use you, and I just used you.'

"I went home wondering what that meant and found out several months later when I visited Juan Charley there. Juan said that Williamson had taken a bunch of pills shortly before I arrived. The whole prison was saying that Williamson would have been dead if he had not had a visitor that morning. Now that was very dramatic to me and I became more conscious of how the Lord uses us day by day."¹³

Family Prayer Stories

My father was a carpenter. He told his sons, "When working on a high barn roof, you only get one fall." In 1954, while he and his son, Neale, were shingling a barn roof a gust of wind blew a pack of shingles against him, causing him to lose balance and fall about thirty feet to the ground. As he fell he thought, "Well, I guess this is my one fall, but I don't know why the Lord is taking me now, because I have not yet accomplished much for Him."¹⁴ He then lost consciousness before hitting the ground. Unbelievably, he survived with a few cracked ribs and severe pain all over his body, but no broken bones.

He walked with a cane for several weeks and finally recovered completely. He considered it a miracle and a religious experience. For some time he could not speak about it without tears, and frequently said he was "saved, sanctified and fell off a barn roof."

An Incurable Disease

My cousin, John R. Sider, tells this personal story about a disease that crippled him and that doctors said was incurable. "Upon our return from missionary service in India, Ethel and I accepted the invitation to pastor the Houghton congregation, where we served for seventeen years. About half way through those good years, I began to experience arthritic pain, which became increasingly severe. The pain intensified and spread throughout my body. I was not able to raise my hands above my shoulders. I required help to get dressed. Stiffness increased. Doctors diagnosed my condition as ankylosing spondylosis, a particularly debilitating type of arthritis with no known cure.

"After several months of prayer and having been anointed with oil, we began to recognize that this was more than just a health issue. Ethel and I began a period of time in fasting and

prayer in which we prayed specifically for spiritual and physical healing.

“During and following this concerted praying, God began a healing process. I experienced release from pain and then I began to make movements, first one and then another and another, raising my hands to full arms length, tying my shoes, etc.

“Several weeks earlier we had made an appointment with a doctor who specializes in this type of arthritis. By the time we were able to see him I was feeling better, but decided to keep the appointment anyway. When we met with him he had all my medical records in hand and also examined me thoroughly. Then he said, ‘You indeed had this condition but you do not have it now. I do not understand it. My patients don’t get better.’

“Spiritual healing brought peace and today after twenty years I experience no signs of the arthritis. To God be praise!”¹⁵

Miracles in Everyday Life

My brother, Neale and his wife, Mary celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 2008. On that happy occasion Mary gave each of the guests a copy of a little booklet titled *Stones of Remembrance*, which tells of “God’s wonderful intervention in our lives over the years of our marriage.” In the following pages you will read three of her twelve chapters.

Healing From Sickness and Fear

“Baby Karl was just three months old when he became very sick with severe chest congestion. That night he was unable to suck when I tried to nurse him. His color became grey and he struggled to even breathe. Neale and I prayed and committed him to the Lord, as we feared he was dying. We rushed him to the hospital where we were told he had double

pneumonia and was a very sick baby! We were thankful that medical help was available and he soon recovered.

“Karl was very sick almost every month. We would get medicine, he would recover and then the cycle would start all over again. I finally took him to a pediatrician who diagnosed him as having asthmatic bronchitis. Karl seemed to have no immunity to withstand infections. Each time the other children got a cold, Karl would become very sick with congestion and experience breathing difficulty.

“We did much praying over Karl, as he would struggle to breathe. We repeatedly saw him relax in his crib and go to sleep when we would pray. He soon began to expect prayer when he would feel his sickness starting. He would say his stomach hurt, and in a few hours he would be very sick.

“One night when I was getting Karl ready for bed he said his stomach hurt. I responded by telling him that King David in the Bible had said, ‘When I am afraid, I will trust in Thee, Oh Lord’ (Ps. 56:3). I explained to him that God understands when we are afraid and wants us to trust Him. I tucked him in and prayed before going to bed, believing I would not get much sleep that night.

“Amazingly, I woke up in the morning to find a small boy standing in the doorway of our bedroom, his face aglow, saying, ‘Mommy, Daddy, Jesus was with me last night and I wasn’t afraid!’ What a testimony to us of God’s faithfulness to His word and His ability to meet the needs of a young child.

“Over the years we had several times of special prayer for the healing of Karl. Dr. Ennis said he would probably be a full asthmatic by the time he grew older. At five years of age Karl was sent to Hamilton for allergy testing. At this time he believed in Jesus as his personal Savior, and was praying for Jesus to be with him that day. He had the tests, all of which turned out negative, and Karl grew to be a very healthy, normal child. Praise the Lord!”

Protection from Lightning

“Explosion! The whole world seemed to explode around us. We exchanged shocked, questioning glances before the house was in total darkness. We dashed to the doorway of our newly finished library and saw a flaming hallway. The living room was also in flames, with the far wall a mass of fire. We were so shocked that we barely realized there was a huge eight foot hole in the far wall. There were piles of plaster debris, broken furniture and pictures all around.

“‘Phone the fire department,’ Neale said to me, but the phone was dead. We were desperate. The place was burning down and what could we do?

“My next thought was the children. They had been put to bed early after a busy day and were sound asleep. I ran downstairs to the boys’ room and hastily pulled them out of bed and led them upstairs in the darkness. There was no time for shoes or clothes. After getting Janet out of bed we went through the wind and rain to the car.

“Neale started to fight the fire. The last thing I heard as I left the house was the roar of the flames and Neale calling out in quiet desperation, ‘Oh God, help us!’ He began to use his bare hands to smother the flaming insulation paper that was burning all over the hall. Turning to the living room and grabbing a towel from a chair he used it to help smother the flames burning on the wall, floor and furniture.

“He was beginning to sense some progress when he looked up through the charred studs to see the attic aglow with fire. Now he knew things were really bad. In an instant he was in the library taking down our antique coal lamp from the top shelf. He never carries matches, but that day he had absentmindedly put a pack in his back pocket. Lighting the lamp, he handed it to a strange man who appeared from the highway, and hoisted himself up through the manhole into the attic. With the lamp in one hand he began to smother the fire burning on the electrical wiring. He had nothing to work with but his bare hands and it took a lot to smother that fire, but eventually it was also extinguished.

“After leaving the children with neighbors, I returned to find the house unbelievably dark and quiet. Neale could hardly believe the fire was totally out. By now we realized that lightning had hit our house. Later we traced the path of destruction.

“Traveling across the roof of the garage, the lowest part of the house, the lightning burned holes right through the ridge cap. At the end of the ridge, the charge traveled down the gable end, following the metal flashing until it found the electrical wiring that ended on the wall. There it exploded, pushing the end of the house right out. The force lifted the floor several inches, breaking the floor boards and pushing down the furnace ducts. The electrical wire disintegrated, burning holes in the floor tile and carpet. In the living room a T.V. table set was crumpled, a dining room chair shattered, with pieces strewn as far away as the back entrance. The coffee table was deeply gouged from flying plaster and a stuffed chair was burned and blasted to the center of the room.

“Trace with us now the hand of God’s protection, mercy, and love. Neale’s parents were visiting us for several days and would have been sitting with us in the living room that evening. Instead, they had decided to attend a Missionary Conference at Sherkston and took Kristine along. They would usually sleep on the living room sofa, so if this had happened later in the evening, they would have been killed or severely injured. The three other children were in bed early, so were not in the living room either.

“A friend from Welland had planned to visit us that evening, arriving around 8:30 p.m., but she never came. She later said she tried to come but kept being detained until it seemed too late. Had she arrived as planned, we would have been visiting in the living room.

“Janet was sleeping with her head right at the end of the hall. A huge piece of heavy plaster was lying on the floor beside her bed, right next to her head. These pieces of plaster had been hurled so forcefully that wooden door frames were smashed all along the hall. Bits of plaster were all over Janet’s pillow and bed, but she did not even have a scratch. A light

bulb had exploded in the room, with bits of fine glass scattered everywhere. It was miraculous that the children walked out of the house unharmed. The next day we had to carefully pick our way through the mess to avoid glass, long spikes, sharp plaster, and splintered wood.

“Most amazing of all was the way God’s power protected Neale’s hands from being critically burned. After the excitement was over and we tried to settle down for the night, I checked his hands for burns under the black coating of soot and tar. We found some water to wash them, but could only see two superficial burns on one hand. We could not believe our eyes. Knowing how potent burning electrical wiring is, we were filled with awe and wonder, as we realized anew God’s power and protection.”

An Unknown Illness

“We had moved into our new home just before Christmas, 1977. Neale was working steadily at his carpentry job to meet our financial commitments. As spring arrived he complained of extreme fatigue and pain in his knees. When he finally went to the doctor’s office, blood work was ordered to be done the next day.

“On April 18 the doctor called to tell us that Neale must go to the hospital the next day for complete bed rest and tests to diagnose his illness. A nurse told us later that his “sed rate” was up to 128 (normal is 12 – 15). Suddenly the bread winner was very sick in the hospital, and I was left at home to care for the family’s needs.

“It was very stressful because they were unable to diagnose his illness. We sent out a call to all the churches, asking for prayer. At Niagara Christian College, where our children were studying, the students were asked to pray. God began to minister to us in wonderful ways. I found words of songs and verses of scripture coming to my mind to encourage me. Money gifts arrived in get-well cards on a daily basis. People came to the hospital to visit and quietly left gifts of

money. One friend gave me his gasoline credit card to help cover the extra driving costs. The outpouring of loving prayer and gifts was overwhelming.

“One night I found myself in tears, feeling so weak and in need of prayer myself. The very next morning Aunt Mattie Pye phoned me to say that the women in her Bible study group were all praying for me. The encouragement came just when I needed it.

“With the hospital staff unable to diagnose Neale’s illness, we at home began to deal with the fact that he might be terminally ill. I spoke with the children regarding this possibility and we prayed for God’s will, hoping for His healing touch to restore health.

“Neale was acquainted with a specialist, having done carpenter work at his home, and we requested that Dr. Leon examine Neale. He came to the hospital, reviewed the case, examined Neale and said he had a viral infection that affected muscles and joints. He said that this virus would move to other parts of the body, run its course and then leave. Since there was no treatment or drug to help, Neale was discharged from the hospital on May 10, still having a lot of pain.

“For the next two weeks, he stayed in bed with severe pain in his upper body and arms. On May 23, Uncle Edward Gilmore visited and prayed for healing as Neale felt the virus moving into his head. At the exact time of prayer the progression of pain stopped and got no worse. Two days later Arnold Marr and his pastor visited us and Neale was anointed and prayed for again. At this time rapid improvement began. Just four days later Neale was able to drive to the Toronto airport to get Lois Jean as she came home from Africa. Fatigue remained but strength was returning.

“How did God provide for our financial needs during this time? Unemployment insurance would not pay anything because the doctor had said the fever was of unknown origin when he entered the hospital. For eight weeks we had no income except from donations that came in, some of which were from people we did not know personally. These were mostly \$10 - \$25 amounts, with some as large as \$100.

“When the unemployment check finally came, the donations ceased. We had never told people our needs at any time, so we knew it was truly from God. Neale added up the total of all we received and divided it by the eight weeks without income to find that we had received \$1 more each week than the unemployment payments would have been.”

A Woman of Prayer

In *My Story, My Song*, Earl and Lois Musser, missionaries in Africa, write about Lois having phlebitis and other health problems. A surgeon in Bulawayo had recommended surgery. “Lois felt very apprehensive about having surgery after all the trouble she had had, but on the morning in which she went to the hospital for the operation she had a real calm about the whole matter. The operation was successful and from that time on she began to recover from her problem. About ten days after the surgery, she received a letter from Cora Sider, a deeply missions-minded mother in Israel, who asked if anything special happened to her on a certain date, which was the very date of the surgery. The Lord had prompted her to pray for Lois on that day. Then Lois understood the special peace she experienced just before the surgery. ‘Prayer makes a difference’,”¹⁶

This was my mother—a woman of prayer.¹⁷ She prayed for people throughout the world. She prayed for her family, for her brothers and sisters, and for her in-laws. She prayed for their children and grandchildren. She knew all their names and more than their names. She prayed for missionaries and church workers throughout the world. In her later years she sat in her living room for hours, praying for family and friends around the world. This life of prayer developed from years of living with and trusting God.

Bible School and Early Years of Marriage

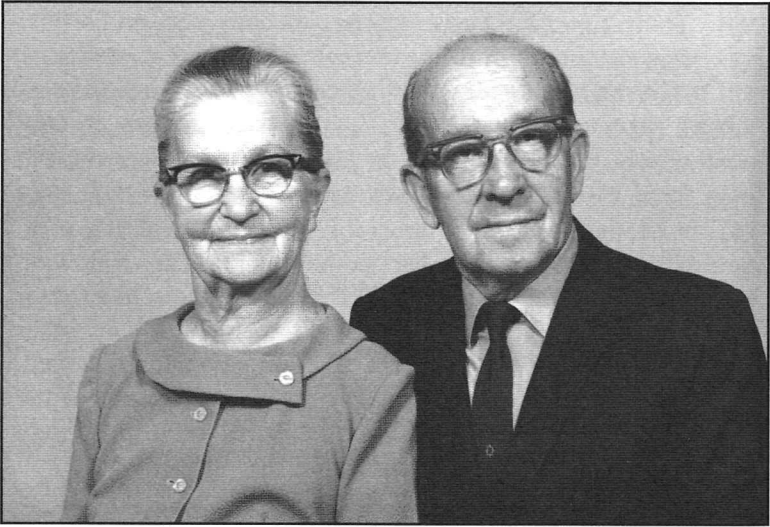
When Mother was in her senior year at Messiah Bible School (now Messiah College), she and her roommate, with two other girls sensed a spiritual coldness at the school and in their lives. One night they spent four hours on their knees in prayer. Mother writes that the Holy Spirit dealt with her in an unusual way, deepening her commitment. The following evening, during the student prayer meeting, she told of their experience. This testimony brought conviction to other students, many of whom went to their room and prayed. During the next few weeks revival broke out throughout the school. Many young men and women involved in this event became ministers and missionaries.¹⁸

In 1933, my father was completing junior college at Messiah Bible School and working part-time jobs to support his young family, but work was scarce as the Depression peaked. Near the end of the school year there was very little money for food. The family needed a miracle to survive so my parents prayed. Heavy rains came and the Yellow Breeches Creek overflowed its banks, washing out the footbridge to the college, and flooding adjacent pasture land. The water, when it subsided, left behind hundreds of fresh water clams in the field below the apartment where the family lived. A few weeks later the same flooded area bloomed with mushrooms—like manna from heaven. Clam chowder and mushrooms were canned and kept the family fed for weeks.¹⁹

I was born shortly after that experience. For years I did not enjoy clams or mushrooms. Mother always said I had my fill of them in the womb.

Mother and Her Children

In 1936, when Lois Jean was two years old, she contracted pneumonia repeatedly throughout the year. The doctor prescribed mustard plasters and a steam tent to help her breathe. Fervent prayer was answered, but the pneumonia kept



Cora and Christian (Chrisie) Sider (courtesy of Ronald Sider)



The Sider family. Left to right: Neale, Ronald, Cora, Lois, Harold. (Chrisie was deceased when the photograph was taken.) (Courtesy of Ronald Sider)

returning. After receiving the third or fourth call, the doctor said, "Don't call me any more. You know what to do." After the seventh attack within a year, Mother was in despair. She prayed, "Lord, if you are not going to heal her, take her to yourself." Then, she said, the Lord gave her the verse in Job. 5:19, "He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." After special prayer and anointing, a definite healing was experienced, so that by the end of that day Lois Jean was well, out of bed, and playing like a normal, healthy child. The pneumonia never returned.²⁰

As children we always knew our parents prayed for us. Mother not only prayed for us, but with us, and talked to us about our spiritual lives—when we were small children, teenagers, college students, and adults. Yet she was always sensitive to our thinking and feelings. She prayed more than she talked.

In an article, "Grace and Guidance in the Life of a Brethren in Christ Musician,"²¹ I wrote that Mother believed I needed prayer when I entered the Eastman School of Music. Without my knowing it, she prayed and wept for me until she felt that victory had come. Later she learned that I had attended the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship student group on campus and I was not impressed, but later (around the time she was praying) I went back and decided to join. This association was a means of spiritual growth in my life.

In her *Memories*, Mother wrote about my brother Harold when he was attending a secular college. She wrote, "While [Harold was] going to college in Guelph and working in Welland during the summers I felt he needed a renewed experience with the Lord. I prayed very earnestly for the Lord to help him to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I felt I could not let him go to Guelph without meeting God in a special way. The Lord said to me, 'Why don't you pray with him?' I went through a real struggle fearing he would not go along with me. When eating supper that night I told him how I felt and said I feel we should go to the couch and pray until victory comes. He thought about it for a while, then said, 'Alright Mother, we'll do it.' We both prayed out loud, he talked to me about

things that were bothering him, then we prayed again and God gave real victory. Next morning he told me he was glad for that prayer.²²

My sister, Lois Jean, tells this story of an automobile accident and Mother's prayer. "In 1964, from January to June, I was teaching in Welland, after having come home from over two years of teaching at Mtshabezi Mission in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia). During those months I was praying and thinking about the possibility that the Lord might want me back in Zimbabwe as a long-term missionary. I lived in the Niagara area, but usually on every other weekend I went to Collingwood to visit my parents, where my father was pastoring a small store-front Brethren in Christ Church.

"It was Easter weekend, on Thursday evening, when I started on my regular journey to Collingwood. The weather was good in the Niagara Peninsula when I left, but as I proceeded on Highway 400 north, on the way to Barrie, it became clear that snow was probable. When I was near Barrie the snow began gently, but soon turned to a wet snow, covering the roads with a slippery slush. I thought I was driving carefully, but as I rounded a curve in the undivided four-lane highway my car began to slide. It slipped completely across the opposite lane of traffic, circling around to my traffic lane, then moved back into the opposite lane again before finally stopping on my side of the road, with the back of the car up the embankment at the side of the road, and its front end nicely placed at almost a right angle to the road. It seemed all ready to turn on to the road.

"Just before I started my slide, a steady stream of lights approached from the opposite direction, so as soon as I started to slide, my first thought was that this was the end, because the oncoming cars could not possibly stop in time. After the slide, when my car had settled into its position on the side of the road, my first thought was THANK YOU, LORD. Then I looked out my car window and saw, about a foot away from me, a post that I could have smashed into, but did not. Then I thought about the oncoming cars that could have crashed into

me during my circling around in their traffic lanes, but did not. I knew that it was all a miracle of God's protection on my life.

"The key was still in the ignition, and although the engine had stalled, I finally gathered together enough composure to try to start the car. Amazingly, it started immediately, and even though I was shaking from the experience, I carefully pulled back into the traffic and proceeded on my way to Collingwood.

"I was about an hour's drive away from Collingwood and as I traveled that last lap of the journey, the Lord began to speak to me. The car I was driving was a new one and the Lord seemed to be telling me that material things are fragile and impermanent. I had just been shown that my new car could have been destroyed in a moment. I would be foolish to let possessions stand in the way of doing God's will.

"Of course, I thought I was totally committed to the Lord, and would not get attached to a new car. But the Lord knew I needed a reminder, and that incident was one of many things during those six months of teaching, that convinced me that the Lord was calling me to long-term missionary service—a conviction I never seriously doubted during my many years of service in Zimbabwe and Zambia.

"My parents knew that I was coming, and the expected time of arrival during the latter part of the evening. My father was going out to do some visitation in the earlier part of the evening. My mother usually went with him, and she knew she could go and still be home before I arrived, but for some reason that she didn't understand, she did not feel she should go that evening. So my father went alone. When she told me about it, she said she proceeded to work at various tasks, until she felt strongly that I was in danger, and she must go and pray earnestly for me.

"She went to her bedroom, got on her knees and began to pray. She told me that she wanted to pray that I would be kept safe from whatever the danger was, and that nothing bad would happen to me. But she said she could not pray that way. Instead she needed to thank God that I belonged to Him and that He was in control of everything that happened. She felt

free to pray that nothing bad would happen to me that was not a part of God's perfect plan. She prayed until she felt God's peace that I was in God's care regardless of what happened. When she told me this, I immediately asked what time she was praying. As you can expect, it was just over the time of my sliding around on the road south of Barrie.

"The ways and times that God answers prayers may remain a mystery to us. But we can be sure that God knows what he is doing, and he does answer our prayers. We may not recognize the answer."

Divine Protection

In her *Memories* ²³ Mother wrote: "I must tell you about the Lord's gracious care over us when Chrisie [her husband] was in Pennsylvania, soliciting for Niagara Christian College in 1938. We expected him home on the Greyhound bus at 6:00 p.m. He did not come then so we looked for him on the midnight bus. We went to bed and left the door unlocked. About midnight we were awakened by a car coming into the driveway with a floodlight shining into our upstairs bedroom. It woke up Ronald and Lois Jean and they said, "Daddy." I too thought someone was bringing him home from Chambers Corner. I slipped on my house coat and went to the window expecting to hear a familiar 'Hi.'

"But all was silent. The engine was shut off and all was dark. Then I thought about my unlocked door just a few steps from the car and wondered who was in the car. They must be strangers. I cried out to the Lord, 'Oh Father, I am helplessly dependent on you.' Just then two huge white wings hovered over us and the words 'He shall cover thee with his feathers and under His wings shalt thou trust' (Ps. 91:4) were given to me. With that assurance I heard the car's engine start, the lights were turned on and the strangers drove out of the driveway and down the road. I thanked the Lord for His gracious protection and His Word."

Mother experienced other times when divine protection became very real to her. When in their seventies, my parents traveled to Africa to visit Lois Jean. During the trip there were many complications—delays, a detour to Scotland by bus and train, overnight stays in hotels because of cancellations. At one point a young couple from Canada who were on the plane joined them and helped them navigate through many of the problems. Later, because the airplane needed a new engine, they spent the night in a Holiday Inn. Mother writes, “The Lord met me in the early morning and gave me sweet assurance of His care over us. I saw angels watching over us like a row of angelic beings peering down upon us, and Ps. 34:7 and Ps.91:11 and 12 came to me. ‘The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them,’ and ‘For He shall give His angel charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.’ What a precious experience.”

Protection in Accidents²⁴

“In Collingwood,” Mother writes, “we were driving on an unfamiliar street when we went over a small hill. On the other side we did not see a large hole made by the removal of a railroad tile, and dropped into it. My head bumped into the windshield so hard that the windshield was broken and had to be replaced. But I experienced Ps. 91:12: ‘He shall give His angels charge over thee. They shall bear thee up in their hands.’ His angel put his hand on my forehead and took the bump. I had no bruised spot on my head at all.

“Another time I missed the top step of the stairway and fell the entire length of the stairs, but I did not strike a step until I reached the bottom. This scripture came to me, ‘They shall bear thee up in their hands,’ and He literally did that.”

Protection in a Frightening Experience

Mother refers to Psalm 37:32 and 33, and Psalm 34:15 and 17 before relating this story: "I was the leader of our prayer group at church. I was praying for a way to get there. Many times He had sent a way in answer to my prayers, but this day nothing showed up so I decided to start walking, and as I walked I prayed. Presently a big car came along, stopped and asked me to have a ride. . . . It was a European farmer from the north concession. I thought God was sending me a ride. I told him I wanted to get out at the church.

"He said, 'I am not letting you out at the church. I am taking you out on a lonely road and it won't do any good for you to scream.' He was driving his big car very fast, so I said again, 'I need to be at the church. I am the leader of our prayer group. See, I have my Bible.' I carried no purse, just my Bible. He said, 'Oh no, I am not letting you out at the church. I am taking you out on a lonely road.' The lonely road was just across the highway. At that time there was only one house on that road and nobody lived in it.

"He went beyond the church, slammed on the brakes and stopped. I opened the door and he said, 'Were you afraid?' I said, 'No, I belong to the Lord and I knew He would take care of me.' He said, 'Who are you anyway?' I told him who I was, and said I remembered he took his little boy to school the same day I took my little girl to get a needle.

"He drove away and I walked over to the church. It was early and the church was locked. I sat down on the curb for I was shaking all over. But the Lord drew graciously near. I thought of the scripture, 'Angels came and ministered unto him.' I really felt a heavenly presence surrounding me.

"There is a sequel to this story. We prayed much for that man and before he died, Uncle Edward Gilmore had the privilege of praying with him on his sick bed, and we trust we shall see him in heaven."

Protection in Healing Touches

In the last two decades of her life, Mother read the Bible through every year, and spent hours in prayer, but she also experienced her share of difficulties. She once wrote, "Satan hurls his darts at me day after day, sometimes in bodily ailments, sometimes in mental anguish. But His word is my refuge. His word washes and cleanses my mind. My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. I am not my own. Satan has attacked me:

1. By a goiter. After anointing, prayer, and some time of waiting and believing, He healed me entirely.
2. By severe pain in my back. I was led to ask Neale to lay his hands on me and pray for my healing. In the night I was awakened and saw in bold letters on the wall, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you' – Romans 4:14. "Ye are not under the law but under grace." The wonderful grace of Jesus became real to me and very wonderful. Then I felt drops of healing like spring rain on my body and I was wonderfully healed.
3. By a virus. In 1985, a virus caused terrible pain in my leg from hip to toe for three weeks. I was in the hospital, my temperature was very high, and I was very weak. Harold phoned me from California, talked to me, then went to the Upland Brethren in Christ church and was anointed and given prayer for his mother. The pain left instantly. On Tuesday he called me at the hospital. I told him the pain was gone. He told me what he had done and we both praised the Lord.
4. By eyes watering profusely. For several years my eyes watered constantly. I put drops in to control the

watering. But the Lord has healed my eyes and I praise His wonderful name.”

Final Years

Mother was a private person who did not enjoy speaking in public. Roman Catholics might say she was a mystic,²⁵ but she was also a practical housewife who raised four children, and during some of those years did not have electricity, an indoor bathroom, or most household appliances we now take for granted. She made clothing for family members, canned fruit and vegetables, made jam, and made quilts and braided rugs (one of which is still on our living room floor). After the children were away from home, she spent more time in prayer, but she continued to do other things also. On her eighty-eighth birthday she wrote: “Another very good year has passed into Eternity. The Lord has blessed me with good health. Dr. Tweedy assured me my eyesight is good in both eyes. I thank the Lord for healing my eyes.

“I thank the Lord for energy to do things. I baked bread most of the year and gave away fresh loaves to friends and family. I baked quinces, cooked quinces, and made 24 glasses of jelly to give to friends and family.

I have read 40 books in 1986 and 27 so far in 1987.

I dressed three dolls for Christian Benefit Shop. I have two more to dress.

I have material and pattern to make beanies for Pioneer Girls.

I crocheted a sweater for myself and one for Lois Jean.

I made two dresses for myself.

I made a church and a school for Christmas for Rhonda and Eric.”

On her eighty-ninth birthday she wrote: “Again, I have had a very good year. The last three years have been happy and enjoyable, each one getting better. The Word is getting richer and more meaningful. The Holy Spirit leads me and opens ways for personal ministries. . . . In reading the Bible

through every year, this is my 26th or 27th year. I have a general idea of the Bible as a whole and when the pastor announces his text I have a general idea what he is going to read. But the Bible is so vast and contains so much knowledge that it is like a mine of precious treasures. I read it with joy and great pleasure as the Holy Spirit reveals new truths to me and makes God the Father so big and wonderful and Jesus, the Savior, so loving and kind. It just warms my heart."

In 1977 my parents moved into an apartment next to Neale and Mary. Four years later my father passed away. In the article, "Willing to Serve," Harold wrote: "With Chrisie gone, following fifty-six years of marriage, Cora went through periods of intense loneliness. . . . Gradually life took on a different character. A new independence developed; soon Cora was again able to minister to others. Her ministry became even more a ministry of encouragement. Her letters to those in difficult times were much appreciated. In the local church she continued to have an open spirit, so that when asked to speak or to lead a discussion or a prayer service, her answer was still yes, God gives strength for each day. . . ."26

Mother's daughter-in-law Mary (Neale's wife) comments that "living side by side in a duplex helped me to keep in touch with Mother. On most days I would find time to go across the porch to chat with her, and check on any needs she might have. When I would say I was planning a trip to town, and asked if she wanted to go, she would often say, "I was just praying about that this morning. I need. . . ." It was evident that she took everything to the Lord in prayer, and expected his answer."

On June 3, 1992, Cora welcomed her daughter, Lois Jean, home on furlough from Zambia. Lois moved into her mother's apartment and for the next few days they enjoyed a special time of sharing. No one could have realized how short that time would be. A cold soon developed into pneumonia and Cora accepted this as God's call, peacefully leaving this earthly life for her heavenly home on June 16, 1992. Truly God was good to her.²⁷

Healed Grief

Of Mother's death Mary comments: "The summer of 1992 was very difficult for us. In June, Mother had died quite suddenly with pneumonia. She was not only Mother and Grandma, but my very best friend, a Godly woman whom we loved and depended on for spiritual leadership.

"We were very busy all summer, but through all the busyness a great cloud of grief was hanging over me, seemingly unshakeable. Lois Jean had packed up the contents of Grandma's house except for the kitchen. I promised to do that, but each time I would go to work on the kitchen, I would find myself in tears, missing my friend, unable to deal with the grief.

"Finally everything was finished and we put Mother's green rocker in our guest room, along with her mother's dresser, washstand, and chest. It looked cozy and inviting. One morning, as I was going past that room, I felt drawn to go in and sit down in Mother's chair. This chair had been where she would sit in her living room to spend hours in prayer for family and friends around the world. As I sat in it, it seemed as if a misty cloud surrounded me. There were no special voices or even thoughts, just a sense of being closed off from the world and surrounded by a sense of well being. After a while, the cloud lifted and I was filled with joy. The grief was gone. I went downstairs singing a song of praise to God."

Conclusion

How do we respond to these prayer stories? Can we consider them a part of Brethren in Christ history? The Brethren in Christ have been people of prayer. The stories are inspirational, but they are also challenging. They challenge us to examine our own lives. Are we continuing the positive traditions of our forefathers?

Perhaps readers will be inspired to write their own stories about parents and grandparents who were people of prayer.

This could be a meaningful gift for our children and grandchildren.

NOTES

¹ A statement by Dr. George Faries, a Harrisburg surgeon, whose father was a doctor in the early twentieth century.

² My brother Harold made this statement, referring to his wife's family, our own family, and others whom we knew.

³ See the account of John Rosenberry's mother in E. Morris Sider, *Called to Evangelism* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1988), p. 32.

⁴ Peter Climenhaga was the father of John and Asa Climenhaga and the grandfather of Arthur and David Climenhaga.

⁵ From *Memories of Cora Sider*, Part 2, p. 3. A copy of this is in the Archives of the Brethren in Christ Church.

⁶ From a pamphlet available in John Wesley's House, in London, England.

⁷ Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, the Learned Musician* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), pp. 113-114 and 334.

⁸ William Hamilton, "Johann Sebastian Bach as Theologian," *Colgate Rochester Divinity School Bulletin* (May, 1957).

⁹ Belva Murphy, *At Home With the Murphys* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), ch. 4.

¹⁰ E. Morris Sider, ed., *My Story, My Song* (Mount Joy, Pa.: Brethren in Christ World Missions, 1989), p. 82.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 424, 425.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 473, 474.

¹⁴ It is interesting that some of the most fruitful years of his ministry occurred after this fall. God was not finished with him yet.

¹⁵ A letter from John Sider, in my possession.

¹⁶ Sider, *My Story, My Song*, p. 408.

¹⁷ For more information about my parents, see Harold K. Sider, "Willing to Serve: The Story of Christian and Cora Sider," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (August 1992). Also, the *Memories of Cora Sider*, which she wrote during the last ten years of her life, in the Archives of the Brethren in Christ Church. Much of the remainder of this article is taken from her memoir.

¹⁸ *Memories of Cora Sider*, pp. 89, 90.

¹⁹ Harold K. Sider, "Willing to Serve," pp. 271, 272.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 276, 277.

²¹ *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (December, 2007), p. 359.

²² *Memories of Cora Sider*, p. 46.

²³ Ibid., p. 85.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 88.

²⁵ She left us more prayer stories than could be included in this article.

²⁶ For more information about Chrisie Sider's life and ministry, see, "Willing to Serve."

²⁷ As Mother was checked into the hospital she said to the nurse, "I have had a good life and I am ready to go to heaven. You do not need to work hard to keep me alive."

Media Review

Who is the True Jesus? A Comparative Analysis of Jesus of the Qur'an and the Jesus of the Bible.

*Reviewed by David W. Shenk**

The debate recorded on this DVD was sponsored by the Faith and Science Lecture Forum in October 2000. The host was Dr. James Tumlin, and the moderator was Peggy Wehmeyer, religion correspondent for ABC News. Presenters were Shabir Aly, director of Islamic Information and Da'wah Center, Toronto, and Jay Smith, Ph.D. candidate in Islamist Studies at Brunel University, London.

The jacket of the DVD for this engaging presentation says it accurately: "opponents." This presentation is a confrontation between opponents. Both Shabir and Jay know each other well; in fact, they seem to appreciate and respect each other. That is a redeeming dimension of their encounter recorded in this DVD. They are experienced apologists and quite ready to engage in polemics in their confrontation with one another. There are strengths in this approach. However, the downside in a debate by opponents is that there is little or no space for respectful listening. Occasionally during this 150-minute engagement, the presenters used attack tactics rather than the respectful listening, debate, confrontation, and dialogue that these ultimate truth issues merit.

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Another approach would be to consider the “opponent” as a friend who is sincerely committed to truth as he understands it. In that case, the engagement would be dialogical with ample space for listening as two friends explore, debate, and confront in regard to the different truth claims that each embraces. In this regard, a simple understanding with the audience can make a difference—no applauding. It would have been helpful if the moderator had prohibited any applause, for the outbursts of applause detracted from the seriousness of the issues and contributed to feelings of divisiveness—my person has scored and your person lost on that point!

The presenters were caught somewhat off balance, because two companions, who were to have participated, did not show. Jay’s first presentation, which was read, turned out not to be his contribution but that of his absent companion, William Cragg. Instead of the anticipated foursome, the forum became a two-person debate.

Both men know their material very well. They are experts. Jay is a scholar of the historicity of the Qur’an; Shabir has drunk deeply from the wells of higher Biblical criticism. They used these scholarly weapons in confronting each other in an attempt to discredit each other’s scriptures. Some of the critical scholarship that was presented is exceedingly pertinent to the debate, especially in regard to the development of Christology in the New Testament and the early church, or the recent findings of alternative versions of the Qur’an in Sanaa, Yemen. However, although the presenters seemed to understand what they were talking about, the scholarly presentations were fast and complicated; my judgment is that many in the audience were rather bewildered.

In their respective efforts to discredit each other’s scriptures, there was very little attention given to the main theme proposed for the debate, mainly who is Jesus in the Qur’an and who is Jesus in the Bible? The purported purpose of the event to present “A Comparative Analysis of the Jesus of the Qur’an and Jesus of the Bible” was mostly sidelined by disagreements in regard to the trustworthiness of the Qur’an

and the Bible. For example, both referred repeatedly to Jesus as Messiah. Yet at the end of it all, there was no clarity of what Messiah means in the Qur'an and in the Bible.

Some of the issues raised would be better discussed in a round table of theologians and scholars than in a public debate. The discussion of the names of God is an example. Jay was dismissive of Shabir's assertion that "Allah" is the Arabic form of the "Elohim" used by Abraham who spoke Aramaic. On the other hand, Shabir did not take seriously the meaning of the biblical revelation of God as the I AM (Yahweh). This is a core issue; it was not adequately or clearly addressed.

Another example that merited more time and thoughtful discussion was dating and formation issues in regard to the Qur'an and the New Testament; when and how were these scriptures formed? Do scholars support the claim made by Jay that the New Testament Gospels were completed within twenty years of Jesus' crucifixion, or that the Qur'an was only completed 200 years after Muhammad? And is Shabir right that the divinity of Jesus was only finally established by the church in the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.)? Is it not rather that the purpose of the Council of Nicea was to affirm the humanity of Christ in a church that was emphasizing only his divinity and neglecting the human dimension of Jesus? Does scholarly opinion support either the claims of Shabir or Jay in their assertions in regard to these matters? Yet there was no forum to prod and explore the scholarly opinion and the implications. These issues merit a scholarly discussion forum rather than rapid-fire public debate.

Both Shabir and Jay are apologists. That gift is needed. Equally important is good theology. A basic principle is that good theology is profound; yet if it is good, it should be simple enough that a child can understand. The narrative of Jesus is that kind of story. For that reason I wish that this gathering had been a dialogue rather than a debate. What is the difference? In a dialogue, Shabir would have been invited to share the narrative of Jesus as presented in the Qur'an, and Jay in turn the narrative of Jesus as revealed in the Gospel. Then Jay would respond to the narrative of Jesus as described in the

Qur'an, and Shabir to the biblical narrative. The response might include critique. It would certainly raise some ultimate questions and invite serious discussion.

How does a Muslim interpret and a Christian respond to the Qur'anic narrative that describes Jesus as born to a sinless virgin and a Jesus who himself is described as without sin, Jesus as the Messiah, as the fulfillment of the scriptures, as a sign among the nations, as the miracle worker, as the one so loved of God that he could not be crucified, as the one coming back at the end of history to put everything right, as the one who is the Word of God and the Spirit of God? However, Shabir presented only enticing glimpses into the narrative, and from Jay there was minimal comment on Jesus in the Qur'an. Jay's comments on the Qur'anic Jesus were generally critical rather than seeking signs of truth that provide bridges for the gospel to be heard and understood. I do not mean to suggest that the Jesus of the Qur'an and of the Gospel is the same. Yet are there not signs of truth in the Qur'an that are fulfilled in the biblical revelation of Jesus—for example, Jesus born of the virgin?

In like manner, how does a Christian understand the narrative of Jesus, and what questions or even objections does a Muslim bring to the table when presented with the Jesus narrative of the Gospels? This includes the annunciation; the virgin birth; the refugee in Egypt; the commencing of his ministry in the Nazareth sermon; his ministries; the Sermon on the Mount; his proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom; the Mount of Transfiguration; his long journey to Jerusalem to meet the cross; the cleansing of the temple; the last supper, washing the feet even of Judas; the arrest in the garden, the trial, crucifixion, and resurrection; his ascension; the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; the church as the body of Christ ministering in our broken world in the way of Christ. This basic narrative could be shared in twenty minutes. It would have been enlightening to hear Shabir respond.

There was very little said about the New Testament narrative except for debating the crucifixion and resurrection. The Qur'an has been influenced by the life of Jesus, because

the Qur'an emerged in an environment where Christian oral tradition was known, although as Jay points out those traditions were occasionally distorted. This engagement would have been well served to provide opportunity for the Jesus of the Qur'an and the Jesus of the New Testament to be heard. And then the dialogue could have progressed as a dialogue between these two visions of Jesus.

Of course, I do not mean to minimize the difficulties. Shabir's insistence on undermining confidence in the trustworthiness of the Bible is a convenient way to ignore the message of the Bible. However, I doubt that much is to be gained by Christians then in turn undermining the central Muslim conviction that the Qur'an is the accurate rendition of what Muhammad proclaimed. A consequence of a tit for tat critique of the other's scriptures is that neither side listens seriously to each other. This debate demonstrates that reality. The tit for tat critique of each other's scriptures took precedence over hearing what these scriptures actually said about Jesus.

As we hear the narratives of Jesus, the theologizing commences. Jay did share the salvation account beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden. That was very significant. It was a theological statement, and helpful. Questions in regard to the Trinity and the cross, coming especially from the moderator, were searching and helpful. I wish there had been more clarity and simplicity in response. Isn't God as Triune simply our way of trying to put in human language the reality that God is the Good Shepherd who comes down to seek the lost and redeem us? In Islam God never comes down to save anyone. He is merciful, so he sends his will down. But he is never affected by us. Yet in the Bible and supremely in Jesus we meet God as the Good Shepherd. In Jesus we meet God as the father in the account of the prodigal son who lays aside his dignity and runs down the road to welcome and redeem us. And in the cross, does not God in Jesus Christ go all the way to death on the cross in his redeeming quest? I would urge caution in asserting that it is only the human Jesus who died! That is the Nestorian response to the mystery of the cross.

Nowhere in the New Testament do we meet that dichotomy between Jesus as the divine Son and Jesus the authentic man. Indeed the questions Islam presents to the church are searching and call for theological clarity.

Ms. Wehmeyer was an excellent moderator. She not only moderated, but she understood the issues and pressed the right questions with grace and tact. The format for the engagement was also suburb. The planners did excellently in arranging the details. The presenters were scholars who are experts in apologetics. The engagement was fraught with confrontational intensity. All present knew that these questions are of ultimate significance. The carefully arranged forum was in recognition that this kind of engagement does not portend trivialization.

The DVD is excellent as a communications piece. The recording is clear. The interplay between audience and presenters is outstanding. The technical aspects of the recording are superb. The event was fast moving, absorbing, and engaging. It certainly did not seem like a 150-minute event! The presenters were all dynamic speakers, with their confrontational style providing spice throughout.

However, such a forum is only possible in pluralist societies. Islamic societies would not tolerate a forum that allows the kind of critique of Islam and the Qur'an that happened in this forum. Jay and Shabir have developed their debating skills in liberal democracies. Christians bearing witness to Christ within Islamic societies discover that critique of the Qur'an is not tolerated. Other approaches are required.

The counsel penned by Apostle Peter is pertinent for all who are called and committed to bearing witness to Jesus Christ among Muslims:

Set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts.
Be ready to give account of the faith.
Do this with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

Ordering Information

Faith and Science: *Who is the TRUE Jesus?* Vision Video, 2000. DVD \$19.99 (Web price \$15.99). Order from: Vision Video, P.O. Box 540, Worcester, PA 19490 (www.visionvideo.com or e-mail info@visionvideo.com or 800-523-0226).

Review Essay

JAMES C. LONGACRE. *Like Those Who Dream: Sermons for Salford Mennonite Church and Beyond*. Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009. Pp.197. \$18.95.

*Review by D. Ray Heisey**

This book is for more than Mennonites. It is for all the “beyond” readers who want to have their thinking challenged. Though I never met James Longacre or heard him preach, his sermons remind me of a professor I had many years ago. Professor James Stewart of New College, Edinburgh, Scotland, used to tell us in his New Testament classes that when we come upon a scriptural text that has more than one interpretation, “Take the harder one to accept, the more difficult one.” Longacre is telling his reader, “Take the one you haven’t thought of.”

Of course, coming from a congregation with three centuries of a Mennonite community behind it, Longacre had more than his own sharp talents going for him. Like the Scottish congregations, their preachers were expected to be good. His fifteen-year ministry resulted in over 500 sermons from which these thirty-two were carefully selected and presented chronologically to represent and honor a minister who knew how to preach. Every page jumps out at the reader with the implied question, “Did you think about this possibility for what Jesus meant?” I agree with Walter

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Brueggemann's Foreword when he says, "Not often do preachers take up controversial issues and walk us into new freedom and new courage beyond our predilections . . . but this one does!"

I would like to reflect on three characteristics of Longacre's sermons—his message, his method, and his motives.

His message. His sermons are biblical. From the first sermon preached on April 12, 1992, to the last one preached on December 31, 2006, Longacre preaches from the Bible in the way he launches from a text each time to the way he treats the great themes of the Bible. As his colleague, John L. Ruth, writes in the introduction, "Jim preaches a full gospel: the news of divine love that transforms both the personal and the social life of those who accept it." He covers the essential concepts of faith, conversion, baptism, sanctification, which he calls "the second stage of grace," love, evil, suffering, judgment, and other doctrines without being doctrinal about it. They emerge in new clothes.

His message is not only biblical, but also Anabaptist. As a Mennonite, he is very open about preaching this message. Longacre was fond of preaching series of messages centered around a common theme. One of them (chapter 6) was on the themes from the Mennonite Confession of Faith in which he quotes from the Confession by saying that the "church is the new community of disciples" that is a "witness to the rein of Christ." "But," he continues in this sermon he calls, "Mending the World," "this is no passive assignment. The church does not just sit there. The church gets caught up in God's redeeming energy. The church gets caught up in the truth that God loves the world and would mend it."

In another sermon (chapter 7), "An Uncommon People: Being Anabaptist in the Twenty-first Century," he sets forth four themes that Anabaptists witness to—(1) "the way in which strangers are welcomed," (2) we don't need to fix everything for "there is infinitely more to come," (3) "persons near and far can grow and change," and (4) we "initiate steps toward forgiveness" rather than revenge.

Further, his message is evangelical. It is more important for him that lives be changed than that right creeds be believed. In his sermon on conversion (chapter 22), which he titles, "No Pre-Washed Jeans," he says, "Living the gospel is more than buying pre-washed jeans." He then takes up the stories of conversion found in the book of the Acts to find what the common elements were in their stories. First, "conversion is likely more a process than an instantaneous event." Second, it is "fundamentally reorientation"—"a reordering of all of one's life." Third, it is "to be summoned, called up"—"a summons to serve." Fourth, it is "about covenant—entering it, serving under its terms." Thus it means relationship, partnership. He concludes, "This is no notion of 'only believe, just accept.' This is not purchasing pre-washed jeans. It is living faithfully in the rough and tumble and excitement of life." In another sermon (chapter 14) in which he recounts from John 9 the story of the man born blind, the Pharisees wanted to know where evil comes from. "Good questions, they thought. Wrong questions, said Jesus." Longacre then quotes from Lesslie Newbigen that the church is commissioned "not to explain the world, but to change it."

His method. First, his sermons in this book are parabolic. That his eye is on the story form for conveying truth is seen in his statement, "The Bible comes to us as story, poetry, parable, letter, and other literary and artistic forms" (p. 156). Almost every one of the thirty-two sermons includes a story. The stories come from the Bible, from his life, from the life of the community, from his imagination, or from other people. In fact, one could argue that his favorite way of beginning his sermon is to start with a story.

In his sermon on peacemaking (chapter 9), he begins, "Let me tell you about Jenny—a retired school teacher in this area. Jenny never gives up." He then tells how she tried to decrease the fighting among the children by having all the children on the school bus learn every other child's name on the bus. He said it worked for her. "Where the children know each other by name, the skirmishes have lessened considerably." Longacre then proceeds to offer his views on how the

Christian should respond to violence—within the Mennonite tradition. In the very next sermon (chapter 10) on the vision that Ezekiel had, he begins with, “Her name was Ruby Bridges. If I have the story right, it was in the early 1960s.” In his sermon, “Down to Joppa” (chapter 23), he begins, “Now you have to sort of admire this guy Jonah,” and proceeds to tell the story of how Jonah went to Joppa instead of Nineveh. His message to his congregation was, “To go to Nineveh is tough. So we go down to Joppa.”

Second, his sermons are counter-rhetorical. By this I mean he over and over again uses language that represents the Christian mission in the world as running counter to the prevailing winds or the dominant American culture. Let me offer some examples: “good parents are a counter-culture” (p. 90), “The Sermon on the Mount is counter-intuitive” (p. 161), “that offers ways to counter the values of our time” (p. 168), “We have inherited a counter-story” (p. 177), “Precisely where and in what ways *do* we suggest that the church stand aside from the culture in which we live?” (p. 185), “Now the counter-melody, the new music, was the manna in the wilderness, enough for each day (p. 186), “the baptized community has counter-music” to “the world’s longing for ‘more bricks’” (p. 187). He uses both the language of “counter” and the substance of “counter” in speaking to his congregation.

Third, his sermons use identification. He identifies with his listeners in two ways. He names people who are in the congregation, he names other people the congregation members would know, and he very frequently refers by name to Mennonite leaders, Mennonite events, and Mennonite beliefs. This is one of the deficiencies of the book as far as a larger reading audience is concerned. But it certainly would have, at the time of presentation, brought the speaker and listener together in the rhetorical event.

The second way is much more fundamental and positive. Longacre demonstrates great skill in suggesting that his ideas are only part of the picture. His preaching points are only some of the multi-dimensional aspects of the truths he is

touching on. He more than any other preacher I have studied has a special way of tipping his hand to his listeners and inviting them to consider their thoughts and ideas on the topic. Preachers who occupy the pulpit often assume that their training and position give them the privilege to state with some certainty that they know what they are talking about. The author in his Preface admits his philosophy on the Christian faith is, "Then, in steps small and large, careful listeners are drawn into the drama, not simply intrigued and inspired by the good story. The listeners now realize that the drama is unfinished and ongoing." In the second sermon of the book, he treats the question of women in leadership in the church. Before advancing his perspectives on the issue, he says, "You are all needed in this discussion. Your perspectives and questions deserve to be heard and considered." In his sermon on God's judgment (chapter 4), he says, "In all these matters I'll need to speak with some measure of caution and reserve, admitting that we do not understand fully the ways of God."

In his sermon on parenting (chapter 12), he begins the body of his sermon with "Let me suggest three dimensions of vegetables [Longacre enjoys using metaphors] with love. You could add more. But let's think about love as time, love as direction, and love as no." In the sermon he preached right after 9/11 (chapter 17), he asked whether our faith has any words to offer in the face of this evil? He responds, "I have just a few and you undoubtedly have others." In the sermon on prayer, he modestly says, "From this familiar prayer, let me offer a few thoughts." On Easter Sunday, 2003 (chapter 21), he asks how are we to come to a realization of the risen Lord? "Let me note three and there are more." At other times, as he comes to the body of his sermon, Longacre uses language such as, "Let me suggest several among many potential ones." On suffering (chapter 26), he ventures, "Now we know there are not final or complete answers to these questions. But this morning let's chip away at the issue." And on witnessing (chapter 29), his sermon announces, "Drawing from the text

read, let me suggest several out of many possible ways to witness."

His motives. Motive can be inferred from the choice of language used by a speaker. As Kenneth Burke reminds us, all action is symbolic and all language is symbolic. We know what a person is thinking by the language s/he uses. Longacre is aware of how symbolic language is and speaks about it in his sermons. I would offer, then, the following three motives in these sermons. First, he has a motive to jolt from complacency. He wants his listener and his reader to be jarred into a new way of thinking. He uses frequently the words "new eyes," "new direction," "new orientation," "new insights," "an alternative way," "a better way," "a new community," and likes to speak of Paul who counters with, "No, that's not it either—wrong question." In his sermon following 9/11 (chapter 17), he counters President Bush with the question, "Can we think in new ways?" "Our security is no longer found in standard defense. Ships, planes, bombs can only do so much. Imagination is needed. What if, in Afghanistan, instead of unloading bombs and grenades, we offered bread, gifts, goats, and sheep?"

In chapter 25 he deals with the controversial issue of other faiths. He jolts us from complacency in the way he responds to this. He offers two texts that "push up the windows a bit, letting in some interesting light on the status of those beyond the regular stream of faith." He then quotes from Romans 10:20 that quotes from Isaiah, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." Longacre then asks, "Will God honor the faith of those who respond to the dimensions of God of which they are presently aware?" He continues, "Might it be that God will count as righteousness this leaning toward the light, this honest search for truth, this eagerness to worship God as God is understood, if only partly?" This is jolting language for those steeped in the traditions of the church.

Second, he has a motive to unmask the opponent. Who is the opponent? It is the prevailing culture. In his sermon on God's providence (chapter 13), Longacre gives the Old

Testament story of Joseph and his brothers to illustrate family feuds and hatred. His opening sentence is, "Would you have wanted your daughter to marry Joseph?" The sermon carefully and in great detail describes the kind of person Joseph was. But at the end of the sermon Longacre pulls a surprise to suggest the proper attitude we should have toward the enemy. He says, "One additional perspective on God shines like a beacon in these stories of Joseph. It is simply this—that while God cares for the children of Jacob, God also cares for the Egyptians. Yes, the children of Israel were fed, but the Egyptians also were fed." We can unmask the enemy by acknowledging that God cares for him, too.

One of the ways he does this is to expose the dark side of what we consider good. In his sermon the second Sunday after 9/11 (chapter 18), he argues that "evil is not lodged in a few evil people," but "is intermingled with the good, with that which is necessary." We consider "the American way of life as desirable and largely good, but there are others for whom it feels exploitative. We see capitalism as the most desirable economic system, but it has its underside, as those on the lowest end know too well." Later on, he says that "truthfulness would also require that we hear the cries and anguish, the concerns and perspectives, of those we consider enemies.... For there to be justice, it must be justice for all."

Another approach to the unmasking of the opponent is to throw in one word as a way to shine light on who the opponent is in our society. In his Easter sermon in 2003 (chapter 21), he offers ways in which we see Jesus at work back in Galilee after the resurrection. In a list of examples of how Jesus dealt with those who needed him, he gives this sentence just out of the blue: "The rich young ruler was told that Enron did not yield joy and meaning."

In a sermon on peacemaking (chapter 9), Longacre says, "The peacemaker is to love the enemy. No easy task." He further claims that one of the things that makes for peace is to protest. He continues, "I wonder if the church has raised its voice sufficiently against a variety of evils of our time. Is there sufficient protest against capital punishment? Has the church

raised its voice adequately against those who care too little for the wellbeing of the environment? Have we spoken up for the concerns of the poor?" Not surprisingly, Longacre's church at Salford announces on its website that Ron Sider of the Evangelicals for Social Action would be speaking at the church on October 18 on the topic of poverty.

Third, he has a motive to question the accepted. We have already seen how he questioned the adequacy of the American response to 9/11. In a sermon (chapter 8) based on Colossians, he argues that modern Christianity confronts many notions that some would add on to the Christian faith as supplements. He says that "pervasive ideologies of the modern era have restricted or competed with the full message of the faith." Some of these are "individualism" that supposedly yields fullness of life, "wealth brings security and happiness," the "self-help" spiritual disciplines help us live successfully, and counseling and therapy sessions will help us find who we are. He concludes, "We are fighting the demons of our lives with antidotes that are too weak."

In a Palm Sunday sermon (chapter 28) in the year before his retirement from Salford, Longacre highlights the role of the donkey as a contrasting vision to a prancing horse for Jesus' ride into Jerusalem. In a statement typical of his sermons, he says, "Our creative challenge in our time, as in every time, is to find a donkey—a way to bring to the light and into question the dominant and controlling values of our time, and to picture an alternative way, a better way."

I don't have many criticisms of this book, but there are a few. I've already mentioned that the author may be staying too close to his Mennonite roots for some readers. It is not surprising since he was preaching to a solid and well-established Mennonite congregation. Even so, his sharing many quotations from outside writers—some well-known and others not—shows that he is a widely-read man.

A second point is that it often takes him too long to get to the point of his sermon. In chapter 12, the author is more than half way through the sermon before he gets to the three points he wants to make. In chapter 3, a sermon on Advent, he begins

with a story that takes up more than one-fourth of the sermon before he gets to his text.

A third point is that he sometimes does not offer specific enough suggestions for how to deal with the problem he is discussing. In chapter 24, the sermon on baptism, he mentions four dimensions of the new creation. The final one is reconciliation which would have many possibilities for exploring. He stays with generalities, saying, "Now this is no easy task. Differences are real, experiences vary, differences and perspectives are deeply held. In this world there are real divisions." I missed Longacre's creative mind applied to this one. He does bring up in this context the superficial issue of music and worship in the church service. He says that some have two services, others have blended music. He quickly announces, "I'm not interested in blending. I want transcendent music." What does he mean by this? What about the real issues that need reconciliation in society?

A fourth point is that there is no index and no author photo or contact information. There is an extensive Notes section on sources used and an Appendix of all the sermon themes preached during his tenure. Except for the Introduction, there is hardly any information about the congregation where these sermons were preached to help provide a context for his preaching. I was able to obtain some information about the congregation from its website: <http://www.salfordmc.org/>. There I found that current sermons preached at the church are available in print and in audio. I was sorry not to be able to find an archive of Longacre's sermons there so that I could have listened at least to his voice in preparing this review of his sermons.

In conclusion, Longacre's message, method, and motives make his sermons ground breaking and provocative. When I still teach occasionally, I tell my students that Kenneth Burke once said, "Language is the dancing of an attitude." If ever a book of sermons demonstrated this, James Longacre's book does. It's an attitude that resulted in, as the author says in his Preface, "again and again the reigning ideologies of our time

were questioned and countered, and new possibilities were offered.”

Book Reviews

JOHN HOWARD YODER. *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace and Revolution*, editors Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker. Ada, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2009. Pp. 480. \$34.99.

Reviewed by Myron S. Augsburger *

This book is a premier source for the outstanding insights of Dr. John Howard Yoder, one of the great minds of the twentieth century. Through his careful theological interpretation, his contribution over the last half of that century has touched minds and hearts across the Christian spectrum and in many parts of the larger world. This is affirmed by his colleagues in the educational and leadership programs of the Mennonite Church, too numerous to name here, but far beyond as reflected in the affirmations of Dr. Stanley Hauerwas of Duke University and of Dr. Glen H. Stassen of Fuller Theological Seminary. In reading this work one soon becomes aware of how much we are indebted to the editors Dr. Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker for this sequence of Yoder's lectures, a series presented at the Associate Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana.

In this work, Yoder's lectures give us a systematic survey of the history, character and varieties of Christian and humanist thought on this subject. Yoder, as a Mennonite scholar and missionary, sets forth the centrality of Christ in faith and life as the key to his own thinking. But he does this with an emphasis on the "whole" Jesus—death and

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resurrection, yes, but the risen Christ confirms the message of his person, his lifestyle and his teachings. Yoder emphasizes that Jesus established a new community of disciples as a creative minority in society. This people accept the way of the cross in self-giving love, in embodying forgiveness and a new life by a walk in the Spirit in the Kingdom of God.

Those who have read Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus*, or *Nevertheless*, or *The Royal Priesthood*, recognize that Yoder emphasizes that the Lordship of Christ and the reality of the Kingdom of Rule of God have political implications. Such will find in this book extensive source material for his argument. The reader will be amazed at the breadth of Yoder's scholarship and the force of his intellectual perception as he inter-faces with other scholars.

From early Church history to his contemporaries, Yoder was not only informed but interactive. This is seen in his high regard for the thought of the great theologian and pacifist of Yale University, Roland Bainton, and in his clear insight into the thinking and impact of Reinhold Niebuhr, his critique and analysis of the thought and impact of Niebuhr referred to as the greater American theologian of the twentieth century. But he is clear with respect to his differences while reading Neibuhr with awareness of his realism in the face of twentieth century wars and tracing Neibuhr's adjustments and compromise of his earlier pacifism.

While Yoder gives evidence of global consciousness as to the impact and relevance of a witness to nonresistance and nonviolence, I wish that he had given more space to an interpretation of Mohandas Gandhi as well as to Martin Luther King, Jr. His references to each, as to Tolstoy, are illustrative and to the point; however, in several lectures he gives considerable attention to other influences or movements which are lacking in these several. (I had the privilege of studying under Yoder in my third year of seminary at Elkhart, Indiana, and as I read this work I can hear his amazing lectures and his ability to pursue a discussion that would expand a particular point disproportionately.)

Without reviewing the awesome content of the book in this brief review, it is important to lift out the special focus in a few areas, including early Church pacifism, the development and character of the "Just War Theory" (with its intent of preventing war rather than justifying war), the various peace traditions of the Anabaptists, Mennonites, Brethren, and Quakers, and especially the interchange with the thought and influence of Reinhold Niebuhr. He also gives an analysis of Liberation Theology as well as of "Common Sense" humanism in various forms of thought on nonviolence. But this is interfaced with his own reflections on *Biblical Realism* and *The Politics of Jesus*. His analysis of the "Just War Thinking" is a must for readers from the larger Christian Church who have so often used the argument inconsistently to justify our engagements in violence rather than to seek alternate ways of conciliatory action that can be in some measure pre-emptive. However, true to his Biblical base in the New Covenant and the teachings of Jesus by life and word, Yoder calls us to the awareness that love doesn't always "win" but is called to the way of the cross.

Evangelical Christians will benefit especially from this emphasis on the "whole" Jesus rather than the truncated gospel that focuses only on the elements related to a pietistic experience in salvation. The pattern of discipleship of the risen Christ, by a minority community in any society, will serve as being "salt to the earth" and "leaven in the dough". Yoder stretches the mind but challenges the heart-commitment of the reader.

As Mennonite he reaches far beyond any ethnicity and is ecumenically engaging. He calls each Christian tradition, Catholic and Protestant, to rethink its presuppositions and hear the Scriptures again with openness to the Spirit as we engage insights in the community of faith on the contemporary issues of war and peace.

We are indebted to members of this community of faith, Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker, for their care in editing and presenting these lectures to the reading audience. I highly recommend a careful reading of this work. One could

wish that Yoder's development of thought as presented to students of theology could in some way have been presented here with the lay persons of the community in view, but it would have been unfair for the editors to have modified his style. For the reader it is important to hear these chapters as lectures, but intended not only to inform but also to stimulate. Above all, we should hear Yoder as calling for us to "think with God" in the Scripture, not just to think about God, and to gain a fresh insight into the priorities of His Kingdom in life.

JOHN W. MILLER. *Proverbs (Believers Church Bible Commentary)*. Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2004. Pp. 351. \$24.99.

*Reviewed by Terry L. Brensinger**

As both a teacher and preacher, I look for certain qualities in a good commentary. I want, first of all, a commentary that examines both the original context in which the text was written as well as the contemporary context in which that same text is now summoned to speak. I look for a commentary that reflects a thoughtful awareness of the entire book under consideration, but at the same time invites the reader to jump right in at whatever point he or she has interest. And finally, I want a commentary that integrates both the heart and the mind. If the Bible is properly read within the context of the Church, as we Anabaptists have long believed, then I look for commentaries that grapple not only with questions of academic interest, but with faith issues as well. In John W. Miller's study of the book of Proverbs, published as part of the *Believers Church Bible Commentary*, I've found a commentary that scores high marks in all three categories.

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Miller, first of all, carefully examines both the original context and setting of the book of Proverbs as well as possible points of contact with the modern world. Without overwhelming the reader with historical minutia, he ably explores such matters as literary genre, authorship, the setting in which the book was originally composed, and the meaning of "wisdom" in ancient Israel. For those readers who might like to explore these and other issues beyond what Miller says in the commentary itself, additional essays are included at the back of the book.

At the same time, Miller consistently encourages his readers to think carefully about ways in which these ancient texts might speak to those of us in the modern world. Throughout the commentary, he addresses such contemporary topics as marriage, parenting, materialism, violence, religion, government, and the environment. With few exceptions, Miller's comments on these and other subjects are clear, relevant and insightful.

Second, Miller shows a thorough understanding of the book of Proverbs as a whole without preventing his readers from entering the discussion at various points along the way. In fact, it is precisely his discussion of the overall structure and intention of Proverbs that I found most useful in the commentary. As one who has taught classes on the Wisdom Literature and Proverbs, I have often commented to students that the book of Proverbs does not reveal an overly precise organizational arrangement. After reading Miller's work, I'm forced to reconsider. Throughout this commentary, Miller argues that the book of Proverbs as we now have it is the second of two major editions. The first edition emerged during the time of Solomon, and the second and present edition during the noteworthy reforms of Hezekiah. Skillfully, Miller then provides a consistent reading of the book based upon this perspective. While acknowledging that Miller's theory does not solve all of the compositional uncertainties surrounding the book of Proverbs, I did find it to be generally persuasive and helpful.

Finally, Miller writes as both the scholar and pastor that he is. His work reflects a broad awareness of all of the major academic questions surrounding the book of Proverbs, and he does not back away from facing them. At the same time, the commentary is pastorally sensitive and seeks to do far more than simply engage the scholarly community. Miller writes with the church in mind, and he cares deeply about the spiritual welfare of his readers.

Like other volumes in the *Believers Church Bible Commentary*, this study of the book of Proverbs includes a helpful introduction, lengthy commentary on the book itself, individual essays dealing with various issues pertaining to Proverbs, and an outline of the book and bibliography. In addition, Miller provides several original charts that help the reader categorize the many proverbial sayings that appear in the book.

In short, John W. Miller has written a wonderful and accessible commentary on what for many has been a perplexing book. Whether used by pastors preparing sermons, teachers gathering class materials, or individual disciples seeking to live more godly lives, this commentary on Proverbs will be a welcome addition to anyone's library.

RICHARD P. CHURCH. *First Be Reconciled: Challenging Christians in Courts*. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2009. Pp. 232. \$19.99.

Reviewed by Mary D. France *

In the preface to *First Be Reconciled*, Richard Church states that “[t]o be a witness to the kingdom of God come in the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ has everything to do with the manner in which Christians resolve disputes”

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(p.13). Nowhere in Scripture is this point made so vividly than it is in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11. In these passages Paul admonishes the members of the church at Corinth to take their grievances against one another to the "saints" rather than to the unrighteous judges of the civil courts. More pointedly, Paul encourages Christians to avoid disputes altogether and to be willing to suffer wrongs rather than seek justice.

Paul's instructions, Church observes, has been forgotten by modern Christians who have embraced the courts and have ignored the traditional role of the church as a discerning body for the reconciliation of disputes. How was this lesson lost? Church explores the answers to this question through an historical examination of the views of the early church fathers and the leaders of the Reformation. As a counterpoint to his general thesis that mainline churches have failed to address the conflict between reconciliation and litigation, Church acknowledges that the Anabaptist tradition has engaged, and continues to engage, in an ongoing conversation about what Christians should do when they disagree.

Church sets the stage for examining Anabaptist teachings on litigation by tracing historical interpretations of Paul's teachings in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions. St. Augustine understood Paul's message as prohibiting litigation for the purpose of advancing personal economic goals. However, suits to protect the weak, heard by church adjudicatory bodies, were permissible. Later, under Martin Luther's dual kingdom doctrine, Christians were not so much set apart, but were citizens of both a heavenly and an earthly kingdom of God. Luther taught that "wrongs against oneself were to be forgiven without response; wrongs against another were to be litigated in the secular courts assigned the role of wielding the sword" (p. 73). While Luther relaxed the prohibition on civil litigation, John Calvin moved even further from early church teachings. Calvin reduced Paul's admonition to avoid the courts and bear wrongs patiently as merely an aspirational statement, unrelated to participation in the social and political order ordained by God.

Against this backdrop, Church describes the historical Anabaptist understanding that Christians not only were to avoid litigation, but also were compelled to forgive and to seek reconciliation with the wrongdoer. This position has required Anabaptists to engage in an ongoing conversation as to how this witness can be sustained while participating in civil society. In 1981, the Mennonite Church's General Assembly issued an important summary of Mennonite views on the legal system entitled "The Use of the Law." This document went beyond the traditional Mennonite view of law by affirming the positive role law played in society and by encouraging the professional practice of law. It also approved the practice of consulting with lawyers and entering into contracts and other legal agreements. Christians are encouraged to use the legal system to bring justice to the poor and the oppressed. But "The Use of the Law" also reiterates the traditional Anabaptist position that believers should not take each other to court for selfish reasons and that litigation should be avoided in favor of alternative dispute resolution practices.

Church notes that while Anabaptist theology continues to affirm this position, it is not always followed in practice. A survey of five Anabaptist denominations in 1989 revealed that only one-third of their members thought that a Christian should not engage in litigation. This statistic suggests that Anabaptists continue to wrestle with this issue, but at least they recognize that an issue exists. Church's goal in this book is to challenge the view prevalent in the modern church that believers can engage in litigation while still providing an authentic witness to the kingdom of God.

Avoiding litigation in a secular society populated by non-believers and multi-national corporations may seem naïve to Christians outside the Anabaptist tradition. Church recognizes the practical challenge posed by 1 Corinthians 6 in the telling of the story of Antonio Quintela, an attorney and a Mennonite. Quintela and his family responded to their neighbor's acts of ethnic intimidation and violence with prayer and offers of reconciliation. In their efforts to provide a witness to the

power of forgiveness, Quintela drew upon the support of fellow Mennonites and others in the community. But as Church observes, the efforts of the Quintelas did not result in a "fairy-tale ending." Eventually they determined that all other options had been exhausted and elected to pursue justice in the courts so that others similarly situated would not be abused. Church concludes that although the Quintelas' efforts did not transform their toxic relationship with their neighbors, the difficult path they followed provided a powerful "witness to the potential of the gospel of reconciliation to shape and call a set-apart people" (p. 35).

The story of the Quintelas highlights the theological importance of the concept of justice and the critical role the judicial system plays when parties are seeking justice for themselves or for others. At times the resources of the church may not be sufficient, or the church may fail in its purpose to be God's witness. For example, Church suggests that as an alternative to litigation in the courts, instances of sexual misconduct by priests in the American Catholic Church could have been resolved by canon law courts rather than by litigation that drove many dioceses to the brink of bankruptcy. Whether the result would have been different if such courts had heard these complaints is uncertain. Over decades, laypersons, clergy and others within the Catholic Church had urged its leaders to confront the problem, but these efforts failed because the preservation of the institution, rather than the protection of innocent parties, was the preeminent concern of some church leaders.

Church's purpose is to challenge Christians to think about litigation more critically. Both Christians and non-Christians have accepted his challenge. However, Church downplays situations in which parties within the legal system have acknowledged that litigation is counterproductive and have adopted more collaborative approaches to resolving differences. Current efforts to encourage mediation or other alternative dispute resolution processes are dismissed because they are based on concerns for efficiency, rather than the moral superiority of reconciliation. Church's view may be

pertinent when Christians are disagreeing with other Christians, but more often than not, Christians find themselves involved in disputes with non-Christians, corporations or governmental agencies, which do not share their religious convictions. Rather than dismissing these efforts because they may arise from selfish motivations, they should be encouraged because they provide an opportunity for the parties to learn that disputes can be resolved through non-adversarial processes.

First Be Reconciled is the fourth installment of the Polyglossia: Radical Reformation Theologies series, which serves as a conversation among academics, ministers and laypersons about Christian knowledge, beliefs and practices. Church, however, unlike the other authors in this series, is not from the Anabaptist tradition. He is an Episcopalian and a practicing attorney. While a student at Duke University, Church explored theological ethics as taught by Stanley Hauerwas, which Church admits complicated his life and created a level of discomfort about his career as a lawyer. In this scholarly and thoughtful book, Church encourages Christians to join him in his discomfort and to look at 1 Corinthians 6 with fresh eyes and a renewed commitment to witness to the world the power of reconciliation.

TRICIA GATES BROWN, ed. *118 Days: Christian Peacemaker Teams Held Hostage in Iraq*. Cascadia Publishing House, co-published with Christian Peacemaker Teams, 2008. Pp. 263. \$17.95.

*Reviewed by Phyllis Hershey Carlson **

On November 26, 2005, the Christian Peacemaker Team of Tom Fox (United States), Norman Kember (United

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Kingdom), Jim Loney (Canada), and Harmeet Singh Sooden (New Zealand) were kidnapped in Baghdad, Iraq, by a group whose members called themselves Brigades of the Swords of Right (p.88). Tom Fox, the full-time member of the Iraq CPT team, was killed on March 9, 2006. The remaining three men were released two weeks later on March 23, having been held for almost four months.

Doug Pritchard, CPT Co-Director, wrote in the book's foreword (p.11): "The kidnapping is like a rock thrown into a pond. This book describes the ripples set in motion by that rock. Ripples in the lives of CPT teams and the communities in which they work. Ripples among the families and friends of those taken. . . . Ripples across the world in faith communities, prisons, the media and their audiences."

This book is an attempt to follow those ripples, sometimes an uneven task. *118 Days* is a collection of writings by CPT teams, their communities, friends, family, and their supporting networks across four continents, detailing their experiences during these tumultuous days. After their release Norman, Jim, and Harmeet wrote a simple statement of forgiveness for their captors. This concludes the essay portion of the book. At the end of each article, the writer's name is listed with a brief updated biography. The appendix lists more than 140 different groups representing Muslims, Jews, Christians and others who gave statements on behalf of the four during their captivity. A few annotated notes end the book.

Although Christian Peacemaker Teams is a small group of less than 200 active members and reservists, the response to the kidnapping of these four men and the later execution of Tom Fox reverberated around the world. The response cut across cultural and faith lines as people poured their support into the effort in whatever ways they could.

A crisis management team was formed, comprised of CPT Co-Directors, Delegation and Training Coordinators, Canada Co-Coordinator, Colombia Project Support Coordinator, and the CPT steering committee (p. 16). The crisis team never met in person but communicated daily by telephone and conference calls. They orchestrated press releases, coordinated

responses, determined how the story of these men should be told, and gathered information to demonstrate that these men were not spies, as had been charged. "This team maintained an amazing unity, focus, and energy level through the constant stress of the crisis" (p. 16).

Publicity released by CPT focused on the peace work of Tom, Norman, Jim, and Harmeet rather than their backgrounds. One member had been a Marine, another had worked for a defense contractor, and a third member was gay. Evidence was collected through documents, photos, and testimonies about the peace-making mission of CPT and more specifically about the four men and the work in which they were involved. It was determined that press releases needed to be in Arabic and given by Arabic speakers. CPT members were seldom interviewed by the media. Arab speakers kept CPT teams informed about news reported on Al Jazeera. Arabic and foreign media were crucial in telling the story, but at the same time could not always be relied upon to give accurate information, and the teams found themselves in the position of trying to counteract false stories. For example, the commercial media insisted Tom had been physically tortured, but when examined later, there was no evidence of this.

It was felt that the media didn't adequately portray the message of peace of CPT, which in part called for the release of 14,000 Iraqis imprisoned by the multi-national Force in Iraq. Instead, the media often seemed to grasp at the sensational, and sometimes attempted to vilify CPT by calling them inexperienced and naive. After the three men were rescued by British and American service personnel, some news reports described the team as ungrateful.

During these 118 days, it is clear from the detailed accounting by the CPT teams that this kidnapping consumed much or most of the teams' energies. In some cases the various teams put their other work on hold as they participated in prayer vigils and demonstrations, communicated with families and friends, and became caretakers of those involved in the work.

Many examples are given in the book of how the Arabic and Muslim communities in Iraq and throughout the world made a massive effort to release the hostages by writing statements of support, giving interviews, making useful contacts with numerous Islamic groups, making appeals to the captors, translating documents and news releases, collecting information, and working with and advising CPT. Over half of the persons and groups listed in the appendix who supported CPT during the crisis were from the Middle East or represented Middle Eastern groups. Without this strong support *118 Days* might have had a different ending.

One chapter details the gay relationship of Jim Loney and Dan Hunt as written by Dan. CPT determined that knowledge of this gay relationship would compromise Jim's security. Dan describes the struggle that imposed secrecy had on him. This candidly written chapter resulted in withdrawal of two publishers unless certain paragraphs were removed, which CPT declined to do. The inclusion of the entire chapter provides insight into the CPT community, its supporters and of CPT's effort to remain an accepting, humanizing community, even at great cost to their support base.

From the title, *118 Days, Christian Peacemaker Teams Held Hostage in Iraq*, the reviewer had expected the book to be written from the hostages' point of view. Instead of the inside story of how Norman, Jim, and Harmeet survived the crisis, the stories mainly told how supporting people and groups experienced this crisis. The writings underscored CPT's emphasis as a Christian peace organization attempting to maintain an atmosphere of justice, equality and fairness in a hostile environment.

Voices of the kidnapped men were heard through four chapters. Harmeet Sooden, a short-term delegate, had been in Iraq only a few days before he was kidnapped. In an interview he wrote of his reasons for joining the CPT team, of his witnessing of the poor living conditions of the ordinary Iraqis, of his response to critics of the team's actions, and of his intentions to continue to work for peace.

In an article published in the London *Daily Telegraph*, Norman Kember briefly reflected on his experience and the “understanding of the radical nature of Christianity.” “I see in Jesus’ teaching and example a revolutionary approach to the manner of dealing with conflict and wrong-doing” (p. 208). “Our experience has not brought about a change in our belief in the need for and efficacy of nonviolent solutions to conflicts. The best way to peace is not to prepare for war . . . but to work for justice” (p. 210).

Jim Loney wrote the most touching chapter. He gave an insightful, brief glimpse into the men’s experience as captives, the role that Tom Fox provided early on as “stalwart anchor and in-house expert” (p. 238), and ended with a heart-felt tribute to Tom.

Most bothersome in the book was the repetitious details and stories, which detracted from the flow of the book. Careful editing would have made these stories more succinct. There was an obvious attempt to get as many viewpoints as possible—from intimate family stories to prison musings to morgue visits—but this repetition became tedious and boring.

This book is for those who want to understand Christian Peacemaker Teams as an organization and their work for peace. It is essential reading for anyone thinking of becoming a CPT member. Most importantly, this book challenges and inspires those seriously committed to non-violence as an alternative to war and willing to put themselves at risk. As an often quoted phrase points out, CPT works by “getting in the way” (p. 29), deliberately choosing to work in areas of war and conflict. This book gives an intimate glimpse into CPT and how its dedicated members attempt to accomplish this goal of peace-making in a troubled world.

PAUL ALEXANDER. *Peace to War: Shifting Alliances in the Assemblies of God*. Cascadia Publishing House, 2009. Pp. 432. \$26.95.

*Reviewed by Daniel R. Chamberlain**

Paul Alexander is a fourth-generation Pentecostal with impressive Assemblies of God credentials. From birth he attended Assemblies of God churches; he earned undergraduate and seminary degrees from Assemblies of God institutions and subsequently taught in one of the denomination's universities for nine years. In the book *Peace to War*, Alexander documents the forces that produced a dramatic change in the denomination's official position on participating in war.

In 1917, Assemblies of God church leaders sent the following resolution to President Wilson: "Therefore, we, as a body of Christians, while purposing to fulfill all the obligations of loyal citizenship, are nevertheless constrained to declare we cannot conscientiously participate in war and armed resistance which involves the actual destruction of human life, since this is contrary to our view of the clear teachings of the inspired Word of God, which is the sole basis of our faith" (p. 30). Just fifty years later, in 1967, the church adopted this policy: "As a Movement we affirm our loyalty to the government of the United States in war or peace. We shall continue to insist, as we have historically, on the right of each member to choose for himself whether to declare his position as a combatant, a noncombatant, or a conscientious objector" (p. 31).

Peace to War was first written as a doctoral dissertation and it retains evidence of its origin. It includes nearly 1,200 footnotes and a forty-five-page bibliography of primary

* Daniel R. Chamberlain recently retired as president of Houghton College. Formerly he was academic dean at Messiah College and Assistant University Dean for University-wide activities at the State University of New York.

sources plus thirteen pages of secondary sources. (This bibliography alone makes this book worthwhile for those interested in peace studies.) Alexander has divided his study into nine chapters. The first is an overview of the entire volume with a brief introduction to Pentecostals in general, with special additional details about the Assemblies of God. These groups yearn to recapture the essence of the New Testament church and believe that "all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including healing and speaking in tongues, are for contemporary Christians" (p. 29).

Chapters 2 through 7 examine in chronological order important epochs and influences on the Assemblies of God as they first propagated, then neglected, and finally rejected their peace position and joined mainstream evangelical churches in supporting U.S. military policies and practices. In the final two chapters, Alexander abandons the objective style of an evenhanded scholar and adopts a far more prophetic stance. He pleads for the Assemblies of God to examine their biblical and historical roots and return to the peace position of their first generation leaders.

Alexander attributes the early peace position of the Assemblies of God to an intuitive or implied hermeneutic that placed primary emphasis upon the life and teachings of Jesus which they understood and applied literally. The numerous articles supporting nonviolence and conscientious objection to war almost always appealed to Jesus and the Bible. When the church changed its position, it appealed to the Old Testament and Romans while ignoring the example of Jesus as presented in the Gospels. It is also significant that the denomination included its peace position in their bylaws, but not in their doctrinal statements. As a result (bylaws are not usually taught!) nonviolence was seldom taught or preached. In addition, the movement failed to develop relationships with historic peace churches which would have provided encouragement and support for an ongoing tradition of pacifism.

In 1917 the Assemblies of God had 8,500 members and most of the men of military age were either conscientious

objectors or noncombatant soldiers with twenty Pentecostals actually imprisoned for their peace position. By WWII, the denomination had grown to over 2 million with 65,000 members in the various branches of the military; only thirty-five members declared themselves to be conscientious objectors. The numbers tell just one important dimension of the shift in the church's position. By this time the publications and the practices of the Assemblies of God were now stridently supportive of U.S. military personnel and practices. Members were often "commissioned" by their church when they were drafted or volunteered to join the military. Military heroes were praised in church publications and in many congregations. Alexander then examines several additional reasons for this dramatic shift.

Speaking in tongues was limited to worship for the Assemblies of God. It was the normative evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit, but it made no demands upon the social and ethical issues that Pentecostals faced; thus *experience* became the crucial element in obtaining and exhibiting one's Christian life. The Assemblies of God emphasis upon missions and evangelism was originally a major argument for its peace position. Missionaries would find it difficult or impossible to minister in other cultures and nations if the Assemblies of God supported wars that damaged or destroyed those they wished to reach for Christ through missions. Ironically, the passion to evangelize led the church to become very active in training and deploying military chaplains so that they could minister to those in the military. By 1969 the denomination boasted forty-five full-time military chaplains and that number had increased to more than 300 by the year 2000. Chaplains were highly respected and encouraged by the church, a practice that indirectly undermined a peace witness.

Rapid growth posted another hurdle in maintaining a peace position. Opposition to war was not yet part of the DNA of the Assemblies of God. Pastors and other leaders lacked careful grounding in nonviolence; plus, a commitment to nonviolence was never a test for membership. Thus

assimilation and acculturation quickly occurred and was institutionalized when the Assemblies of God joined the National Association of Evangelicals in 1941.

But Alexander identifies the elevation of the authority of individual conscience as the most important element in the rapid change from “peace to war” within the Assemblies of God. He finds the denomination’s willingness to apply this principle to the important issues of war and peace unfortunate and inconsistent. The church insisted that it had the right and the obligation to set uniform standards on many practices such as the use of alcohol and tobacco and opposition to abortion and homosexuality while leaving decisions about participating in war up to individual conscience. Within three decades the result was that church members against war were marginalized and opposed while those affirming any and all government policies, including war, were commended and supported.

This reviewer was disappointed that the word “patriotism” was always used in a negative or pejorative way. By denotation and definition, patriotism simply means love of country and the willingness to sacrifice for it. Love of country should not require jingoistic support of whatever the government may propose. The desire to improve and strengthen a nation may often call for dissent and for presenting or supporting proposals that would change and improve the nation. Perhaps the word “patriotism” cannot be rehabilitated since it has such narrow and negative connotations for many. On the other hand, we will have made progress in our national maturity when we recognize that positions such as nonresistance and support for policies that reduce or eliminate many of the causes of war are patriotic in the best and original sense of the word.

I was also surprised to discover a few errors that were missed by the author and his editors and perhaps by his dissertation advisor as well. In quoting a reference to “a government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” Alexander criticizes the author for putting words from the American Declaration of Independence in the mouth of Jesus (p. 216). His concern is legitimate, but confusing Lincoln’s

Gettysburg address (the actual source of the quotation) with the Declaration of Independence was jarring to this reader.

Peace to War is a valuable case study about how organizations change. For churches concerned about maintaining a vibrant peace witness, it is a cautionary tale. Positions that are not part of the cultural mainstream are under constant threat of moving toward the popular consensus instead of maintaining the prophetic stance required to be true to a tradition and its biblical basis. Readers will also appreciate that this book is not a dry recital of historical facts and figures. It frequently pulses with moving examples and stories of individuals who suffered persecution and ostracism for their beliefs. Many readers will be shocked or even outraged by the repression and suspension of freedom of speech and freedom of the press during WWI that Alexander documents. The courage of conscientious objectors in the face of brutal treatment by government officials and ordinary citizens is sure to inspire all those who dare to stand for their convictions despite great opposition.

E. MORRIS SIDER. *Celebration: A Centennial History of the Grantham Brethren in Christ*. Grantham, Pa.: Grantham Brethren in Christ Church, 2009. Pp. 371. \$13.00 (\$25 hard cover).

*Reviewed by James O. Lehman**

A good congregational study is **history writ large** of the denomination and its cultural and geographic setting. This well-written congregational history is like a small cosmos that in some sense mirrors the larger Brethren in Christ Church and Messiah College, the setting in which this congregation began

* James O. Lehman before retirement was Director of Libraries and Archivist at Eastern Mennonite University. In retirement he is part-time archivist for Virginia Mennonite Conference. He has written nine book-length congregational histories.

and flourished. It becomes a microcosm of the larger church and college of which it is an integral aspect.

Sider is dealing with a history of the congregation he and his wife have called home for the last forty-six years. If that suggests bias to some, to others it may be thought of as a sympathetic reflection of how God was at work in a given congregation. The author immediately deals with the bias question by admitting it upfront, but he makes no apologies "for putting a favorable spin on the account."

Of course, that tends to be true of the historian who writes history with which he/she has been closely associated for nearly half a century. Knowing this, the reader can then proceed with that in mind. Actually no historian really practices the craft of nearby and up-close history with complete objectivity. Everyone has rose-colored glasses to some extent. A different set of eyes and perspective might see the history differently.

"If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done," says Ecclesiastes 11:4 (*New Living Translation*). To Solomon's comment one might add, "If one waits for the perfect historian" no congregational history would be written. No perfect historians exist.

Because our age is "more interested in story than in bare facts and numbers," says Sider, he deliberately tried to put "a more human face" to the history. In that he succeeded well. The author's love of biography shines in many places in this account. Congregational development often relies on a relatively small number of persons who became prime movers throughout the history. That was especially true in this account. Highlighting them is to be expected. To do otherwise would be less than honest.

No local history proceeds well without good biography. Of course, one should attempt to present a fair and accurate picture, one that will also deal with negative aspects of the story along with the facts, the statistics, the faces. It is crucial to be generous with photographs as is Sider's book. When a reader picks up a congregational history one often observes that the first thing people do is look for the photographs to see

who is included and what they look like. Pictures say more than reams of pages of text, particularly if one is dealing with major changes of dress, buildings or surroundings.

It is striking in this account to observe how this congregation and the Brethren in Christ in the United States and Canada have a history that closely parallels that of the Mennonite Church. Who was copying whom? Sometimes one, sometimes the other may be first with innovations and changes. It matters not. One suggestion for improvement might be that a bit more comment or analysis of that parallelism would have been useful in this history, for Sider somewhat sidesteps that aspect. However, he clearly does point out the close and symbiotic relationship of Brethren in Christ and Mennonite development of MCC (Mennonite Central Committee). In fact, the Brethren in Christ, for their size, have had unusually strong involvement in leadership and development of MCC. It is not surprising that a good bit of Mennonite writing includes something on the Brethren in Christ, for they are so similar in doctrine and life, noting, of course, that the latter emphasize holiness more strongly.

A congregation with a century of history has context, comparisons and relationships. This author wisely admits from the beginning how closely the history of the church on campus compares with the history of Messiah College. That gave him an abundance of information to research and much interviewing. These were done in depth. The temptation then becomes strong to include so much in telling the story that the book tends to become too large. It becomes a serious problem on what to leave out and what to include. In this regard Sider made many good choices.

The Grantham congregation was wise in assigning this task to a historian with such major experience in research, writing and editing. Count the list of books Sider has written. This one will be number 30 that he has written or been involved in editing, beside his editorial duties of many years of editing the *Brethren in Christ History & Life* journal. This reviewer has often been awed by the number and speed with which Morris Sider accomplishes the research and writing of

so many volumes of good history or biography. The Brethren in Christ Church at large is certainly indebted to Morris Sider.

Finally, one happily notes that he does not ignore recent history. Local histories that stop twenty years ago are disappointing. History making does not stop. True, in some sense, the last decade or two are the most difficult to deal with, particularly if major changes or controversies were weathered. But they must not be ignored. Sider took a good approach. He said "change and continuity" mark the last decade. Perspective certainly is lacking, but development and change and continuity do not stop. He makes observations regarding new administrative patterns, changes in worship services, various activities, partnerships, expansions of vision, and numbers of people involved. Thus the congregation can be encouraged to face the future.

Too many congregations have seen bitter wrangling of one sort or another somewhere in their history. Not this one, for disputes were resolved and they moved on. Perhaps a recent visitor was correct in saying that the "Grantham Church has a reputation of doing things in the right way." Surely that must feel comfortable to the church and the college next door.

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FRONT COVER: The administration building of Upland College and Upland Academy (see article beginning on page 444). Image courtesy of Eglomisé Designs, Inc. Original photograph courtesy of Cathy Light Musser. Arrangement to use image courtesy of Jon Stuckey.