MENNONITE LIFE

JUNE 1993

In this Issue

This issue of *Mennonite Life* includes articles which follow the westward migration route of Mennonites in America—Ohio to Illinois to Kansas.

From Ohio, a diary and a small walnut chest, both belonging to Abraham J. Moser in the 1860s, recently came to light. Both artifacts help give us imaginative access to the remote world of the Wadsworth Institute, an early Mennonite school (1868-78). The diary had been passed down to Moser's granddaughter, Irene Miller, who gave it to Ruth Moser, a member of the Central District Conference Mennonite Historical Committee. Moser asked Nettie Hoolie to do the initial translation from German into English, and passed the documents to the Mennonite Historical Library at Bluffton College in Ohio. Ann Hilty, director of that library, suggested that *Mennonite Life* readers might be interested in reading diary excerpts.

Ervin Beck, professor of English at Goshen College, came upon Moser's chest at a yard sale in southwestern Michigan. He was able to purchase it for the Mennonite-Amish Museum Committee at Goshen. Inside the lid of the chest was a report card with Moser's scores from his 1868 classes at Wadsworth. Ervin supplied several of the photos for this issue.

Rachel Kreider and Anna Kreider Juhnke, a mother-daughter editorial team, have each published articles on the Wadsworth school in earlier issues of *Mennonite Life* (April 1959 and June 1977). Rachel is the co-author of the comprehensive volume, *Amish and Amish Mennonite Genealogies* (1986). Anna teaches in the English department at Bethel College.

This issue includes an essay by Jeff Gundy about one of his ancestors, Valentine Strubhar. Jeff teaches English at Bluffton College. This piece of creative writing is part of a larger project about the author's ancestors and their lives in central Illinois. Jeff says it is turning out to be "a kind of hybrid, not quite a novel and not quite history, and not quite a historical novel either." Whatever the genre, it does help us see our forebears with new eyes.

Daagya Dick's essay in this issue tells of the response of one denominational periodical, *The Mennonite,* and its editor, Maynard Shelly, to the early years of the modern civil rights movement in America. This article is a shortened version of a paper that won first prize in a contest sponsored by the Kansas History Teacher's Association to honor the best undergraduate history paper in the state in 1992. Daagya works in Mantz Library at Bethel College.

The Radical Reformation and Mennonite Bibliography appears annually in our June issue. Barbara Thiesen, compiler of the bibliography, is Technical Services Librarian and Co-Director of Mantz Library and Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College.

One generally unacknowledged contributor to the design of *Mennonite Life* is Robert Regier, retired art teacher at Bethel College. Especially in our December issues on the arts, Robert has helped to improve the visual appearance of our journal. Many thanks, Bob!

James C. Juhnke

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LIFE

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Front Cover
Wadsworth Institute

Back Cover
Christian Community Center, Gulfport, Mississippi, ca. 1955?

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The Abraham J. Moser Diary of Wadsworth Institute - 1868

Edited by
Rachel W. Kreider and
Anna Kreider Juhnke
Translated by
Nettie Hooley

In October 1866, Abraham J. Moser, a young man from the Sonnenberg community in Ohio, traveled twenty-five miles north to attend the dedication of the Wadsworth Institute. This Institute, sponsored by the General Conference Mennonite Church, was the first Mennonite school for higher education in North America.[1] Moser was deeply impressed by the dedication services, and his report of this significant event is the only one on record.

Two years later, Moser enrolled in the summer term at Wadsworth. From June 9 until September 12 he kept a diary of his experiences, the only surviving daily account of a student's life at the Wadsworth school. Without missing a single day, Moser wrote his entries in neat German script in a tiny notebook, three by five inches. This notebook was preserved by a granddaughter, Irene H. Miller, of Escondido, California. Now, with brittle pages and faded ink, it is in the Mennonite Historical Library at Bluffton College, together with other Moser papers, gathered and donated by Mrs. Ruth Moser of Orrville, Ohio.

Abraham Moser was the youngest of ten children born to Jacob and Barbara (Wahli) Moser, who left their native Switzerland in 1821 and settled in the new Swiss colony in Wayne County, Ohio. Even in his youth, Moser enjoyed writing down his impressions and experiences as well as the stories he heard about his background. Among the Moser papers are two autobiographical sketches. A nine-page, undated one is entitled "Youthful Years of A. J. Moser." The longer one is "On Lonely Paths: Remembrances of the Past" (26 pp.), written in 1894, when he was forty-five. From these typed manuscripts we can learn much of the history of the Moser family and the early Sonnenberg community.

Moser, called Hami in his youth, traced his lineage back to one Hans Moser (born about 1695) who was a nurse in a hospital in Bern and an uncle to the famous doctor, "Tschampo-Hans Moser." Hans I had a least two children, as did Hans II. The latter had a son Peter (b. 1750)—a farmer, weaver, and watchmaker—who apparently raised his family in the Reformed Church. Among his seven sons was the aforementioned Jacob (1793-1870), one of at least three sons who emigrated to America. Abraham wrote romantically about the Switzerland of his forefathers and recorded in detail the long trip which eventually brought his family to Ohio, where the first Swiss of the old community had settled in the previous year. "The roads were still almost impassable and huge virgin forests covered much of the land." Moser speculated that the hard work of the pioneers may have been considered less of a burden than the loneliness and isolation.

The family of Jacob Moser, Abraham's father, exerted considerable influence in the new Sonnenberg community. The oldest son John (1826) became a prominent bishop but moved on to Putnam County, Ohio. David (1836) led a movement that split off the more liberal Salem church from the Sonnenberg congregation. Jacob (1840) was a deacon at Sonnenberg for over fifty years and gathered together what became the only official church roll of the early decades. Abraham (1845-1912), who attended the Wadsworth Institute, became the community's historian of the nineteenth century.[2]

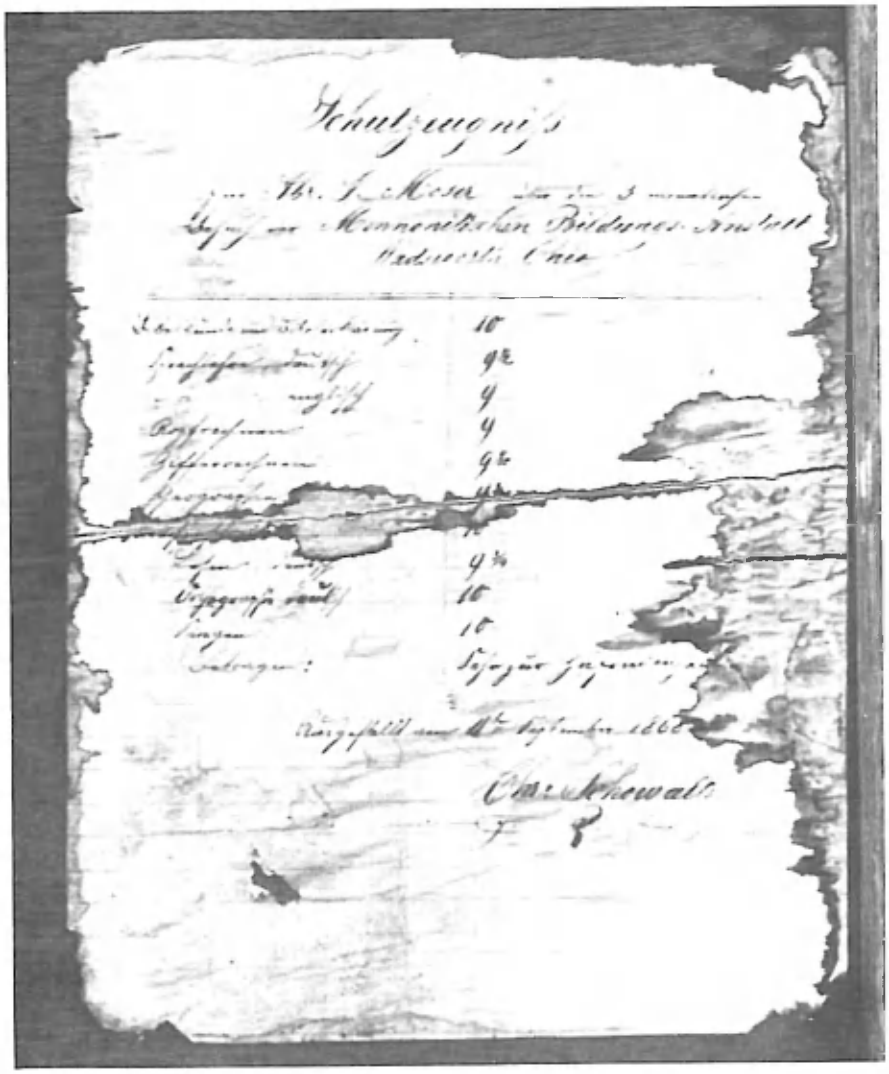
He wrote that as the youngest child he no doubt enjoyed a considerable advantage over his siblings but his parents brought him up "in the ways of the Lord" and furnished him "a good example." In describing his youth he wrote in generalities except for one paragraph of specific information about

his years as a young adult:

> In the fall of 1862 J. D. Lehman founded his 'Eintracht' in which I took part and which encouraged me to read and write essays. In the same year I learned the cobbler's trade from J. Baumgartner. In March, 1864, brother Jacob went to Oregon. Brother David lived at home then. I was at home . . . worked on the farm. In the spring of 1865 Jacob came home again; in the fall of 1866 he married. In the fall of 1865, brother David and I went to Missouri. During the winter of 1865-66, I went to German school. C. C. Baumgartner was the teacher. During the summer of 1866, my parents built their house and moved in in the fall of that year. I attended the dedication ceremonies of the educational institution in Wadsworth and then started teaching school. In the spring of 1867, I joined church and went to Missouri . . . returned in the fall and taught school again. In the spring of 1868, U. Welty and I went East and then I entered the institution (the one mentioned above at Wadsworth). In February 1869, I went again to Missouri and in May 1870 I was married.

With these facts out of the way, he could then release his talent for writing on what truly interested him—his travels.

The summer term of 1868 was the second school term of the Wadsworth Institute. Sixteen students were enrolled, a decrease of eight from the first term.[3] The faculty was not yet complete, some serious problems were starting to show, and Moser's own community was becoming polarized about supporting the school.



Abraham J. Moser's report card September 1868

Recent Swiss Mennonite immigrants such as those at Sonnenberg had suffered from isolation, discrimination, and now from a struggle for survival in pioneer conditions. Simplicity, frugality and integrity had deep religious significance for them.[4] However, outward conformity, rather than inner spiritual life, had become a test of simplicity; progressive innovations were a sign of pride.

At Sonnenberg, the issues of progress and pride came to a head in the matter of higher education. In 1862, Daniel Hege, General Conference leader, had come into the Sonnenberg community to solicit funds for the proposed Wadsworth Institute. He received a rather sympathetic hearing and a number of members showed some kind of support, although many of the pledges were never paid.[5] In the mid-1860s, growing disagreements over higher education and other issues in the congregation, as well as the lure of cheaper land, propelled some more progressive members to the new colony in Moniteau County, Missouri. Abraham Moser visited this settlement in 1865, 1867, and 1869.

The conservatives who remained found fuel for their arguments against higher education in the appearance of their young people who attended the Wadsworth Institute. According to James O. Lehman, when students returned for vacation, bringing friends with them (see, for example, Moser's diary for July 11) they showed the effects of modern ways. Their clothing did not meet the standards of traditional simplicity. One or two of them even wore mustaches. They spoke in high German instead of their familiar Swiss dialect. They were full of talk about such innovative things as prayer meetings, Sunday school, missions, and a more active church program. Traditionalists condemned such changes as signs of pride. By April 1, 1870, the conservatives in the Sonnenberg congregation pushed through a resolution that members be forbidden to attend the Wadsworth school.[6] In 1871 they resolved to discipline anyone who associated with the school. Step by step the congregation moved to a schism and the organization of a new congregation, the Salem Mennonite Church.

Against this background, the young Abraham Moser's enthusiasm for the Wadsworth Institute is significant. His description of the dedication services, and even his private diary, may be seen partly as defending Christian higher education to others and to himself against the charges of pride and worldliness. Moser's report of the dedication, as published in *Der Christlicher Frie-*

densbote, a church paper, began:

> When the announcement was made in the *Christlicher Volksblatt* that the school building at Wadsworth would be dedicated on October 13 and 14 and that the occasion should be a general celebration for Mennonites, there arose in me the wish to attend, to see this building for myself and to hear whether indeed it had been erected for a good purpose.[7]

The imposing three-storey building with its cupola had been criticized as prideful and ostentatious. Moser cautiously described it as "a stately building, yet modest in appearance . . . in short, the whole building is nicely arranged without much display or unnecessary ornamentation."

Overall, the dedication services filled Moser both with spiritual blessing and with a thrill of new possibilities for spreading God's kingdom:

> The impression which this celebration had made upon me I shall never forget, and even now, as I recall those blessed hours, a gentle spirit of devotion fills my soul. . . . I had the consciousness of having witnessed a celebration which had for its purpose the glorification of the Almighty and the spread and establishment of His Kingdom.[8]

In the diary of his summer term, Moser continues his glowing evaluation; for example, in July 29, 1868, it is "the grace of God that the young men of our church can come here to . . . learn the right interpretations of His Word." Yet, surprisingly, he never mentions the turmoil in his own congregation over the Wadsworth Institute—almost as if he expected his diary to become public.

A few months after returning from Wadsworth, Moser again joined his friends in Missouri. The family of his bride had preceded him. He was married to Caroline Welty on May 14, 1870, and they settled on a farm five miles east of Fortuna, where they raised their ten children. His concern about the conflict between conservatives and progressives in Sonnenberg is evident in his letters from Missouri. Writing to his brothers Jacob and David, who were on opposite sides of the developing schism, Abraham asked to hear both sides.[9]

Abraham Moser was a community leader in Missouri. According to notes in the Moser genealogy folder, he was a teacher and gave singing lessons at the Hazel Dell School. He was on the editorial board of *Zur Heimat*, an immigrant newspaper in Kansas, and he helped organize the Hazel Dell Insurance Company. As a farmer he made arrangements with the cattlemen to use his place for grazing while on their way to market, and he maintained a kind of sub-postal station in his home for the convenience of his neighbors. On his way to and from town he would stop to repair the roads as needed, according to an old Swiss custom. He ran for judge of the county court, but he died on October 28, 1912, before the election was held.

At the beginning of "On Lonely Paths," Moser described his religious thinking, so opposite to the eager piety of his student days:

> It was not until the past ten years that my reasoning gradually took its present free direction and grew farther away from the traditions of my forebears, and from the belief in supernatural revelation and biblical infallibility, which is generally held in the circle of my close friends. For this reason I find myself on a lonely pathway because among my old friends and acquaintances there is no one who shows the slightest inclination to join me.

Moser eventually left the Mennonite church. Conservatives at Sonnenberg might have predicted his straying, had they read the July 3 entry from his Wadsworth diary about the possibility that God created the world "over a much longer time period" than six days. Moser's diary, however, does not glory in such a moment of intellectual controversy. Although innovations like Sunday School and missions were exciting to him, every entry of Moser's diary shows his earnest, humble effort to learn from the Scriptures that were his daily fare at the Wadsworth Institute.

ENDNOTES

[1]The Institute was formally the *Christliche Bildungs-Anstalt der Mennoniten Gemeinschaft* (Christian Educational Institution of the Mennonite Denomination). For further information see Anna Kreider, "The Wadsworth School," *Mennonite Life* (April 1959), 66-70; and Rachel Kreider, "A Mennonite College Through Town Eyes," *Mennonite Life* (July 1977), 4-13.

[2]James O. Lehman, *Sonnenberg: A Haven and a Heritage* (Kidron, OH: 1969), 43.

[3]H. P. Krehbiel. *The History of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America* (1898), 145.

[4]Samuel Floyd Pannabecker, *Faith in Ferment: A History of the Central District Conference* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1968), 44.

[5]Lehman, *Sonnenberg*, 95-96.

[6]Lehman, *Sonnenberg*, 98.

[7]Quoted in Krehbiel, *The History*, 127-28.

[8]*Ibid.*, 131-32.

[9]James O. Lehman. *Salem's First Century: Worship and Witness* (Kidron, OH: 1986), 20.

My Diary of the Educational Institute of Wadsworth, Ohio —Abraham J. Moser (1845-1912)

Tuesday, June 9, 1868

Today I left in the company of U. Welty, C. C. Lehman and Dr. C. C. Baumgartner from Sonnenberg to go to the Mennonite Institute. It was a wet dreary morning and we couldn't get started until noon. The weather improved and we arrived safely by evening. We were welcomed by the principal and students and also by J. H. Oberholzer. That evening J. H. Oberholzer gave his farewell address. He spoke to the students concerning their duties and admonished them to be true and faithful.

Dr. Baumgartner and I stayed at the Institute overnight and the others with E. Hunsberger.[1]

Wednesday, June 10

It is a nice but cold morning, even frost.

At 7:30 we attended a devotional service at the Institute. I made my application and was accepted as a student. I went home with some friends until noon. The afternoon I spent working on the Institute grounds to get acquainted with rules and regulations and getting rooms ready for students.

Thursday, June 11

Today I started my studying. My courses are Bible and interpretation, German and English language, orthography, English reading, music, geography and arithmetic. I am feeling quite well and eager to learn. To Prof. Fritz I recited my first lesson in English grammar. . . .[2]

* * * *

Saturday, June 13

It was pleasant to study in our rooms in the nice weather. This afternoon the principal Schowalder left for Cleveland and I accompanied him to Wadsworth where I took care of the mail.[3]

At the Institute, preparations were made for Sunday and the rest of the time we spent in the study. In the evening there was something outside. The evening devotions were conducted by Jacob Moyer.[4] Afterward I talked with him and found him to be a spiritually minded young man.

Sunday, June 14

This morning the worship service was held in the auditorium of the Institute. E. Hunsberger preached on Nehemiah 9:38-41. In the afternoon we walked one mile to the church where they had Sunday School.[5] In the evening we went to town to attend the service at the Methodist Church. . . .

Monday, June 15

The principal was absent having not returned from Cleveland until evening. Because of that we had only English lessons to recite today. The geography especially taxed our minds. That is one of my favorite subjects.

The weather is always humid and this evening we saw lightning in the west.

Tuesday, June 16

After the morning devotions we had the Bible History class. The books of the New Testament were studied and the time and place of their origin were discussed and learned. During our work time we hoed the cabbage and potatoes. . . .

Wednesday, June 17

Today after devotions we had Bible interpretation with the explanation of some Jewish laws and traditions. The principal emphasized the Holiness of God for those who have accepted Him. The main subject was Leviticus 19:2 which is "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy," and the verse from Exodus 20:7 warning against the evil temptation of using God's name in vain.

The weather is very warm. We took a walk to a dam and had a refreshing swim.

The evening devotions consisted of reading a chapter from the Bible and a prayer.

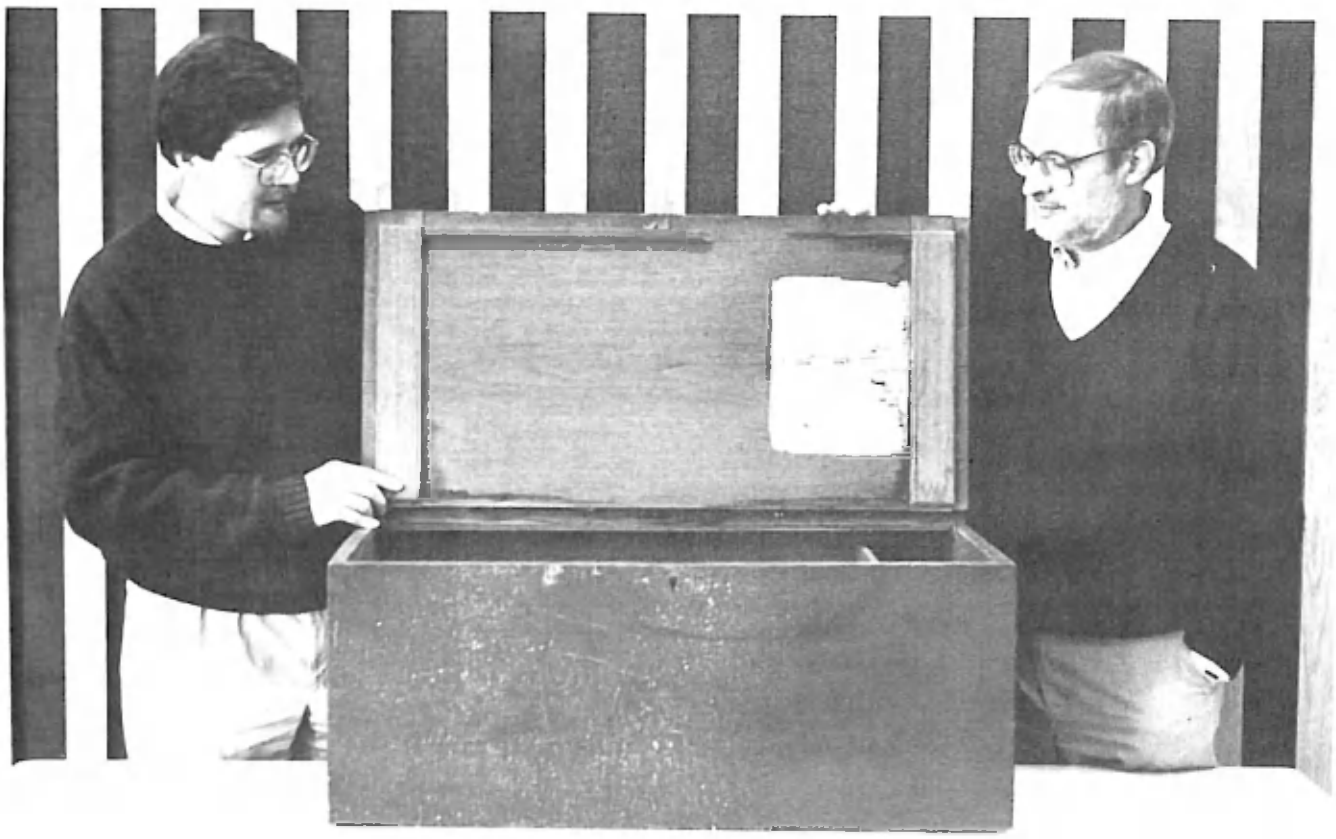
Thursday, June 18

Today it is time for Bible History. The teacher explained the gathering and compiling of the apostolic Scriptures so we will be able to discern between the false and the true.

The weather is still warm and it looked like rain in the evening. We watched the thunder and lightning. It was a sharp contrast between the friendly twinkling stars and the lightning in the blue heavens. The principal discussed the power of God through His creation. After that we went to bed.

Friday, June 19

Everything in nature is fresh this morning; even the plants are fresh and green.



Abraham J. Moser's blanket chest; left, John D. Roth, director of the Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen College; right, Ervin Beck, chair of the Mennonite-Amish museum committee, Goshen, Indiana

I am beginning to feel more at home at the Institute. The instruction is completely Christian and it leads me in the right understanding of the Word of God. . . .

Saturday, June 20

After today's instruction in Bible History I thought especially of II Peter 3:16 and the teacher's comment about it. Here the unlearned are warned and need to search for the help of the Holy Spirit to give understanding.

The weather is dreary and at noon it rained.

In the afternoon we made preparations for Sunday so that the day could be spent in peace and quietness and dedicated to the service of God.

Sunday, June 21

This is the day that the Christian gathers strength to fight the enemy of his soul.

At 9 o'clock we walked to the church and C. Schowalder preached on _____ and E. Hunsberger had the closing.

In the afternoon we had Sunday School and in the evening we had a prayer meeting where several students were asked to lead in prayer and did it in an impressive way, and we really felt the presence of God filling the house. . . .

* * * *

Tuesday, June 23

We receive suggestions daily of what should be the characteristics of a church leader. Today especially emphasized that a school teacher should be intimately acquainted with the Word of God. Only after the teacher has experienced the spiritual life and victory is he fit to teach others. He must have the help of the Holy Spirit to guide him so that he can make it clear to his students and they can accept it in their hearts. The Bible is not an ABC book so that the teacher is not to just read the Bible as another book, but apply it to his life.

In the afternoon it rained again and in the evening there was a heavy thunderstorm in the South.

* * * *

Thursday, June 25

The Institute does not forget its goal to produce qualified teachers. Today Schowalder showed us very clearly what these qualifications would be. The teacher needs to be very careful of punishment of children so as not to offend them. It is better to explain the wrong doing to the child and the child will feel thankful for the discipline. . . .

* * * *

Saturday, June 27

The weather is nice which the student likes to see even though he has to stay in and study. The Institute is located at a beautiful setting where we see the beauty of nature which it dresses in the fresh green summer. We have a beautiful view from where we sleep and study. I would like to be outside but need to study.

In the evening I went to Schowalder's office and had an interesting conversation with him. We discussed especially the situations of our congregations. He has the strong hope the Institute will be a blessing for each congregation, and why shouldn't it be because it is founded on the firm foundation and cornerstone of the Holy Word of God and has a special goal of acquainting the student with the Word of God and leads them into its truths until they arrive at the

perfect knowledge and to this goal we daily seek the help of the Holy Spirit.

Sunday, June 28

The church service was held in the auditorium of the Institute. Rev. C. Schowalder preached on the text from Luke 16:19-31. He made a special emphasis on the difference between the blessed and the unblessed in eternity that the story of Lazarus and the rich man reveals to us. It wasn't the riches or the poverty that condemned them. If we have wealth we must consider it a gift from God and use it with thankfulness to God rather than to please self. If a person is selfish and filled with pride, self-love, murmurings and all evil things which gives the heart a false security and peace so that he doesn't seek repentance because of his riches, he is not humble before his God.

* * * *

Monday, June 29

This is a regular summer day. People are starting to make hay in the neighboring farms. Just as the farmers have their duties in material work so we students have our lessons to fulfill, because it will place a heavy responsibility upon us. God has given His blessing upon the Institute thus far. This shows that it is His will that the powers of the mind and the soul should be cultivated and used to His service and that's why we can trust His guidance and walk in His ways.

Tuesday, June 30

Today nothing outstanding has happened. The studying is going along well. I received two letters from Missouri, one from P. P. Lehman and the other from P. L. Welty.[6] These are the first letters I have received at the Institute.

* * * *

Friday, July 3

Today we really had a controversial lesson in our Geography class taught by Professor Fritz implying that the Creation had not necessarily happened in six days but over a much longer time period. This created a disagreement among many of the students so we had a lengthy discussion on the subject.

The theory of the high age of the earth is not really a new one and—in my opinion, not worthy of dispute but many do not accept it—including Principal Schowalder. We all believe that God created the earth in His wisdom; concerning the method and manner used, it really is unneccessary to be disturbed.

Saturday, July 4

Since our English professor was taking part in the 4th of July celebration in Wadsworth today, we had only our Bible History class so we had some free time. I spent my time in writing and reading. In the evening they released a balloon into the air from Wadsworth. We climbed the tower at the Institute and watched it rise into the air and disappear in the sky. The beauty of the evening sun was undescribable. In the West, the sun set behind golden clouds and its last rays shone on the green forests and almost ripe grain fields. In the East, the full moon arose in its glory and over the houses and church towers of Wadsworth the balloon was floating through the blue heavens. How impressed we were with the beauty of the earth and the majestic greatness of our land whose birthday we are celebrating today and a silent plea arose into the clouds of the sky that the Lord might bless our land (and make it really free).

Sunday, July 5

At 9 o'clock in the morning we walked to the church house and this time Ephraim Hunsberger preached on the joy in the Lord Jesus and in the Holy Spirit. Principal Schowalder made the closing remarks about missions and read a missions report. An offering was collected for missions.

In the afternoon we attended S.S. I have been assigned to supervise a German language class. Of special interest is the discussion that follows the reading of a portion of New Testament scripture. Often several very deep subjects are touched upon.

In the evening all students gather in the auditorium for a prayer meeting. This is a very good practice for Sunday night—all students are asked to participate in prayer around the circle.

An incident had occurred that brought sorrow to everyone. A student named Knauf (?), someone with a wild character, had left the Institute on Saturday and didn't return. The principal prayed earnestly for him at the prayer meeting tonight.

Monday, July 6

Where is life fleeing so rapidly? Another day has passed away. May God grant that it might not have been lived in vain. Nothing unusual has happened today. School transpired as usual and I hope every day will be a blessing to every one of our students. . . .

Tuesday, July 7

Every day we have occasion here to ponder serious subjects. Today—amidst others—we discussed whether God would do miracles in situations where the goal could have been reached by ordinary circumstances. Schowalder expressed his opinion on the subject that man is obligated to use the resources that God had provided, especially the power of the Spirit for the work of the Lord. The writer Luke (see Chap. 1:3) studied this carefully before he wrote the Gospel. The Spirit brought these things to his memory and, under the guidance of the Spirit, he used the gifts of the Spirit.

Wednesday, July 8

Today the principal told us the story of an aged mother. She accepted the grace of God in her old age and became an instrument to lead many to salvation. After she experienced the power of the Holy Spirit and the peace of God in her own life she was not satisfied to keep it to herself. She worked so diligently and unceasingly in God's vineyard that soon a genuine revival broke out in the community. Just like most others, even till an advanced age, she considered herself a good Christian until she became aware that merely a so-called "good" life after conversion wasn't sufficient. There needs to be an inner life and a powerful dedication to the Lord must take place. The grace of God worked mightily within her and she sought to obey Him in all things.

The weather is warm and the farmers are beginning to harvest their crops.

Thursday, July 9

This morning devotions' theme was from Luke 14:16 concerning the invitation to the wedding supper of the Lamb. The Lord calls us to two things in particular: to the work in His vineyard and to partake of His banquet to share His good things. It is amazing that at times (the Apostle Paul as an example) a person receives a very strong call of the grace of God while many thousands only receive a general invitation. It seemed as if a deep secret was facing us and we seemed to stand at a dark wall

through which we could not see. In deep humility we had to place our hands over our mouths and remain silent because this was the great unexplored wisdom of God. All those who recognize that God has called them but they have not responded to this call, they will suffer more strokes than those who did not feel the call. He closed with the wish and the prayer that we would willingingly follow the call of the grace of God.

Friday, July 10

The rays of the sun shone blessedly upon the earth which was clothed in its midsummer beauty. The golden wheat field is waving in the breeze and the harvest has begun. Hopefully the seed that is being sown here at the Institute will bear fruitful harvest as well.

This morning the decision was made that I together with three other students would travel to Sonnenberg since the principal is going to Cleveland and we would have free time.

Saturday, July 11

Very early—at 2:00 a.m.—in the company of J. Hirschler, W. Galle and P. Krehbiel, we traveled to Sonnenberg. We arrived at my parents at 9 o'clock. We found them in their usual good health. Jakes were busy with the harvest and I helped him a little. It was a very hot day—in the evening there was a thunderstorm in the north.

Sunday, July 12

This morning Hirschler and I attended the church service but the other two didn't feel well and stayed at home. After the service we went to Dave's and returned home in the evening with the intention of getting an early start on our return trip.

Monday, July 13

Hirschler and Krehbiel went to Galle at 2 A.M. but he was still not feeling well so we all remained longer. I helped in the harvest field until 2 o'clock in the afternoon at which time Galle felt a little better and we began our return trip. At 9:30 we arrived at the Institute—a very weary group.

Tuesday, July 14

This was an unusually hot day and I didn't feel inclined to study. In the afternoon we mowed our wheat field and the principal assured us someday a Reaper would come to cut all the wheat.

* * * *

Thursday, July 16

In the forenoon we had our usual lessons to prepare and our teachers supplied explanations and comments. Always there is the concern that the heart and the spirit be nurtured as well as the body and the mind.

In the afternoon H. Yoder cut some of our wheat with a mower and we tied it into bundles. We would have finished if the mower hadn't broken down so we had a free evening. . . .

Friday, July 17

We had our morning devotions at the breakfast table by having the principal read a portion out of Gossner's Treasure Chest.

Instead of going to our classrooms, we went to the harvest field after breakfast to help mow the wheat field with a borrowed mower. We, however, did not know how to operate the machine very well so we received a rest period. We didn't finish the field until 12 o'clock. In the afternoon everyone could study or work according to his wishes since we had free time.

* * * *

Sunday, July 19

Today we walked to the Mennonite Church in the intense heat. Our principal preached and he was followed by an English preacher who had the closing meditation.

In the afternoon just as we were going to leave for S.S. a refreshing rain began to fall. This really revived the dry plant life and encouraged the farmers.

Sunday School had to be omitted and we spent the afternoon reading. Later in the evening we had the usual prayer meeting.

* * * *

Tuesday, July 21

This morning right after our Bible History class an accident occurred which really shocked us. The principal set his chair up on his writing desk in order to reach a piece of loose plaster on the ceiling. As he stepped down, he fell backwards on to the floor. He was unconscious for a few minutes. Soon, however, he revived and even though he was considerably shaken by the incident, he is quite well again.

Wednesday, July 22

We read I John 5:14-21 for our morning devotions and we were warned about the false interpretations of their words. Many have the mistaken idea that these words imply that those who have been born of God cannot sin; they therefore become careless in their Christian walk and forget the admonition of the Lord "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." Others felt that since they were still tempted to do wrong, they must not have been born again. A person will always need to struggle against the sins of weakness but he will not love the world. He will use the spiritual armor to fight against this sin.

Today we completed gathering the wheat together. The weather was lovely.

Thursday, July 23

Mark 13:33-37 was the theme of our devotions this morning. Two points were especially emphasized which cause man to slip spiritually: 1 - to associate with friends who are careless and uninterested in God's Word, 2 - the spirit of pride which tempted those who have already been enlightened.

Our school is making good headway. Everyone seems to be enthusiastic about their studies.

* * * *

Saturday, July 25

We read Phil. 2:12-14 for the morning devotions. Here we see the heartfelt humility of Paul as he states that he is sure that nothing can separate him from the love of Jesus and he is assured also that he will be given the crown of eternal life. Such a spirit of humility and a recognition of our own weaknesses we should also seek. It would be a help to us in our effort not to fall from grace and into sin.

My friends, W. Welty, A. Baumgartner and A. Tschantz brought me happiness with their visit today. We spent the afternoon and evening in conversation—especially about our Institute.

Sunday, July 26

At the ringing of the morning bell, we arose from our beds. Our friends from Sonnenberg who had stayed overnight said they had had a good rest too. We had several hours of time for fellowship before the beginning of the worship service. We students sang several songs before the service. Our guests listened

very attentively.

Rev. Schowalder preached and E. Hunsberger had the closing. In the afternoon our friends left for home. I walked with them for a distance—then we had to separate again. I returned to the school and spent the rest of the afternoon reading and writing.

In the evening we had the usual prayer meeting. Oh, may the Lord graciously hear the prayers that rose to His throne.

* * * *

Tuesday, July 28

Today's meditation was based on John 5:24-39 especially on the last verse "Search the Scriptures" etc. Only in this Holy Word of God can man find eternal life for his soul. It provides comfort in suffering and light for every pathway of life. Our principal impressed it upon us that we should study the Word diligently so that it could provide direction and comfort in all of life's situations. If we are well acquainted with the Scripture we will be able to be guided by it.

Wednesday, July 29

If one looks at our Institute and its goals one can't but see that it is a work of the grace of God that the young men of our church can come here to gather information and learn the right interpretations of His Word. But we must still always remember that knowledge and learning is only temporal as we were reminded this morning during the devotions from I Cor. 13:9-12. We should therefore not try to investigate those things that the Lord has hidden from us but humbly seek to understand that which is necessary for our salvation.

Thursday, July 30

"The words that I speak are Spirit and Life." These were the words which were emphasized in the text for today from John 6:60-63. He made comments about the Body and the Blood of Christ which we can partake of as a sacrament to provide Spirit and Life. The Christian partakes this bread and wine, flesh and blood, in the natural way but His Words are Spirit and Life.

Friday, July 31

The school is continuing daily in a quiet and even manner, hopefully toward the fulfillment of (Christ's Garden of plants). His Words are our daily food. May it be said of us as of Mary in today's text in Luke 2:19 that she pondered them and hid them in her heart.

Today we had a nice rain which was greatly needed for the crops.

Saturday, August 1

We had another very good day in spite of the fact that it was stormy and rainy outside. In the rooms at school it was pleasant and peaceful. . . .

Sunday, August 2

This was a beautiful day, cool and pleasant. We walked together to church and heard a message by J. Nice[7] from Akron based on the verse, "Come unto me all ye who are heavy laden and I will give you rest." After that Schowalder read a Mission report and a collection was taken for missions. This is done monthly. In the afternoon each one of us had to explain a Scripture verse which had been handed to us during S.S. We ended the day with the usual prayer meeting.

* * * *

Tuesday, August 4

This was an especially lovely day. Over the noon hour we all had to work on the roof which was in need of repairs. The text of the morning devotional was Isaiah 50:3-5 with emphasis on an awakening which would lead people to repentance. It is the beginning of a revival. It is the awaking from the sleeping of sin.

* * * *

Thursday, August 6

I Tim. 2:1-6 was the theme of this morning's devotional. Intercession for others was especially emphasized: for family members, for the faculty at the school, for the students, for close neighbors and then for all mankind. In the afternoon we celebrated the Harvest Thanksgiving Festival at the church. In the evening we had a discussion of the 1000-year Kingdom.

* * * *

Saturday, August 8

We read Luke 18:35, and for our morning devotions we were encouraged to continue our pleas to Jesus just like blind Bartimaeus did. To my great joy John and Jacob Baumgartner came for a visit and we had wonderful fellowship in the afternoon and evening.

The strong wind that had been blowing all day was followed by a gentle rain in the evening.

Sunday, August 9

The Sunday service was held in our auditorium this morning. C. Schowalder preached very well. Hunsberger had gone to Cleveland. P. Hilty was present from Chippaway. Rev. C. Steiner was there too. I had a long discussion on the subject of the thousand-year reign, missions and the faith with them at C. Hunsbergers. Also the two Sonnenbergers stayed until 4 o'clock when they returned home again. Before the evening's prayer meeting, we had a very worthwhile period of explaining Bible verses followed by a discussion with Schowalder about various subjects. So the days fly by and everyone has many opportunities to dig deeply into the knowledge of God's Word which can work mightily in our hearts and help us to a new life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

* * * *

Thursday, August 13

The study of the Lord's Prayer was continued during the morning devotions. The thought-provoking "thy Kingdom come" was discussed at length. The coming of the Kingdom has three phases: 1st, the coming of the Lord, the Son of God, in the flesh, 2nd, the entrance into the heart as Savior, 3rd, His coming again to reign over all the nations of the world as described in Rev. 20.

The weather is cool in the morning and the evening but warm during the middle of the day.

* * * *

Saturday, August 15

The request "Give us this day our daily bread" was today's devotional meditation. Schowalder reminded us that this request also included peace in the land and in families and also the inner peace in the heart, because without that the blessings of the Lord can't really be enjoyed.

In the afternoon I had another very pleasant visit: Bro. David and C. C. Lehman.

Sunday, August 16

At 9 o'clock we walked to church and heard a stirring message by E. Hunsberger based on Psalm 137:1-4. In the afternoon Dave and Lehman went home again. In the evening we attended a Sunday School exhibition in Wadsworth.

* * * *

Monday, August 24

Today our principal showed us how imperfect all human wisdom is according to I Cor. 8:1-6 and how those who do not accept His Word as the basis of knowledge will be led astray. All knowledge should be of service to the Gospel.

Tuesday, August 25

Today we read I Peter 4:8-11 and the principal's remarks admonished us to love and unity. He prayed that the Lord would send His peace upon everyone in the house.

Everything is going forward in the usual manner and the Lord is blessing the Institute in a very visible way.

* * * *

Thursday, August 27

Our Institution is really a place where someone with an open ear can obtain wisdom. Today we studied Eph. 4:22-to the end. Special warnings against lies and untruthfulness were given and we were encouraged to be friendly and willing to forgive all mistreatments from the heart.

Friday, August 28

Today's Bible study continued—based on v. 26-29. One should be very careful not to be involved in idle and profane conversation which grieves the Holy Spirit. In the afternoon we read a letter from Carl van der Smissen during our Writing class.[8] He declares himself ready to come to America to teach Hebrew at our Institution.

A good rain refreshed all nature during the evening hours.

* * * *

Sunday, August 30

After I had had a pleasant visit with my guests during the morning hour, A. S. Lehman and A. Spitiger arrived to acquaint themselves with the Institution so I had a chance to enjoy the fellowship of old friends. We all went to church where J. Nice and E. Hunsberger spoke very earnestly on the subject of prayer.[9]

After that Schowalder reviewed the purpose and goal of our Institution and the obligations that true Christians have. He entrusted the church to stand by in support. It was a moment of serious contemplation.

In the afternoon the friends from Sonnenberg returned home again.

* * * *

Wednesday, September 2

We are beginning to think of vacation time. Examination time is arriving soon.

* * * *

Saturday, September 5

Today the principal went to Cleveland and in his absence Bro. J. Moyer presented the morning devotions. He read a portion from "Gossner's Treasure Chest" and led in prayer. Everything proceeded peacefully and in good order just like usual.

Sunday, September 6

For the Sunday worship service we gathered in the Institute's assembly hall. E. Hunsberger preached very earnestly and convincingly.

The S.S. class met in the afternoon, and in the evening we attended the prayer meeting at the Reformed Church in Wadsworth.

We had a nice rain in the evening.

Monday, September 7

In the absence of the principal, Brother J. Moyer read a selection from the "Treasure Chest" and prayed at the morning devotional period. Then we had time to study for the exam tomorrow as well as for Friday. But the thoughts about vacation seemed to become intermingled, and our diligence in study was disturbed.

In the evening Schowalder returned safely from Cleveland.

* * * *

Thursday, September 10

Today we prepared for exams—the weather was cool and dreary. It was encouraging.

Friday, September 11

The exams began at 8 A.M. and ended by 12 o'clock. First was Bible History, then German and English Grammar, Math, Geography, Science and Declamation. At the beginning as well as at the end we sang from Schmauk's Harmonie.

A. S. Lehman and C. C. Tschantz arrived during the course of the forenoon. They wanted to be present and take part in the exams.

In the evening we discussed several Bible verses the way we usually do on Sundays. This time we were in the study hall and Principal Schowalder and G. Krehbiel from Cleveland were also present. Schowalder found that the Scriptures were a continuation of teaching that fit together and he made some very fitting closing remarks.

Saturday, September 12

At 9 A.M. we gathered in the big hall, we sang and prayed with each other and the principal made several appropriate admonitions and suggestions as a farewell address. In the afternoon I returned to Sonnenberg with several of my friends. I arrived at my parents' home by evening.

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ENDNOTES [DIARY]

[1]Ulrich Welty was an uncle to Caroline Welty, whom Abraham later married. C. C. Baumgartner was a Swiss immigrant who came to Akron, Ohio, to study medicine and later practiced in Wayne County. They and C. C. Lehman were community leaders who supported higher education. J. H. Oberholtzer (1809-95), one of the founders of the General Conference, promoted higher education and the Wadsworth School. Ephraim Hunsberger (1814-1904), the progressive local pastor, was one of the founders of the Conference and the school.

[2]Because no Mennonite teacher of English was available, a non-Mennonite was hired.

[3]Christian Schowalter (1828-1909), born in Germany, was an early leader in the General Conference and in planning for the Wadsworth School. He was persuaded to be the principal and German teacher until 1869, when he returned to pastoring his church in Iowa.

[4]Jacob Moyer (1842-1909), one of the first graduates of the school, pastored the Deep Run (PA) congregation and served on the Home and Foreign Mission Boards.

[5]C. Huntsberger was Ephraim Hunsberger's brother Christian. He later moved to Halstead, KS.

The Institute, located a half mile west of the town square, was then "out in the country." Its bell remains on the site, now occupied by a public school. The church, built in 1853, was a mile farther west and a quarter-mile northwest, on the diagonal road leading to Medina; a cemetery and sign now mark the spot. Services were held at the church and the school on alternate Sundays.

[6]Peter P. Lehman and Peter Welty were among the progressive members of the Sonnenberg community who moved to Missouri in the late 1860's.

[7]Jonas Nice was a charter member of the Wadsworth church and the first deacon.

[8]Carl Justus van der Smissen (1811-1890), was a leading German Mennonite minister. He served in Wadsworth as principal and theology teacher from 1869 to 1878, when the General Conference discontinued the school.

[9]J. Nice, a charter member of the Wadsworth church, was the first assistant minister to Ephraim Hunsberger. He later was a prominent bishop in the Illinois Mennonite Conference.

Comets and Calls from the Life of Valentine Strubhar

by Jeff Gundy

Looking back, it's impossible not to romanticize one's ancestors. There were after all giants in the earth in those days. The men worked dawn to dark in the fields, coming into the house only to eat enormous meals and go back out again; the women worked even harder in the house, slaving over enormous wooden stoves, washing vast heaps of laundry by hand, putting up acres of vegetables for the winter. The children labored cheerfully beside their parents and walked miles through the snow to school, with hot potatoes clutched in their pockets to warm their hands. Everybody who didn't die young became an earnest Christian and stout defender of the faith, made just enough money to avoid being suspiciously rich, moved to town, dandled umpteen grandchildren and died peacefully in his/her seventy-ninth year.

So we'd wish it. And why not. Certain it is that the old sepia photos are not entirely lies. Surely the people put on their camera faces then as now, or tried. In those days of slow film and eight-second exposures a look of gravity and somber reserve prevailed, as the ingratiating smile does today, but still I suspect that their camera faces were only one step removed from their real ones. If their children and their friends will not speak ill of them when they are gone, perhaps the reasons are sufficient.

My great-great-grandfather Valentine Strubhar went forward in 1880, when he was 21, at what has been recorded as the first revival meeting among the Illinois Amish. Preaching was by the ubiquitous Bishop Joseph Stuckey and his brother Peter Stuckey, minister of the East Washington congregation. Forty souls were saved, Valentine reported rather proudly years later, "which created quite a stir," though I have not been able to find more detailed descriptions of the meeting. Some were heard to mutter that such evangelizing was unduly individualistic and emotional, not fitting for the plain and humble followers of Jesus. Others were muttering that the church was spiritually dead, and that without such meetings and the dramatic conversions they produced it would remain so.

The rumblings over revival meetings were only part of the disputations of the last half of the century among the Illinois Amish. There were splits and schisms and rumors of schisms, partings of the way over partings of hair, new churches being formed to the left and to the right, some wanting more freedom and some more enthusiasm. The Stuckey Amish, Valentine's people, had already split off from the more traditional Amish, and were fast looking more and more like Americans, buying farm machinery and earrings and fancy dresses. At the same time, they were learning from progressive American Christianity about temperance and the End Times and evangelism; we're badly mistaken if we think they were becoming "liberal" in the modern sense.

Even the grip of German was slipping, the young people growing up with the English in school and scarcely learning enough to read the Bible in God's language. The year after he graduated from eighth grade at the Green Ridge School, Valentine Strubhar started to teach a Sunday School class, which became more or less a series of German lessons, some of the other young people being already less than fluent in the mother tongue. The extent of his success is not recorded, but at best it was a delaying action. His oldest daughter Clara spoke little English until she went to school; by the time I came along, seventy years later, my family spoke no more German than we did

Valentine Strubhar ca. 1893

Swahili.

There is no denying that those were heady times, though, for the Strubhar family, with new farms being bought, the sons being settled on them, houses remodeled and improved, all the hours of sweat paying off. The family histories repeat it like a charm: Valentine's father Peter Strubhar came to Illinois to live in a log cabin, and left each of his four sons 160 acres of the best farmland in the world. Giants in the earth.

And when Val Strubhar took a fancy to "one of the most charming young sisters of our church" he did not go to an intermediary like the aging Peter Nafziger, though Brother Peter still lived in what I suspect was cantankerous retirement a dozen or so miles away. Instead Valentine mustered up his courage on a beautiful Sunday night, took her hands in his, and asked young Katherine Guth all by himself. For their honeymoon they went on a sled ride to Peoria, and then settled into the old family home nearby, the one whose staircase and plastered walls had so impressed young Valentine, the home where Joseph Stuckey had preached the first sermon to what became the East Washington congregation.

That first year of our marriage so many changes came along, we could scarcely keep our breath among them—as if a spring wind had come up, and time was moving with it faster and faster, toward some end we could not see. There was the farm work to do of course, and plenty of that with our starting out on a new place. Then just in May, with the corn almost planted, my brother Joseph's first son Alvin was taken home, just a day after his second birthday. We had barely finished grieving for him, and Joseph not yet finished at all, when in the heart of August his wife Jacobina was taken, leaving two girls just five and six behind. And in November then it was Uncle John's turn, the first of our family to come over, the one who'd walked from Ohio to Rock Creek and back to find a place for us all to start out and then done two men's work to earn our passage. And how could this Illinois prairie be the same without him?

With so much dying around us, I was filled with joy and yet unsettled when my Katie said the next summer that she was with child. Could it be that children would be given to us, when so many had been taken? Was it right even to pray that we be spared the loss of them, to ask God for such favors when we knew that others had grieved so sore and weary and for no evil they could see they had done? We prayed long and often anyway, all that cold winter, that God's will be done but that His will might be to bless our house and those in it, and to keep our children safe from all the perils that would come to them.

After Christmas we had snow and more snow, and then wind from the northwest such as I'd never felt. That was the fall that the old Apostle Peter Naffziger died, ninety-six when he passed on, and well I remember the stories he would tell of the cold in Ontario where he had lived, so cold as he told it that the breath would freeze to the muzzles of cattle, and they had to be led into the cabins to face the fire and thaw out. Of course Brother Peter, though a godly man, loved a good story, and was not always so particular about the gospel truth of it.

But this cold was deep and bitter enough for any man or beast. We kept the stock inside, with plenty of bedding, and only lost one sickly calf. But would you not know that it would be the coldest night of all, thirty-two below by the mercury thermometer outside the door, with two feet and more of snow on the ground and blustering about in great drifts everywhere, that our first child should come to us. With the weather so awful no help could come to us, and myself I knew well how to birth a calf or a lamb but not so much about babies. And the custom was not for the man to be there, or anywhere closer than downstairs with a pipe and a glass of whiskey if he used such things, when a child was born.

Still, with only the two of us there,

what could I do? Katie had gathered the cloths and the scissors, and I held her hand as tight as I could when she screamed and cried, and when it all was over our little girl was there, purple as a new plum until she too began to cry in the cold of the bedroom, for all that the fire was bright as I could make it. But I soon had her cleaned as best I could, and swaddled in the cloths, and laid on my Katherine's breast. Then I lay down beside them, in the bed still damp with my dear Katie's labor, and we all three held each other, listening to the wind hurl itself across our house like it meant to pull us loose and send us back to Ohio or all the way to the big ocean. And we knew that our foundation was strong, and would hold, and see us through.

I went the next morning on the sleigh to tell father and mother and have them pass the news along, and heard then that my grandfather Sweitzer had passed from this world in the night, not far from the time when our little Clara was coming into it. An old man he was, and ready in his heart to go, and yet it seemed then to me that so many of the old men were passing from us before the rest of us were ready to go on without them. Grandfather with his white chin whiskers and his stout frame had come himself across the water as a young man, and made a place for himself in the new world, a place that now would be empty unless we could somehow fill it up.

In 1892 Val Strubhar and some Stuckey Amish leaders started working with the Railroad Schoolhouse nearby, holding Sunday schools and revivals for a group of church members living southwest of Washington between Pekin and Tremont. In the same year Rev. David Augspurger of Valentine's East Washington church moved to Aurora, Nebraska. When the Rev. Jacob Unsicker of East Washington passed on in 1893, the sole remaining pastor, Michael Kinsinger, wanted help. He called for a vote to select another minister, with the understanding that unless two thirds of the members cast ballots, no minister would be appointed. After the three weeks allowed, Rev. Kinsinger announced that the lot had fallen upon Valentine Strubhar.

Well I was not convinced that the church was ready for an assistant pastor in any case. And then Brother Kinsinger said from the preacher's stand that I should be the one, even though I had but sixteen or seventeen votes, only one more than Brother John Nafzinger, and that from two hundred and twenty-five members, most of them not even bothering to vote. Well I was surprised first of all, and flattered some that a few people thought so much of me, but sixteen votes from the whole church seemed hardly enough to pick someone to clean the place, let alone to preach the sacred Word. So I said that surely this was no call I could accept, for what seemed to me good reasons and plenty.

Yet Brother Kinsinger would not let me go. That whole autumn long he brought up the case every Sunday, how greatly he hoped and prayed that Brother Strubhar would see his way free of all human pride and striving to take up the charge and serve God's people to the best of his ability, and all the rest. So persistent in his gruff way the old man was that I did not know what to think. I tried to talk with my brothers and my parents and others in the church, but it seemed they had all gotten together secretly and agreed to give me no help one way or the other. "I am no speaker," I told them, over and over, "and you who know me know that well enough. Others know the Bible better, others have lived better lives, anyone else would be more suited to visiting the sick and the old. And so much work I have to do, that I might return more to the Lord from the fruits he has blessed me with. Cannot a man love the Lord and yet leave some tasks to those whose gifts are greater?"

Even my dear Katie only nodded when I told her all my reasons. "Na, Faulty, I love you and will stand by you. Surely it is true that much has been given us, to do and to have to share. I would hate to see you gone so much on church business as a preacher must be, that is true. . . . And yet I remember our Lord saying that he must be about his Father's business. I suppose you must decide."

That Kate. She could sit for half an hour and listen, not speaking a word, and then say four sentences so mild and meek you would think butter would stay fresh in her mouth for a week, and when she was done I would be hanging my head like a dog that has stolen a chicken from the coop. So I asked her just how she thought all my work would get done if I took on the church work too, with only the girls to help out around the place and hired hands more expensive and more shiftless every year. And I asked her if she were ready to give up this fine house and move back into a log cabin in the timber, so

Valentine Strubhar family ca. 1928 (Valentine in dark hat; author's grandmother Pauline Gittinger Gundy half obscured behind Valentine; author's grandfather Gerdon Gundy behind her)

that I could be about our Father's business. And being my Kate she did not argue or make plans or tell me just how it all could be done, but agreed and agreed that all these were problems until she had nearly agreed me to death.

I prayed long and hard that afternoon, asking for a sign, and along about dusk I walked alone through the fields and the timber as I had in my childhood, looking out for something in God's creation that would tell me what I should do. The trees were all bare, the downed leaves rustling as I stirred them with my boots, squirrels dashing around in the branches, and a great crow lifting from his branch with a squawk of complaint as I passed by. The creek was low and almost clear, the sticktights gone to seed everywhere, and a few tiny purple blossoms lingering in a low spot. In the low sun the earth seemed all made of gold, burnished like a lamp, glowing with the peace of fall and the harvest safely home. It seemed to be calling me to rest, and yet here was Brother Kinsinger calling me to give up the little rest I had.

I walked along until it was full dark and I knew Kate would be expecting me for supper, watching the first stars, hearing the late birds flutter in the thickets. And I called out to God for a sign, something bold and real that I could tell the others I had seen, something I could not mistake, like the great comet with three tails that my mother had told me shone in the sky when she was carrying me, or the eclipse I remembered from my youth. But there was no comet in the sky, no darkening of the sun in the broad afternoon. Only the dark coming on, and a quarter moon rising above the shocks of corn, and a rabbit scampering off to hide in the field.

Unable to come to any conclusion, Val Strubhar asked everyone in the congregation to come to the annual business meeting, and to release him from his "perplexing position" in one way or the other. Here in his own words is his account of the crucial meeting:

"On the tenth day of January 1893 a very cold day, a large congregation gathered in the church. Brother Peter Schantz was with us. Brother Kinsinger opened the meeting with a song and scripture reading and a prayer, in which he asked the Lord to help me to be willing to accept the call. After the preliminaries, Brother Kinsinger again arose and gave the object of the meeting urging me again to accept the call. He asked me if I had any thing to say, I should take the opportunity to do so, which I did. I told the congregation that under the present condition, with so little interest shown by the members of the church, I could not accept so sacred a call as the ministry.

"There seemed to come a holy hush over the whole congregation, and for a few minutes there was a stillness that could almost be felt. No one uttered a word. Finally Brother Schantz got up and spoke a little while to the members, and then he turned to me and asked me this important question, 'Brother Strubhar, if this congregation is unanimous in giving you the call, will you then be willing to accept it?' I replied, that if the congregation would give me their unanimous support, then with God's help and the aid of the Holy Spirit I would do the best that I knew, but if I found myself to be a failure in the ministry I would want the church to release me, and give the church a chance to call another man who would be capable. The church was willing to grant me that privilege."

And so Valentine Strubhar, thirty-four years old, never having "given a public talk except at Literary societies," came up to the pulpit. The congregation knelt in prayer, and the Reverends Kinsinger and Schantz laid their hands upon him and ordained him a minister of the Gospel, an office he was to pursue with diligence for more than forty years in the same congregation.

When it came time to preach—as it did the very next week, the Rev. Kinsinger being absent for the dedication of the new church building at North Danvers—Valentine was concerned that "Preaching the Gospel was altogether different from debating a certain subject, where it was not so essential to proclaim the truth." But he started in, in the fashion of his people and his time, and seems to have done tolerably at it. He had a year or so of reasonably smooth sailing, except for a severe bout of inflammatory rheumatism that kept him in bed for seven weeks in the spring of 1893. He used the time to read the Bible, but quickly felt restless, and finally went back to work behind the plow, even though for the first few days the hired man had to load him in a buggy for the trip to the field. After this he gave up active farm work, though he kept livestock and a huge garden.

The easy time at church ended in 1894, when the problem of languages reared up again. All the services and Sunday school classes had always been in German, but now a group of younger members asked the superintendent, one George C. Wagner, for permission to organize an English Bible class. Clara says that the English class was "for some of our English neighbors who began coming to our Sunday School." Again, evangelism and tradition were at loggerheads.

Brother Wagner was willing, but Valentine found that "this seemed to hurt the feelings of quite a number of the older brethren and sisters as well as our Bishop." He found himself and the elder pastor, Michael Kinsinger, on opposite sides during the year of trouble that followed, "and the church became an unlovable place to go." Finally in June 1895, "without a prayer or the reading of God's word," "our bishop with a large number of the members seceded from the church." They formed the South Washington Church, which was active until Rev. Kinsinger died and continued on until 1937. "This was by far the saddest experience in all my ministerial work," Val wrote. "So many of the members quit going to any church, and would spend their time at home on the Lord's day, so the following winter after I was through with my corn husking, I spent about two weeks visiting those members, and urging them not to stay at home on Sundays, but to go somewhere to church wherever they could feel most at home and which they were willing to do."

Yes, the break in the church was hard. I never was one of those who thought that God spoke only German and that English should be kept for trading and news of the world, but neither did I think that we were so many that we should be splitting ourselves over every little dispute. I kept thinking that we would find a way to convince the older members that a class in English would not condemn us all to perdition, and that the ones who were so hot for change might be a little less forward and in a hurry to see things go their way so fast. But I was not able to make any peace among them, and to this day I wonder how I might have.

To see Brother Kinsinger leave the church and me behind, after he had all

but lassoed and dragged me into the pulpit with a rope himself—what was a man to think? I was left then after only a year of preaching as the only minister, with the whole flock under my care, and many were the nights I wondered why this cup had been given to me. And in my dear Katie's family some went with Brother Kinsinger and some stayed, so that for years we could not gather for Sunday dinner without an argument over German and English getting started and about what it meant to be faithful and to be the True Church. But such are the ways of the Lord, we must trust, though stony and painful they are for us to comprehend some times.

It was not only in the church that our faith was tested in those young years. We had the four girls, Clara, Ada, Barbara and Lucy, before Clara was six. But Ada was never so strong, and when she and Clara started school we asked the man teacher who rode his horse out from Washington to the school each day to carry her along the two miles when he could. Clara never understood why Ada would get a ride while she was left to walk, and what do you tell your child in such a case? That her sister will no doubt die soon, and that to keep her alive, God willing, another year you would do anything in your power? Well nothing was in our power to do, horse rides or not, for in August of that year, 1892, she was taken from us by the meningitis, and may God rest her innocent young soul. She had written "Ada Stru" on the wall of the porch, then never got back to finish it; we all wished later we had cut out that board and kept it.

And even harder for us was what happened with Lucy. On a January day in 1896 Katie and I had gone to help her sister Mary and George Rexroth butcher two hogs. We left our Lucy, who was five, at her uncle Joseph's. She was playing in the orchard with her crippled cousin Chester, who was just about her age. They were jumping back and forth over the ashes from some trash Joseph had burned the day before, thinking the fire was all gone, but a spark was left somewhere, and Lucy's flannel dress caught. She panicked and ran, trying to escape, and the wind fanned the flames until her dress had burned almost to her waist. Joseph's wife Phoebe finally put out the flames, and the doctor came from town and did all there was to do in those days. But in the week she had left to live little Lucy had precious few moments of rest; her poor legs pained her so awfully, weeping and cracking as they did, that long before she left us we knew that she must go, and we prayed finally that she would suffer no more.

So with our trials and temptations we kept on as we could, and praised God for the good things that he gave us, which were many of course. Another girl we had, Ruth, and then at last a son, Lyle Valentine Peter Strubhar, born in the first year of the new century. We were able to build a house on some acres in town, with a barn and chicken house along the tracks of the Santa Fe Railroad, and not long after Clara married her George and they moved onto the old farm. George even sold his fine horse Beauty, the fastest at the Rock Creek Fair two years running, to buy a pair of draft horses.

Outside of Clara and the Lord, there was nothing George loved like going fast; he pined after Beauty all those first years of their marriage. But it was not long until George himself was visited by some of the ministers, and asked if he would come and serve the church at Congerville.

He had no call, George said when he came to see me, especially not to Congerville, fourteen miles one way from the good farm that he loved even more than I had. So I told him of my own time, and how hard I had resisted, waiting for some miracle, some sign. I told him of that cold January in the church, when I had spoken to the congregation and said that without a clear sign I could not accept their call. "In the hush that fell when I had finished," I said, "it came to me, as clear as the light through the windows: God may speak through His great works and miracles, eclipses of the sun and comets in the sky. Yet surely he also speaks through His people, through their everyday doings, their words and their hands and their hearts. His signs and wonders were still everywhere, could I but read them, and I should not expect another three-tailed comet all to myself, but should see His will in His people around me. And if they called me to minister to them, I should answer that call."

George looked at me, a little darkly, from under those heavy brows. "I'll think of that," he grumbled, "when it's ten below on a Sunday in January, and I'm up before dawn to hitch up the team and drive those fourteen miles to Congerville."

"And you'll have been up half the night, burning your good lamp oil to study the Scripture for the sermon you must preach," I said. "And you'll be called to visit the sick, and the widows, and everyone else who thinks they need the hand of the minister to hold them up. And you'll see less of your children and your wife, and they will wonder why everyone else's business must come before your own, and why the work in the fields now falls to them."

George looked at me again. "It might be," he said, "that if I'm to do this work so far from home, and drive so many miles, then the Lord is telling me that I should find a Ford to take me back and forth." So I knew then that it was all right, and that he would go, and would do well, and the work would go on.

Maynard Shelly and The Mennonite: 1961-1965

by Daagya Shanti Dick

As the United States entered the 1960s, the civil rights struggle was emerging as a powerful movement for social and political justice. Martin Luther King had become the undisputed leader of the massive struggle, and the nation was listening to his words with ever greater respect. Like the country at large, many Protestant denominations, including the General Conference Mennonite Church, were rapidly emerging from the social lull inspired by post-war prosperity. One manifestation of the awakening process was the shift in Protestant denominational papers toward greater politicization and responsiveness to the social concerns of the day. According to David E. Mason in a 1966 article in *Christianity Today*, "since 1960 . . . the editorial pages of Protestant magazines have been increasingly filled with healthful debate, objective self-criticism, and intense question-asking."[1] During the early 1960s, *The Mennonite* evolved in precisely this way under the editorial hand of Maynard Shelly.

Maynard Shelly was born in 1925 into a conservative Mennonite community in East Greenville, Pennsylvania, and attended the West Swamp Mennonite Church. He graduated from Bluffton College in 1945 and from the Mennonite Seminary in Chicago in 1949. He served as a General Conference Mennonite pastor for six years before he began to work for the General Conference as the assistant to the Executive Secretary of the Board of Education and Publication. Five years later, in 1961, he began his tenure as the editor of *The Mennonite*. Shelly drew heavily upon his personal theology of Christian discipleship in guiding the church paper. As a result, Shelly broke from the soft-spoken editorial policy of his predecessor, J. N. Smucker, in an effort to drive the General Conference Mennonite Church toward the greater activism and involvement which was consistent with his personal theology.[2]

During his editorial tenure from 1950 through 1960, J. N. Smucker had been content simply to reflect back to the General Conference Mennonite Church that which it was doing, without particular regard as to how he might shape or stimulate the fellowship. Maynard Shelly, in contrast, used *The Mennonite* to challenge the church's limited involvement in and response to the most important and controversial socio-religious issues of the era—particularly the goals and methods of the Southern civil rights movement. By way of describing the relationship of his paper to the church, in 1970 Shelly wrote that "the magazine should be seen as a brother rather than a servant."[3] In 1965, representatives of the General Conference Board of Education and Publication (BOEP) affirmed Shelly's editorial philosophy when they advised that three elements be included in *The Mennonite:* educational articles about the significant happenings of the world; open discussion of challenging issues; and affirmation of differences in opinion.[4] Both Shelly and his conference advisors believed that the magazine should not merely reflect the activities and views of the church and its members. To do so would facilitate their stagnation. Rather, the paper should take a particular—and, under Shelly, progressive—stand on any given issue and "be willing to state its convictions clearly so that they could be understood."[5] Thus, *The Mennonite* was to be a bit of a thorn in the side of every reader, prodding him or her to ever more faithful discipleship.

Shelly was not afraid to challenge the activities of the church and its members if he perceived that the criticism would be constructive. He believed "the work

of the church must finally be supported by the people who care for it and those who care most about it are not those who want to overlook its faults."[6] The purpose was no longer to provide a *Mennonite* which would allow the church to be self-satisfied. Rather, his vision was of a *Mennonite* which was not afraid to cut away at the sickly parts of the church and laity in order to make way for new and healthier growth. He saw in *The Mennonite* a place where all in the fellowship could express their opinions and learn from the views of others.[7] Shelly did not attempt to provide a balanced and encompassing view of the General Conference Mennonite response to the burgeoning civil rights struggle. Instead, he stood openly in support of the work of those who challenged the church to develop a more engaged and progressive relationship with the movement. While he desired to bring unity and strength through such a stand, he eventually began to alienate many within the more conservative tradition.

While Shelly emphasized the need for a single editorial position which would guide the paper, he did not presume to express that view alone. Regarding the issue of an appropriate Mennonite relationship to the nonviolent direct action movement, Shelly wrote only five of the nine editorials pertaining to race relations which he published between 1960 and 1965. In this way, he drew upon the influence of church leaders to communicate effectively his message. Although written by several different men, the position espoused in all of the editorials was the same: Mennonites needed to repent of their racism and work to eradicate its deleterious effects. According to Shelly, Mennonites needed to "weep for [their] sins" and struggle to overcome the suffering caused by their own and others' racism. Further, in times such as theirs, when reasonable discussion yielded no progress, General Conference Mennonite pastor Harold Regier stated plainly that, "direct nonviolent action becomes the only answer. . . . It is a Christian expression of opposition to evil."[8] Through such editorial statements as these, Maynard Shelly and other conference leaders established without qualification that *The Mennonite* endorsed the goals and methods of the civil rights struggle.

Well under one-third of the race relations articles published in *The Mennonite* under the leadership of Shelly pertained to the various General Conference-sponsored activities. Further, those published revealed a marked support for the radical stream within the General Conference Mennonite Church. Of the ten articles, fully one half were reports by or about Vincent and Rosemarie Harding, leaders in the civil rights movement of Atlanta, Georgia, and were strongly supportive of their work as a righteous expression of the gospel. The Hardings participated in the nonviolent direct action movement to the extent of being arrested and demanded that GC Mennonites become comparably involved. Vincent Harding advocated communication as essential to progress, but he also insisted that nonviolent coercion was an appropriate response to the unyielding oppression of African-Americans in the South. By publishing his reports, *The Mennonite* supported not only the Hardings' involvement, but the tactics of the civil rights struggle as well.

While the moderate voice calling for slow, noncoercive progress was present among the General Conference articles, it was barely audible among the incessant demands for immediate action. The predominant sentiment was aptly expressed by members of the Woodlawn, Chicago church that "the question is no longer, 'what shall we say to these things?' Rather, it is, 'What shall we do about these things?' " with the answer being a resounding call to take up the actively suffering cross of Christ in the world.[9] According to the image presented in *The Mennonite*, the support for the tradition of separatism and nonresistance was almost completely lost from within General Conference institutions by 1965. In fact, such an image was not entirely correct, in that the missions at Gulfport and Philadelphia continued to support the tradition of noninvolvement to a great extent. Because there were no systematic reports of conference activity and opinions, it is difficult to tell whether or not the mission programs were the sole expression of conservative sentiment. Regardless, that very real position within the church was almost excluded from the denominational paper. As a result of his bias toward action and participation, Shelly chose not to recognize as newsworthy the reports of the more quiet work which called the church to abstain from the sin and coercion of the world.[10]

Approximately one-third of the race relations articles published between

Maynard Shelly in April 1970

1960 and 1965 did not pertain to the activities of the institutional church. As under the editorial hand of Smucker, several of the "general" reports which Shelly published reflected the personal experiences of the laity with the civil rights movement. Because the ordinary church member was more likely to support a conservative approach to the struggle, the personal testimonies did not express as strong a call to action as did the conference-related articles. Rather, they tended to be simple stories of individuals overcoming their racism by learning to see beyond another's color into his or her heart.[11] A characteristic example was the story printed on February 15, 1964, of a black man who befriended a blind white racist. The white man, upon learning that his newfound friend was black, realized that he had been wrong in his many years of prejudice, and he felt duly sorry. Similar to the earlier stories, the moral of personal reports in the early 1960s was that through communication prejudice could be overcome.[12] The articles written by ordinary church members reveal an image of the laity that changed little between the late 1950s and the early 1960s. As before, lay-readers most often espoused gentle community building rather than forced change.

Even among the "general" articles, however, the majority emphasized the unjust oppression of blacks across the country and the burden placed upon the church to become involved in change.

Vincent Harding and Delton Franz, Woodlawn Mennonite Church, Chicago, ca. 1965

Some authors emphasized legislation and integration within the church and home community as Christian responses to racism.[13] Two articles by Martin Luther King, Jr. were included in defense of civil disobedience, as well as others by Mennonites decrying the suffering of African-Americans and supporting the methods of nonviolent struggle.[14] While not all articles advocated civil disobedience, each called upon the church to recognize its own sinfulness and participate in the redemptive suffering of the world. Thus, as in the General Conference-related articles, the predominant image of GC Mennonites was of a church being drawn by its leadership to confront the racism within as well beyond its doors and to work in the world for a more just and peaceable society.

The third category of articles—news briefs—first appeared as a column in 1963. Of the twenty included between 1963 and 1965, sixteen of the reports pertained to the activities of various church institutions. Rather than advocating direct, confrontational action as did many of the more extensive articles on the General Conference, the news briefs emphasized education and community building across racial lines. Characteristic of the solutions presented were proposals encouraging equal employment and educational opportunities, establishing effective channels of communication across racial lines, and reaching out to invite non-whites into the church.[15] While such positions were closer to the traditional separation of church and state than those espoused by people such as the Hardings, they were still within the more progressive stream which advocated direct involvement over against the historic isolationism. Even in these, the least radical articles, Shelly did not give significant coverage to the conservative opinion which characterized the majority within the church throughout the 1960s.[16]

As a result of the very limited BOEP supervision of the philosophy and production of *The Mennonite*, Shelly was largely responsible for the image of the General Conference Mennonite Church at large conveyed from 1960 through 1965. Because his vision for the paper was markedly different than Smucker's, Shelly projected a different image to the readers. While Smucker strove for balance, Shelly wanted to cultivate a particular relationship between the General Conference Mennonite Church and the civil rights movement. He wanted to bring the struggle into the minds and hearts of his readers, and inspire them to see it as a part of faithful Christian living. As it was his goal that the paper would shape and guide its readers, Shelly did not believe himself to be compelled to include in equal proportion articles which expressed the views of everyone within the fellowship. Rather, he accented the activities of those he believed were leading the church well, at the expense of including the views and activities of others. Shelly almost never solicited articles,[17] and so it may be that very few conservative opinions were submitted and available for publication. He would have had the

resources to solicit such articles had he desired to reflect all views equally, but he did not. He cultivated an image of the church which clearly favored the progressive, involved stream of General Conference Mennonite thought over the tradition of non-resistance and non-involvement.

The church depicted in Shelly's *Mennonite* was no longer the comfortable, slowly evolving one of Smucker's tenure prior to 1961. It was instead a dissatisfied fellowship, struggling to break free of the traditional separation from the world and ethic of nonresistance by which it was bound. While not all of the articles condoned involvement to the extent of nonviolent direct action, the vast majority called upon the church to recognize its participation in the racial sins of the world and to struggle actively to free itself from that sinfulness. Because Shelly wanted to inspire the General Conference Mennonite Church to new growth, he emphasized the events and ideas he believed to be progressive. Shelly's conceived church was not one largely satisfied with itself and its slowly evolving involvement in the movement, nor was it one in which self-criticism reflected only hope and faith in the community's ability to grow. Shelly's church was one that had stayed behind when justice called and needed to move quickly to catch up with the movement it would have led were it true to Jesus' teachings.[18] It was a community within a society which was undergoing profound change, and while there was faith that it could survive the challenge in good standing, there was also a driving sense of urgency. Repeatedly writers insisted that the church must either become involved in issues of social justice or die.[19] Whereas Smucker's Mennonite church was content to simply go on much as it had, Shelly's endured painful but potentially fulfilling growth.

Shelly was by no means acting alone. There were many within the conference who shared his concept of active Christian discipleship in the world, demonstrated by the increased number of subscriptions as well as the numerous progressive events covered in the paper. As an editor with minimal conference supervision or input, however, it was largely his choice to mold *The Mennonite* into a tool of change with which the General Conference leadership could shape the beliefs and actions of the laity along more progressive lines. Shelly had a vision for dramatic progress in the world as well as in the church. He chose not to continue in the path of J. N. Smucker and edit a *Mennonite* which simply reflected back to the readers that which they and their co-religionists were doing. Rather, he created a paper which expressed the sense of incompleteness, the dissatisfaction, as well as the hope for change which characterized the progressive, "prophetic" stream within the General Conference Mennonite Church. As a result, Shelly not only ignored but also began to leave behind those who remained faithful to the traditional quietism.

Shelly received many and varied responses regarding his editorial policy as well as the general coverage of race relations in *The Mennonite*. Taken as a whole, they reveal the benefits but also the costs of using the official paper of such a socially and politically diverse denomination to guide the body toward a particular philosophy of social responsibility. Shelly received feedback from three sources—the Board of Education and Publication, pastors, and individual readers. While the predominant sentiment within each group was supportive of Shelly's innovations, each also revealed a growing dissatisfaction with the critical image of the church portrayed in *The Mennonite*.

Shelly's strongest support came from the Editorial Committee of the BOEP. In every annual review from 1960 through 1965, however, the advisors noted that the challenges he proposed must be carefully balanced with support for the church in order to retain the support of the readers. Already in 1961 the committee noted that while differences of opinion were inevitable, it was "wise not to make conscious bids for discussion" by advocating controversial positions on issues such as race relations.[20] By 1963, the advisors were receiving criticism from various congregations regarding Shelly's policy, and as a result became increasingly cautious in their support. Willard Claassen, executive secretary of BOEP, in a letter to Shelly regarding his policy of promoting active discussion, likened controversy to fire when he wrote that "if used wisely it is a powerful aid, but let it get out of hand, it is disastrous." Already in 1963 Claassen believed Shelly to be "exceeding the tolerance level on controversy."[21] Thus, even among his strongest supporters, Shelly received cautionary feedback through suggestions that his vision for the church was not commonly held throughout the fellowship. While the editorial committee itself may have supported his policies, its members perceived that much of the church body soon would not.

Within the ministerial community, Shelly maintained his overall support throughout 1965, but there was a persistent and vocal minority which believed he failed to meet the spiritual and inspirational needs of the fellowship. According to a 1963 survey of pastors whose churches subscribed to *The Mennonite*, only a small majority supported Shelly's more challenging editorial policy with regard to current issues of the day, particularly race relations.[22] At the same time, a significant minority sent up the cry of "too much race, not enough grace."[23] Such clear expression of dissatisfaction suggests that the sentiment was even more widely held than the survey reflects, because traditional Mennonites were not wont to express their opinions in print. While Shelly was able to balance successfully the confrontational and devotional aspects of *The Mennonite* until 1965, his ability to remain true to his vision and simultaneously retain the support of the conservative leadership began, according to the survey, to dissipate already by 1963.

The most vocal and direct opposition to Shelly's challenging editorial policy came from the readers of *The Mennonite* directly through their letters to the editor. While the majority of the letters either specifically supported Shelly or simply opposed segregation and prejudice, a significant minority condemned his support for integration and the methods of nonviolent direct action. Three writers defended segregation as the will of God, one called Martin Luther King a communist, and several simply denounced Shelly's advocacy of involvement in secular concerns.[24] At the same time, for each letter which condemned his policy, numerous letters of defense poured in to Shelly's office. The incredulity expressed by Marie Regier in 1963, a former missionary in China and a member of the Woodlawn Mennonite church, that Mennonites cannot "possibly believe that through all these centuries up to the present day" blacks suffered justly because of the curse of Noah on Ham, was characteristic of the majority of the letters submitted during Shelly's tenure. Indeed,

many condoned involvement in and support for desegregation, if not the nonviolent tactics of the general civil rights movement.[25]

Such vocal and diverse views as were expressed in the letters to the editor from 1960 through 1965 came to the paper only with Shelly's editorship; they were unheard of during the tenure of J. N. Smucker. In a denomination known for its hesitancy at voicing opinions in writing, the active debate which occurred on the pages of the letter to the editor column reveal that the gulf between the conservative and liberal streams was growing ever wider. As the editor and instigator of the controversy Shelly was responsible—if only partially—for the divergence. Shelly strove to unite the church through honest discussion and guided debate within the confines of a supportive fellowship, and perhaps to some extent he achieved his goal. The letters, unfortunately, do not reflect such progress. Instead, they suggest only the entrenchment of members' opinions along either conservative or progressive lines. Because he advocated strongly a position with which many within the Mennonite community were not comfortable, Shelly furthered the growing gulf between two very different and perhaps incompatible factions within the General Conference Mennonite Church.

The almost inevitable result of Shelly's decided support within the church paper of nonviolence over nonresistance was a growing sense of alienation among the conservative body of the fellowship. Not only did such social activism run contrary to the community's traditional identity, but it also contradicted the political leanings of many within the church. The danger of such alienation lay in the very nature of the General Conference Mennonite Church. The structure of the church was fundamentally oriented around the autonomy of the congregation, according to Mennonite historian James C. Juhnke.[26] The emphasis on autonomy left the individual member and congregation with a minimal level of commitment to the church at large. Thus, when Shelly pursued a policy contrary to the theological and ideological beliefs of the conservative members of the General Conference fellowship, there was little incentive for them to continue reading *The Mennonite*. The success of Shelly's vision as editor relied on a committed readership, and the nature of the General Conference Mennonite Church did not facilitate such commitment on the part of its members. When Shelly abandoned the views of the conservatives, they simply abandoned his magazine in turn, for more agreeable reading, such as the more conservative *Mennonite Weekly Review*, the *Good News Broadcast*, or the *Moody Monthly*. While subscription rates continued to increase through 1965, they began to decline rapidly in 1966 and continued to do so throughout Shelly's tenure. While Shelly's vision may have seemed admirable to many within the fellowship, it was fundamentally not well suited to the denomination that it was intended to serve. The General Conference Mennonite Church revealed in the 1960s that it did not have to and thus would not tolerate the discussion and debate desired so much by Maynard Shelly.

At the same time that Shelly began to alienate the more conservative readership, he gave to the paper new life and to the readers a challenge and stimulation which they appreciated and was reflected by the increased number of subscriptions until 1965. As editor, Shelly desired a balance between the two increasingly pronounced visions within the church. He wanted to bring forth a new concept for the church and challenge the readers to consider it, but not so forcefully that the conservative body was left behind. At the same time he did not want to lose the "prophetic" stream of the fellowship by presenting a church too weak to admonish the sinful within. While his very precarious balancing act worked through 1965, the years following saw a marked growth in the distance between the two theological and social streams of the General Conference Mennonite Church.

ENDNOTES

[1]David E. Mason, "Protestant Magazines are Changing," *Christianity Today*, 14 October 1966, 16.

[2]David A. Harder, "An Editor and His Denominational Periodical, or Maynard Shelly and *The Mennonite*: 1961-1971." (Social Science Seminar, Bethel College, 1982), 13.

[3]Maynard Shelly, *The Mennonite: A Blue Book About a Church Paper* (Newton: General Conference Mennonite Church Commission on Education, 1976) 41.

[4]Maynard Shelly, 79, from the editorial commission statement of 1965.

[5]Maynard Shelly, 7.

[6]Maynard Shelly, 22.

[7]Maynard Shelly, 7, 77.

[8]*The Mennonite*, 23 July 1963, 484.

[9]*The Mennonite*, 12 February 1963, 99.

[10]Two articles from the Gulfport mission were included between 1960 and 1965, both of which questioned the value of nonviolent coercion. They were published in 15 August 1961, 515, and 25 August 1964, 531.

[11]*The Mennonite*, 6 February 1963, 84, 9 October, 1963, 644, and 17 March 1964, 174.

[12]*The Mennonite*, 25 February 1964, 125.

[13]*The Mennonite*, 16 March 1965, 169.

[14]*The Mennonite*, 18 January 1963, 409, 23 March 1965, 180, and 28 September 1965, 607.

[15]*The Mennonite*, 25 January 1963, 428, 14 July 1964, 447, and 4 February 1964, 66.

[16]While it is difficult to verify the opinion of the average church member in the 1960s, the studies by Harder and Kauffman in the early 1970s show a significant conservative majority. Because it is likely that the laity was at least as conservative in the early 1960s as in the 1970s, I am assuming that it is accurate to describe the majority of readers as within the conservative stream.

[17]Maynard Shelly, 9.

[18]*The Mennonite*, 19 April 1960, 250.

[19]*The Mennonite*, 22 January 1963, 52-53.

[20]The names of the various persons who served on the editorial committee of the COE are not published in the annual reports of the COE and were not otherwise readily available. This further suggests that their service to the Conference was not very significant.

[21]Claassen to Shelly, p. 2, 3.

[22]The "Every Home Plan," through which congregations bought subscriptions to *The Mennonite* for every household of members was popular throughout the time covered in this study. That the pastors continued to encourage their congregations to subscribe to the plan would suggest that their overall feeling was positive toward the church paper. See Maynard Shelly's report from an unpublished 1963 survey of pastors and readers, entitled, "How Mennonites Read *The Mennonite*."

[23]*The Mennonite*, "How Mennonites Read *The Mennonite*: A Report of Four Surveys of Readers in 1963" (Newton: General Conference Mennonite Church, 1965) Appendix 1, 4.

[24]*The Mennonite*, 13 June 1961, 396, 12 June 1962, 396, 9 July 1963, 455, 26 March 1963, 224, 6 August 1963, 496, 1 June 1965, 366, and 17 August 1965, 523.

[25]*The Mennonite*, 18 June 1963, 416, 25 June 1963, 431, 9 July 1963, 455, 4 February 1964, 76, 14 April 1964, 256, 19 May 1964, 335, 11 August 1964, 502, and 22 September 1964, 592.

[26]Juhnke, James C. *Vision, doctrine, war:* Mennonite Identity and Organization in America, 1890-1930 (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989) 50.

Book Reviews

J. Howard Kauffman and Leo Driedger, *The Mennonite Mosaic: Identity and Modernization* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1991. Pp. 308. ($15.95) ISBN 0-8361-3567-9

The research and the results which this book delivers are a huge contribution, well worth the resources expended. From a questionnaire administered in selected U.S. and Canadian congregations of five denominations in the Mennonite family (the "old" or MC Mennonite Church, General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Brethren Church, Brethren in Christ, and Evangelical Mennonite Church), *The Mennonite Mosaic* is packed with quantitative data on a host of questions ranging from degree of urbanization to attitudes toward pacifism to measures of communalism to frequency of saying grace at meals, plus many correlations and comparisons among the data. So it is an enormously useful resource for almost any reader, scholar, church agency, or anyone else who wants to base impressions and generalizations about contemporary Mennonitism on solid evidence rather than mere impression and myth. Some comparison with non-Mennonite studies add to that usefulness. Adding far more is the fact that this book is "Church Member Profile II" following the landmark 1975 book *Anabaptists Four Centuries Later* by Kauffman and Leland Harder,[1] which now becomes "Church Member Profile I."

Because it is a sequel, *The Mennonite Mosaic* offers "longitudinal" data, that is of course data on change through time—in this case comparing answers of 1972 and 1989, the years of the two questionnaires. Making this comparison imposed a limitation, for the researchers concluded that they had to use the 1972 wording of many items even if in retrospect the phrasing seemed somewhat flawed. They were well aware of that problem and discussed it freely in November of 1988 at a meeting of scholars whom they gathered for advice and critique of their research design. (Another strength of the project is the open way in which they sought such advice and are now willing to share their raw data with qualified researchers.) Of course their decision was correct; otherwise the 1972 and the 1989 data would not be comparable.

A more basic decision was to report the data largely around the concept of "modernization." During one sabbatical this reviewer took a year-long seminar on the topic of religion and the modernizing process; and while at times I still use the modernization concept in a general way, after wading through a lot of literature more impressive for density than for clarity, I really find it too much like, say, the concept of civilization—too vague to explain much of anything precisely or in particular. Admirably, Kauffman and Driedger said carefully what their measures of modernization were: urbanization, rationalization, specialization, stratification, and mobility (using the words in their sociological senses). Nonetheless in the end it seemed they could not make the process of modernization explain nearly as much as they apparently expected. Sometimes they found modernity factors such as urbanization or secularity useful for explaining change, yet time after time they found rather surprisingly that changes in Mennonite religiosity and attitude correlated weakly, mixedly, or even negatively with such tests (e.g., pp. 235-45, 84, 156, 220-22).

A great deal of Kauffman and Driedger's data is no surprise: the five denominations are becoming more urban (35% urban in 1972, 48% in 1989—p. 36), more Mennonites are showing up as officers of business corporations (5% in 1972, 8% in 1989—p. 92), the divorce rate is rising although still remarkably low compared to national averages (quadrupling since 1972, to 5.2% in 1989—p. 108), etc. Other findings may be surprising. Regarding race, in 1989 more than 20% of the respondents were still not convinced that they had no right to keep persons of other races from moving into their neighborhoods (p. 203). Or in what may be another surprise, although MBs and EMCs were more urbanized than MCs and considerably more convinced that Christians should participate in the nation's politics, they nevertheless agreed slightly more than MCs that "there is a clear difference between the 'kingdom of God' and the 'kingdom of this world' " (95% for MBs and EMCs, 93% for MCs [p. 91]). In such a case one wonders whether different groups read different meanings into the question—the MBs and EMCs more often reading through a premillennial-dispensationalist lens that focused God's kingdom in a future age, the MCs more often associating God's kingdom with the work of the church here and now. The reader can ask such questions at quite a few points.

Surprising also, perhaps, is that in 1989 the "liberal" GCs were slightly more in favor of keeping the word "Mennonite" in their congregations' names than were the MCs (80% to 78%—p. 154), or were quite a bit more likely to "say grace at all meals" (75% to 65%; note the word "all"—p. 72). On many counts MCs and GCs answered remarkably alike by 1989. This is true even about matters that suggest degrees of acculturation, for instance the types of community organizations they were joining. On the question about kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God, plus several similar ones, the answers of MCs and GCs were not more than four percentage points different. That was true except when the question was put more directly into political language, asking whether "there is an inner contradiction between following Christ and the exercise of leadership in government." In that case 38% of MCs saw or felt the contradiction compared to only 28% of GCs (p. 91). Also on other questions directly about political participation, MCs were distinctly more skeptical, with only 72% v. GCs' 88% believing in voting and only 63% vs. 83% believing that a Mennonite could rightly hold "any local, state, provincial, or national government office" (p. 138). And when it came to how and how much to express opposition to war, despite considerable overlap MC and GC patterns remained notably different even in 1989. GCs scored higher on activist promotion of the peace position (78% favoring, to MCs' 65%) and refusing to register for the draft (21% v. MCs' 12%)—but then GCs also scored higher on accepting either noncombatant or regular military service.[2] MCs in turn were more likely to accept alternative service programs such as CPS, I-W, or MCC service (83% v. GCs' 74% when the question was the acceptability of such programs, 73% v. 59% when the

question was whether the respondent would choose the position in a hypothetical future war). In sum, while there was considerable overlap, GCs were somewhat more polarized between activism and protest on the one hand and acceptance of military service on the other. MCs were somewhat more likely to cooperate in legal alternatives and rather less likely to accept military service. Very probably the figures mean also that on peace issues the GCs had somewhat greater difference between leaders and grass roots—although Kauffman and Driedger apparently did not test that question directly. In any case, in 1989 the two groups' peace profiles were somewhat different.[3]

To this reviewer the most far-reaching findings of Kauffman and Driedger were data that suggested Mennonites were feeling—and rationalizing—greater and greater identification with their nations and civic communities as contrasted to feeling that they should take their cues from their own distinct peoplehood living more or less as a counter-culture to give collective witness to society and nation concerning God's will and order for humans. This impression comes despite evidence that Mennonites retain a great deal of in-group identity and associationalism (ch. 7). It comes despite a conclusion of Kauffman's and Driedger's, using a concept repeatedly borrowed from social commentator Peter Berger, that in 1989 the "sacred canopies" of Mennonites were still intact (p. 251, etc.). And it comes despite the fact that, when asked directly, 93% or more of each denomination's respondents (except the GCs' at 88%) claimed to see sharp distinction between God's and the world's kingdoms. The suggestion of greater identification with society and nation rather than with a distinctly Christian peoplehood lies in statistics such as greater actual voting (overall, 46% in 1972, 65% in 1989—p. 138) and significant declines in two key beliefs: that "Christians cannot perform in some government offices" (74% in 1972, 59% in 1989—note the word "some"—p. 71); and that "Christians should take no part in war" (73% in 1972, 66% in 1989—p. 71). The impression comes as no surprise in these days when it seems the great majority of Mennonite intellectuals react against any favorable mention of the classical Mennonite two-kingdom stance or of separatism (although Kauffman and Driedger did not). Nor is it a surprise at a time when scholars, church leaders, and ordinary Mennonites speak as if sociological changes are given and inexorable. Mennonites at all levels seem rapidly to be abandoning the idea that they can or should control their own sociology and social participation.

Of course there are Mennonites and Amish who still hold to that idea. But they—the old orders, the plain people, the traditionalists—do not appear in *The Mennonite Mosaic*. No doubt their absence is due at least partly to methodology: it simply would not be feasible to administer questionnaires to old order congregations. But Beachy Amish, perhaps, or Bergthalers? In any case, the absence is a great void.

The void leaves a general impression that almost all Mennonites find their places along a single-line continuum. At one end are highly American-evangelical (especially EMC) Mennonites and at the other are those who are thoroughly pacifist, guided by Anabaptism, and perhaps more truly "Mennonite" (most likely GCs and MCs). But instead of a single line a better image would be a triangle. At one corner would be a cluster of attitudes and behaviors closely resembling American evangelicalism and its kind of political conservatism. At another would be a cluster of values coming more from Mennonite colleges, seminaries, and church offices—an amalgam of "Anabaptist vision" and relatively liberal attitudes concerning race, women's rights, welfare, disarmament, and the like. But at a third point would be traditionalism, with the values of maintaining community, quiet and non-activist piety, and distinct lifestyles ordered around communalism, quietism, stability, group discipline, and modesty rather than around professionalism, profits, power, popularity, individualism, and self-promotion or worldly glitter. In the triangular image, instead of finding themselves along one line, Mennonites are at a thousand different points on a field. To be sure, for some of them the pull of traditionalism is weak and they end up along one side of the triangle, a side that is much like the implied continuum of Kauffman and Driedger. But to many others, not only old orders but those who tout *More With Less* cookbooks and other modern expressions of plainness and nonconformity, traditionalism pulls away from that line and into a more complex field.

Despite or because of its great strength, *The Mennonite Mosaic* leaves the reader with questions. For instance, for the most part the researchers tested verbalized attitudes rather than behavior. If college-educated Mennonites scored significantly higher on the Anabaptism scale than did those who had stopped at high school, or expressed themselves as far more tolerant in matters of race and welfare (p. 242), did they also behave differently or had Mennonite colleges merely taught them the right language? Or in testing moral attitudes, might not the researchers have constructed some scales growing more out of Anabaptist-Mennonite understandings? Except for the questions about participation in war, their morality scales were essentially two: one with a conservative-evangelical flavor, testing attitudes or behaviors about smoking, drinking, alcohol, dancing, movies, foul language, gambling, sex, and abortion; and another with a socially liberal flavor, testing attitudes toward race, welfare, women's roles, and capital punishment. Could there not also have been some more "Anabaptist" (or at least "Mennonite") scales, testing for instance whether the respondents had consulted with the church in making vocational or other life choices and whether they were applying principles of reconciling love in business, in the professional office, on the ward, in the classroom, on the carpenter crew?

Moreover the reader might ask for more texture. The data presented is a rich trove, yet, like any single method, the questionnaire involves considerable reductionism. Thinking ideally, one might wish that the authors had also moved about for two or three years to live as participant-observers in selected Mennonite communities. One misses a feel for real people, with faces and names and hopes and frustrations and halitosis. A few well-chosen anecdotes, a few pithy quotations from Mennonites reacting to the issues the researchers raised—these would have added valuable nuance and a deeper understanding of who those Mennonites were as they answered, and how they thought, and why.

But whatever we may imagine in the abstract, the book is a great contribution. *The Mennonite Mosaic*, its 1975 predecessor, and the raw data behind them will be remarkable sources of information for years to come. Mennonites and scholars are in great debt to J. Howard Kauffman, Leland Harder,

Leo Driedger, and all who helped or supported them.

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ENDNOTES

[1]J. Howard Kauffman and Leland Harder, *Anabaptists Four Centuries Later: A Profile of Five Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Denominations* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1975).

[2]The statistics were as follows. On noncombatant service, 53% of GCs and 33% of MCs approved or condoned it when the question was only whether the position was acceptable, but the figures dropped to 14% and 7% when the question was what the respondent would do personally in a hypothetical future war. For regular military service the researchers did not ask the question of acceptability, but on the question of going to the regular military in a future war, 6% of GC and 3% of MC respondents answered that they would. (For those answering that they were unsure about which of all the options they would choose in a future war—military service, noncombatant service, alternative service, registering but refusing induction, or nonregistration—14% of GCs and 10% of MCs answered that they were "uncertain.")

[3]For this paragraph's data on positions regarding war, see p. 174.

Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism Revisited: Essays on Anabaptist/Mennonite Studies in Honor of C. J. Dyck.* Scottdale: Herald Press, 1992. Pp. 212. ($14.95) ISBN 0-8361-3577-6

The European custom among academics to honor a distinguished colleague with what in German is called a *Festschrift*—a collection of essays by students or colleagues in the field of expertise of the honoree—has become widespread in the United States. It is a lovely custom that combines a declaration of esteem for a colleague with a scholarly purpose. *Anabaptism Revisited* is a splendid example of this genre—a series of essays on Anabaptist and Mennonite history put together in honor of C. J. Dyck, by colleagues and friends, on the occasion of his retirement from active duty at the Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart. In a way, it is a labor of love, since scholarly contributions to *Festschriften* often get lost in the shuffle as they are not easily accessible.

Anabaptist research has undergone significant changes during the last two decades or so, away from the exuberance characteristic of the work of H. S. Bender and Robert Friedmann who emphatically argued that the Anabaptists were the most perfect embodiment of the gospel since Patmos to a new view which stresses heterogeneity and non-theological elements in the rise of the movement. The eight historical essays in this volume are traditional in that they focus on theological themes. As Walter Klaassen notes in his essay on "the Rise of the Baptism of Adult Believers in Swiss Anabaptism," current scholarship has been more interested in the questions of tithe refusal, removal of images, and community of goods, all of course, issues with societal relevance and impact, than on the question of how the early Zürich Anabaptists came to develop their theological position on baptism. The essays in the volume demonstrate that a great deal of insight can still be gleaned from examining theological aspects of 16th century Anabaptist history.

Three essays deal with more contemporary Mennonite themes (Sawatsky; Toews; Peachey). Their inclusion makes for a certain disjointedness of the volume, even though they manifest a crucial theme in the work of C. J. Dyck. A sensitive personal biographical assessment of the honoree, together with a bibliography of his writings, concludes the volume.

C. J. Dyck is one of the scholars who back in the 1960s helped fuel what Harold Bender coined "the Anabaptist Vision," a view of 16th century Anabaptism that was exuberantly positive—and, at the same time, sought to provide meaningful cues to contemporary church life. This was a splendid fusion of past and present, historical insight and contemporary challenge. As in other traditions, one thinks of the "Luther Renaissance" earlier this century which made Martin Luther available to 20th century Lutheranism, the Mennonite Church surely gained much from this historical work. While current scholarship is far more historical than theological, and all Christian traditions seem to be leery of relying too much on historical precedent and insight, this volume is a welcome reminder that we must be historically minded if we want to be societally responsible.

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Radical Reformation and Mennonite Bibliography, 1992

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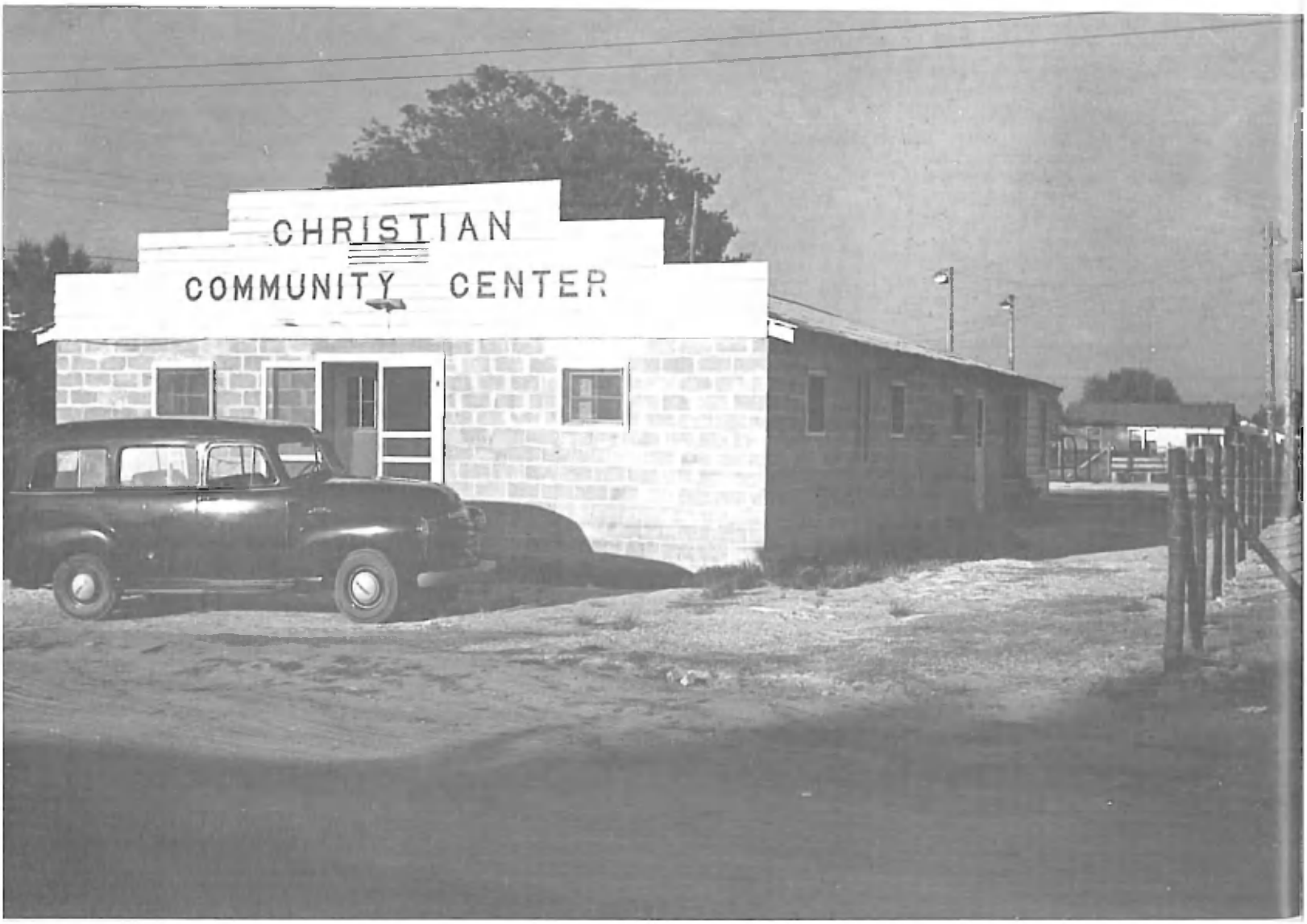
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