

Brethren Historical Library & Archives: News and Notes

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Faith, Archives, and History – A Reflection on Hebrews 11:1

Tim Binkley, Brethren Historical Committee Meeting Devotions, Nov. 3, 2017

In the Revised Standard Version Hebrews 11:1 reads, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.” Hebrews 11:1 (in the RSV) is a verse that I share with seminary classes when they come over to Bridwell Library for an introduction to the archives. Why do I quote Hebrews 11:1 at them? Because faith is “the evidence of things unseen,” and archives are also evidence of things unseen... by us: realities that we have not witnessed, but that past generations have. Their records are a gift to us today. From archives we learn about faith and ideals, about trials and triumphs, about failures and new beginnings. From archives we learn about events that have shaped our lives, our church, and our world; sacred places where God was encountered; and dark nights of the soul where the Lord seemed absent.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.” And archives are also the evidence of things unseen by us.

To push the metaphor beyond what is reasonable, let me suggest that the study of history- like faith- also has to do with “the substance of things hoped for.” Yes, history is about the past. But it is also really about the future. History moves us to ask deep questions about what examples we want to emulate, what messes and harms we want to avoid, indeed- what kind of people, church, and society we want to become, with God’s help. Faith, archives, and history. May the Lord guide and bless us as we advocate for all three.

Prayer: "Those Who Have Gone Before" by Eugene Roop. (Source: *Heard in Our Land*, p. 47)

Thank you, God, for those who have gone before us,
Whose saga we can retell.

Some were favored by circumstances,
And occasionally by you.

Others seemed always blocked by their own behavior,
Or the actions of another.

We rejoice at their moments of triumph and faithfulness,
We hurt at the misuse of power and the lack of trust.

God, we too will leave a saga for those who follow,
Even if our name is lost after this generation or the next.

Our choice would be that we be a part of your story of blessing,
But if not, remember us as you remember Ishmael, Esau, and Leah.

We commend our saga into your safe keeping.
Extent to us the same patience you showed to Jacob and Laban.

We pray in the name of the one from Nazareth who cared for the sinners as well as the
saints, and for those who were a mixture of the two, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The Unintended Consequences of American Missions

David A. Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017). xiii, 309 pp. ISBN: 978-0-691-15843-3.

Research on mission, in all religious traditions, has focused on what the missionaries have done in the host context. This volume turns the tables and examines the results in the home country. The story of the American missionaries during the period of American national ascension onto the world stage, beginning with the Spanish American War and continuing through World War II (WWII), is very complicated and a vast number of defined case studies have been published. Hollinger cites numbers of these in his wide ranging yet precisely defined volume with its carefully nuanced narrative.

The focus of the book is on those missionaries, their children and their proteges who had access to political power in the United States (US) because of their involvement in the older established churches and who were able to use networks of donors and political connections to make significant contributions to American social and political culture. Consistent themes of the book are the gradual disenchantment with the missionary project, an increasing respect for

indigenous cultures, and the desire to increase the American public's understanding of the countries involved and to improve the way the US government and military related to other cultures. The missionaries had found that people throughout the world paid attention to the values expressed by American Christians, and they were almost universally distressed at the extent of racism in the US that echoed around the world.

Missionaries with extensive foreign experience became leaders in seeking justice and international peace. Missionaries, their children and friends fought colonialism and Zionism (chapter 5), campaigned against the internment of people of Japanese descent (chapter 6), struggled against the corruption of the Kuomintang of Chiang Kai-shek and its supporters in the US (chapter 7), were major contributors to fighting the academic racism known as "Orientalism" (chapter 9), developed international service programs that were models for the Peace Corps (chapter 10), and were leaders of campaigns against racism in the churches, academies and government, as well as on the streets (chapter 11).

The volume, especially when read together with Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2012), which discusses the period before the beginning of Hollinger's primary narrative, reveals why American stature in the world achieved such heights and made American missionaries of quite different genres welcome throughout the world in the post-WWII era. It is ironic that when the book appeared, the US was being led by the white Evangelicals who profited most from the "moral empire," but who now appear to be bent on destroying it, primarily, it would appear, because an African American Christian was elected President. It will be interesting to see if the earlier Christian American vision of society and cultural values, the "good Samaritan" approach to the world, ever recovers its nearly global standing.

One aspect of mission mentioned time and again in the volume, but not focused upon, is the presence of multigenerational American families in other countries, where missionary children learned to speak Asian and African languages and to understand the ways in which Asians and Africans thought within their cultures

There are three significant problems with the book. The first is the narrowness of focus on the people who had access to power in the US. There were thousands of other missionaries, many from small denominations and agencies who functioned in the same way. For example, Frank J. Kline, Free Methodist, left India and became a major force in the late 1950s and early 1960s for developing more egalitarian structures among Free Methodists around the world, a model followed by many other small denominations. The Society of Friends (Quakers) and the Mennonites, Brethren and other Peace Churches are not mentioned.

Another problem is the failure to appreciate how complicated the lives of certain figures were. For example, E. Stanley Jones, "the world's greatest missionary" (*Time*, 1938) began his anti-racism campaign with his book *Christ of the Indian Road* (Abingdon, 1925) that attacked

American racism directly. During furloughs, Jones preached at Methodist and Holiness Churches throughout the American South, bearing that same message, and he fought racism in Kentucky. His networks with what may be described as his sectarian origins were maintained until the end of his life. Even when he was rejected by the National Council of Churches and the more liberal ecumenical wing of the Methodist Church, and he was no longer received in Washington circles, he continued to function as an antiracism warrior in Holiness contexts.

These problems are also part and parcel of the most serious historiographical problem of the volume--the simplistic dichotomy between those who supported the "social gospel" and those who did not (p. 10). It is this definitional problem that leads to the issues mentioned above. Hollinger listed the "Seventh-day Adventists, the Church of the Nazarene, the Assemblies of God and the Southern Baptist Convention" as a group, asserting that these were less interested in the Social Gospel, "historical biblical criticism" and "Wilsonian efforts to reform international politics." This ignores the roots of Walter Rauschenbusch's vision in the Holiness Movements and his attraction to the Salvation Army (as were Social Christianity advocates in Europe).

Hollinger also fails to account for the sociological status of the different groups and their relationships with, and incorporation of, persons of different races. Pentecostals and Baptists generally because of social pressure split into primarily White and Black denominations. Some Holiness and Pentecostal Churches had significant numbers of Black/White participants fighting against the racist culture in the South and North, including the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), Church of God (Anderson, IN) and the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (Indianapolis). The classical labels of "Fundamentalist" and "Liberal" make the analysis too simplistic. Many of the Holiness and Pentecostal groups understood the "Social Gospel" as adopted by the "mainline" churches as too weak and patronizing an answer to the issues of poverty, racism and social reform. Here references to the older but still useful *Revivalism and Social Reform* (1957) by Timothy L. Smith could have been helpful. Importantly all these groups had their long-term missionaries who returned to the US with respect for their host cultures and sympathy for the victims of racism throughout the world. In these groups too, Hollinger's general thesis maintains: those with long-term intercultural experience changed America.

Despite these issues, this is a magnificent, engaging, passionate exposition of a long-ignored aspect of American and global culture. It is to be hoped that this volume will stimulate more research on the global engagement of Americans based on their faith and an idealistic vision of the moral possibilities of their own country. American communities of faith may want to ask how they can provide this same window on the world in cooperation with other communities of faith.

David Bundy, Associate Director, Manchester Wesley Research Centre

BHLA Notes

Madeline McKeever Named BHLA Intern

Madeline McKeever has been named to the 2018-2019 internship at the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. Madeline is a recent graduate of Judson University with a BA in Interdisciplinary Communication. While at Judson she worked in the Benjamin P. Browne Library as a research assistant in the reference department. Madeline is a member of the Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren.

BHLA Books for Sale

The BHLA website contains a list of used books for sale. We would like to highlight several titles. William Beahm, *Studies in Brethren Belief*--\$22.00; V. F. Schwalm, *Albert Cassel Wieand* \$12.00; Don Durnbaugh, ed., *The Church of the Brethren Past and Present* (1971) -- \$12.00; D. L. Miller, *The Seven Churches in Asia*--\$15.00; Kurtz, Blough, Ellis, *Studies in Doctrine and Devotion*--\$12.00; Miller & Royer, *Some Who Led* --\$10.00; Dan West, *The Coming Brotherhood*--\$6.00. For a detailed list, see <http://www.brethren.org/bhla/documents/bhla-books-for-sale.pdf>. All books are postpaid. Please send payment to BHLA, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.



Mission Statement

The Brethren Historical Library and Archives is the official repository for Church of the Brethren publications and records. Its purpose is to keep alive the Brethren faith heritage, by:

- Collecting and preserving materials relating to the cultural, socio-economic, theological, genealogical, and institutional history of the Brethren;
- Giving historical perspective and understanding to the mission of the church through counsel and publication;
- Providing a centralized Brethren research center and;
- Serving as a clearing House for information on Brethren historical materials in other repositories.

Some Recent Additions to the Brethren Historical Library and Archives

Mary-Jo Flory-Steury Papers, 10.7 feet, 1978-2016 including correspondence and records documenting her work as a pastor, denominational leader director of the Office of Ministry.

James Poling Papers, 2 feet, 1965-1983 including subject files, correspondence documenting his career as an activist and educator in the Church of the Brethren.

Paul Hoffman Papers, 1960s-1990s, 1 foot, including sermons, addresses and subject files documenting his career as Church of the Brethren educator, pastor and annual conference moderator.

Rosemary Block Rose Papers, 5 feet, 1948-1990s primarily documenting her work as a nurse and hospital administrator in Germany for Brethren Service, 1948-1951 including correspondence, diaries, photographs. The collection does include material from time as a member of the Canton Church of the Brethren after her return from Germany.

Joe Van Dyke Papers 1930s-1980s, 1 foot, including correspondence, some with Dan West, writings and scrapbooks. Van Dyke a longtime instructor at Alma College was an important Church of the Brethren literary figure.

Manassas (VA) Church of the Brethren, 2 feet, 1930s-2012, financial records and printed matter.

Charles and Mary Beth Bieber Papers, 2 feet, 1940s-2012, correspondence, scrapbooks, sermons and photographs documenting their service as missionaries in Nigeria, and Charles' service as pastor, moderator and district executive.

Harold Bomberger Papers, 1950s-2004, 5 feet, including correspondence, subject files documenting his career as a Church of the Brethren pastor, district executive and annual conference moderator.

Please let us know if your mailing address has changed by emailing us at brethrenarchives@brethren.org. Thank you!

Historical Documents Wanted

In an effort to reclaim storage space, church leaders often discard documents, not realizing that they tell the story of the work of people of God in communities around the world. If you have items relating to the history of your congregation, district or even ministries of the national church, even bulletins from special services, please forward them to the BHLA. Our address is BHLA, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.



“War No More,” was a poster created by Wilbur Brumbaugh in 1972. The image color was altered from red to blue for use on the cover of a special issue of *Messenger*, printed February 1, 1972.

The theme was “Nonviolence in a Violent World.”

Support the BHLA with Your Financial Gifts

The Brethren Historical Library and Archives is supported through the Core Ministries fund of the Church of the Brethren. Financial gifts to the church are not only welcomed but needed. Please send your checks payable to the Church of the Brethren to BHLA 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.