BRETHREN IN CHRIST HISTORY & LIFE

Volume XXXIX Number 3 December 2016

BRETHREN IN CHRIST
HISTORY & LIFE

Published by the Brethren in Christ Historical Society. Membership and subscription: one year, $25; contributing members, $50; supporting members, $100; patron members, $200; student membership, $10; lifetime members, a minimum one-time contribution of $1,000. Single issues of the journal, $5.00. Address articles and communications to Harriet Sider Bicksler, Editor, *Brethren in Christ History and Life*, 127 Holly Drive, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 (e-mail: bickhouse@aol.com). Membership fees should be sent to Brethren in Christ Historical Society, Messiah College, One College Avenue, Suite 3002, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055. Articles appearing in this journal are indexed in *Christian Periodical Index* and in *Religion Index One: Periodicals, Index to Book Reviews in Religion*, *ATLA Religion Database*. An index of articles and reviews before 2012 is carried on the Historical Society's website (www.bic-history.org).

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Printed by Mennonite Press, Newton, Kansas

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FROM THE EDITOR

Thirty years ago, I wrote an article for the journal on the potential for Brethren in Christ fiction in which I reviewed a Mennonite novel and advocated for fiction to be written with a Brethren in Christ setting.[1] At the time, I was not aware of any fiction that had been written about the Brethren in Christ. In fact, I learned about Janice Holt Giles and her writings about the Brethren in Christ in Kentucky for the first time when Mike Brown contacted me awhile back regarding an article he had been working on about this Kentucky writer.

Mike has been working on the lead article for this edition of the journal for many years. You'll notice that some of the interviews he conducted as part of his research are dated 1986, a full 30 years ago. The result is a thorough and fascinating analysis of how Janice Holt Giles and her writings intersected with the "White Caps," as the Brethren in Christ in Kentucky were known among the locals in the 1940s and 1950s. Not only does the article analyze that intersection of fiction and real life, but it also offers insights into the Brethren in Christ Church in a certain time and place, when the church was more separate from surrounding culture and yet having an impact on local communities.

Mike describes in detail how Brethren in Christ individuals, doctrines, and practices are featured in Giles' novels and other writings and evaluates the lasting impact of her writing. The lengthy article is in three parts: 1) the background and context for Giles' writing about the Brethren in Christ in Kentucky; 2) what and how Giles writes about the Brethren in Christ; and 3) the influence of her books, especially the novel that is most explicitly about the Brethren in Christ, on the church, and her literary standing. Mike closes the article with this intriguing comment: "The Brethren in Christ should at least know what Janice Holt Giles says about them." He has done a noble job of telling us!

Many people familiar with Brethren in Christ Missions know the dramatic story of Myron Taylor and how his missionary service in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) was cut short when he was mauled by a lion and later died. In the second major article in this edition, the first part of a history of Sikalongo Mission in Zambia, Dwight Thomas fills in

[1] Harriet Bicksler, "Some Thoughts on the Potential for Brethren in Christ Fiction," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 13, no. 1 (April 1986), 92-100.

the details of the years leading up to that singular tragic event. Journal readers will recall that the April 2016 edition included an article by Jan Engle Lewis that featured Myron Taylor's daughter Anna's memories of her childhood in Africa. You'll note that several photographs from that article are reprinted with this new article.

Dwight and his wife Carol began working under the Zambia church in 2001, mostly at Sikalongo Bible Institute. They've spent three months each year at Sikalongo Mission since 2001, and Dwight did a one-year sabbatical there. Throughout those years, Dwight has done extensive historical research related to the Zambian Brethren in Christ Church, including the history of Sikalongo Mission Station. He has also been researching the biographies of Zambian workers who helped to build the church. In 2014, the bishop asked Dwight and Carol to help the church launch a Christian university in Zambia's Southern Province. In preparation for the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of Sikalongo Mission, celebrated at the General Conference of Zambian Brethren in Christ Church in August 2016, Dwight worked with church leaders to prepare a history of the mission. This first part of the history covers the period from initial planning in 1910 to open a new mission to the death of Walter Taylor in 1931. The second and third parts of the history will be published in subsequent editions of the journal.

We conclude with several book reviews, covering such diverse topics as Amish singing and adolescents, John Wesley, American evangelicalism, and higher education. While none of the books being reviewed is specifically about the Brethren in Christ Church, all the topics are related in some way to our history, theology, and current concerns.

Harriet Sider Bicksler, editor

Corrections:

In the April edition, in Jan Engle Lewis' article, "Through the Eyes of a Child," one of Harvey and Emma Frey's daughters is incorrectly named Ruth in photo captions on pages 6, 7. and 8. The correct name is Lois. In the photo on page 7, their son is incorrectly named Lester. The correct name is Ernest.

Also in the April 2016 edition, Hank Johnson, new Historical Society board member and author of one of the essays on "Why I Serve at the Denominational Level," was mistakenly listed in several places as Hank Williams.

I apologize for the errors.

Janice Holt Giles and the "White Caps" of Kentucky: A Novelist Portrays the Brethren in Christ

By Michael R. Brown*

Janice Holt Giles (1905-1979) has more to say about the Brethren in Christ than any other novelist or popular writer; in fact, she stands alone. Her 25 books, written from 1950 to 1975, sold four million copies in her lifetime, and some remain in print and have recently attracted renewed interest. Primarily noted for her historical fiction about the Western frontier, she is also noted for novels and memoirs set in her adopted state of Kentucky. Of these, four describe or characterize the Brethren in Christ at varying length and another three mention or make allusions to them. One novel, *Tara's Healing*, virtually glorifies the Brethren in Christ throughout. (See Appendix for editions and synopses of these seven books and for summaries of their Brethren in Christ content.)

This article presents Giles's portrayal of the Brethren in Christ in detail, including all references to their doctrine and practice in all the books where they appear. It notes the general tone and accuracy of her observations, and it also discusses the personal connections Giles had with the Brethren in Christ Church and members and the Kentucky mission staff. "White Caps," the local nickname derived from the women's head coverings, is used interchangeably with the denomination's proper name when referring to the group in Kentucky.

The article also surveys all the printed statements *about* the Brethren in Christ generated in response to Giles's writings, plus a smattering of some reactions by the Brethren in Christ themselves. Finally, it attempts an assessment of the influence Giles has had on public perception of the denomination, and along the way, it presents a bit of literary criticism and some indication of her place in American literature.

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*Mike Brown served as a librarian at Messiah College from 1973-2006. He and his wife now live in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, where they attend Gehman Mennonite Church.

Part 1. Background and Context

Before looking at the texts, it will be helpful to consider the milieu: Adair County and its religion in the late 1940s, what the Brethren in Christ and Giles were doing there, Giles's personal religion, her Brethren in Christ connections, and the context for her writing the books with Brethren in Christ content.

Northern Adair County, Kentucky, ca. 1950

The setting for all Giles's books which include the Brethren in Christ is the northern end of Adair County, situated in south central Kentucky. This is the knobby ridge country in the western foothills of the Cumberland Plateau, 150 miles west of the Appalachian Mountains proper but nevertheless part of them. Bisected by the upper Green River, the terrain largely consists of steep hills and hollows which, from its first settlement around 1800, conspired to turn its Anglo/Scotch-Irish people into a cultural enclave sticking to the old customs and ways of living.

When Giles began to write, the isolated area was just beginning to make the transition from its frontier heritage to assimilation with post-World War II America. Families were raised on small farms, the one cash crop being tobacco, restricted often to a one-acre allotment generating only $700 to $1,000 (*40 Acres and No Mule,* 72). Hunting and fishing and some sawmilling helped along. One gravel road—the others dusty dirt or impassable mud—connected the area to the nearest town, Columbia, twenty miles south. Only one household in thirty possessed a car or truck; houses lacked plumbing; electric power had just arrived in 1949; telephones did not come until 1961.

While not the mountaineers of eastern Kentucky, the ridge people nevertheless possessed the traits, mores, and norms of Southern Appalachia. Insular and suspicious of outsiders and their foolish ways, they clung to the old ways and maintained strong family and clan ties. Education was usually limited to the one-room schools; few children went beyond eighth grade, and the illiteracy rate was high. All this began to change as men went off to the war and then returned with a wider knowledge of the world, and as others and their families migrated to northern industrial cities.[1]

[1] Elam and Helen Dohner, interview with the author, Grantham, PA, May 23, 1986. Hereafter cited without place; all cited interviews are with the author.

A deeply felt, home-grown sort of religion had long played a dominant part in ridge culture. Typical of the Appalachian region, the settlers were largely nonconformist sectarians. They were influenced by ideas that developed in their long isolation from established religion and were then strongly swayed by the "Bible only," anti-denominational convictions that grew out of the great Kentucky Revival (1799-1805) and the Restoration Movement.[2]

By mid-twentieth century, the prevailing religious mode was fundamentalist, emotional, and revivalist, but not necessarily charismatic. Core beliefs included personal salvation through a mystical conversion experience, baptism by immersion, and the Bible as the inerrant and literal directive for all personal action. Denominations were shunned, and yet the ridge area north of Columbia was dotted with thirty-seven diverse churches and chapels,[3] all small and as independent as possible. Sheltered therein as well as in schoolhouses were various Baptist groups, Methodists, the Church of God, the Church of Christ, two sorts of the Christian Church, Holy Rollers, United Brethren, and (formerly) a black congregation.[4]

The Brethren in Christ in Kentucky

As will be discussed more fully in connection with Giles's statements about their history, the Brethren in Christ more or less stumbled into Kentucky by divine accident. A Brethren in Christ man from Ohio happened to visit Adair County in 1918 and judged it spiritually needy. Tent meetings were held the next summer, and then Sunday schools and church services in schoolhouses. The first mission station was established

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[2] For the fascinating history of the Kentucky Revival and its influence, see John B. Boles, *The Great Revival, 1787-1805: The Origins of the Southern Evangelical Mind* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), reprinted as *The Great Revival: Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (1996). For an overview of churches ca. 1950, see Earl D. C. Brewer, "Religion and the Churches," in *The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey*, ed. Thomas R. Ford (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), 201-218.

[3] Counted on the U.S. Geological Survey 7.5-minute quadrangle topographic maps (based on 1951 photographs) for Cane Valley (1953), Knifley (1954), Dunnville (1953), Columbia (1954), and Montpelier (1953).

[4] In a jointly written book, *Around Our House* (pp. 135-136), Henry reports that a Negro meeting house once stood near his childhood home but that most of the "colored folks" moved across the river in the 1930s.

in Garlin in 1923 and the work expanded in the following twenty-five years to cover all the northern part of the county, an area of roughly 13 by 24 miles.[5]

In 1949 and 1950, the nine members of the mission staff were active in eleven communities, providing nine weekly preaching services, nine Sunday schools, eight vacation Bible schools, nine revival meetings, weekly prayer meetings, numerous funerals[6] and weddings, many medical treatments, and in the course of a year, some 1,500 home visits. Attendances were consistently large (400 in the Sunday schools in 1949-1950; 366 in the Bible schools) and many people came to faith (77 professions in the Bible schools; 34 conversions in the revivals).[7] But despite all this dedicated outreach, the congregations did not swell proportionally; total church membership remained very small, mostly in the 75-85 range, including mission staff.[8]

In a number of ways, the Brethren in Christ fit in well with the southern Appalachian religious culture: comfortable with small congregations, non-liturgical, fervent in preaching and worship, given to revivals and tent meetings. Especially compatible was their adherence to the Bible as supreme authority for faith and life, a sober concern for personal holiness, and an emphasis on heartfelt conversion and salvation. Good working relations were established with the American Sunday School Union, some Methodists, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

But, as shall be examined as we look at Giles's text, the Brethren in Christ also carried along a few things that fit the culture badly: peculiarities in dress, opposition to tobacco, and the doctrine of nonresistance. Even without these particular obstacles, fitting in would have been difficult on two other (unavoidable) counts. First, they constituted—and had

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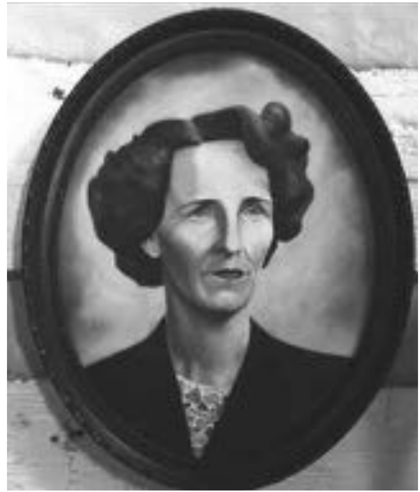
[5] "Kentucky Field," *Handbook of Missions: Foreign and Home* (Brethren in Christ Church, 1947), 117. Hereafter referred to as *Handbook of Missions*.

[6] Numerous funerals performed for people in the community are reported in the *Evangelical Visitor* and *Handbook of Missions*, especially in the 1930s (e.g., *Handbook*, 1930, 22; 1937, 78). Esther Ebersole pointed out the frequency of funeral services and weddings in the 1950s (interview, Mechanicsburg, PA, April 28, 1986). All Ebersole interviews were conducted at Messiah Village; hereafter cited without place.

[7] Home Mission Reports and Tabulated Report of the General Sunday School Board, *Handbook of Missions,* 1950. Similar reports can be found in all the *Handbooks* from the 1930s to early 1950s.

[8] Church Statistical Reports, *General Conference Minutes*. A newspaper article reports a total membership of 69 for eight of the congregations (Thomas V. Miller, "The White Caps: Religion and Life," *Louisville Courier-Journal Magazine,* June 4, 1950, 8).

the forbidden attributes of—a denomination. Second, they were new, from the outside, and their peculiar nonconforming practices made the newness all the worse. Membership therefore remained low at the time Giles wrote of them.



This photograph of Janice Holt Giles was displayed in conjunction with her induction into the Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame in 2014.

Even so, the Brethren in Christ were respected by many for their integrity and their service to the community. According to a cherished pronouncement by Aaron E. Pyles (1921-2009), an influential businessman and political figure in Adair and Taylor counties: "If it hadn't been for strict regulating, the Brethren in Christ would have owned three counties."[9] Esther Ebersole, a Kentucky mission veteran (1944-55), recalls hearing a similar statement: "If it hadn't been for tobacco and the covering, the Brethren in Christ would have swept the county."[10]

Janice Holt Giles in Kentucky

A native of western Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma, Giles came to make her life and career in Brethren in Christ territory by a romantic and unlikely route. With her 14-year-old daughter, she first moved to Kentucky in 1939 to direct religious education at the First Christian Church of Frankfort, which proved an unhappy place for a divorcée. In September 1941 she became secretary to the dean of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, and it was a bus ride from there that changed her life, for also boarding that bus, in Bowling Green on July 12, 1943, was Henry Giles, a young soldier returning to Texas from his home in Adair County. Over the next 48 hours they hit it off, and over

[9] Pyles was a prominent Baptist businessman from a large, influential Republican family (obituary of Aaron E. Pyles, http://www.columbiamagazine.com/index.php?sid=28865). Quoted by Elam Dohner, interview by author, Adair County, KY, August 1, 1986. All August 1986 interviews were conducted in Adair County; hereafter cited without place.

[10] Esther Ebersole, interviews, August 29, 2014 and May 18, 2015.

the next two years, while Henry slogged it out with the 491st Engineer Combat Battalion in France and Belgium, an epistolary romance grew. They were married on October 11, 1945, the same day Henry arrived back in Louisville after his discharge.

Janice continued her work at the seminary, and Henry got his GED and worked as a machinist at International Harvester until their precipitous move, on May 30, 1949, to a 42-acre farm on Giles Ridge.[11] Selling the farm in December 1951, they moved back to Louisville, and then in March 1953, tried farming again for another two years on a larger place down the road from the first. Finally admitting defeat and disgust, they sold out and moved to town (Columbia and Campbellsville), but loving the country, they moved once again, in May 1957, to the base of Giles Ridge, built their (eventually) comfortable log house at Spout Springs, and lived there until her death in 1979 and his in 1986.

Janice first visited Giles Ridge in July 1944 to meet Henry's family. According to her own accounts and his letters from the front, she was warmly received, and for her part, she took an immediate liking to the countryside and was fascinated by the people. When Janice and Henry moved to the ridge, she desired to make it home and at first mingled with her neighbors, but because of her speech, clothes, city ways, and especially her writing (*40 Acres*, 57), she was considered "quare" and always an outsider. People put up with her questions but were not always pleased. She was "not appreciated by most of the hill people," "just tolerated" by her Kentucky relations and the ridge people; although "Janice knew the neighbors," "she was not great as a local mixer."[12] She maintained friendly relations, but having "very little in common with her neighbors socially or intellectually," few if any were real friends.[13]

Giles was interested in her neighbors as long as they supplied her

[11] The steep, parabola-shaped hill called "Giles Ridge" by the locals is not so named on official maps. The western side follows the Caldwell Ridge Road until it arcs over to the Ray Williams Road on Grace Ridge, so identified by the 1954 USGS Knifley Quadrangle map. In her first three novels, Giles dubs it "Piney Ridge" or simply "the ridge."

[12] Quotes, in respective order: Ebersole, interview, April 28, 1986; Elam and Helen Dohner, interview, May 23, 1986; Edgar Giles, interview with the author, August 1, 1986; Elam Dohner to author, June 30, 1986, Dohner Family Papers, Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives, Grantham, PA (hereafter cited as Dohner Family Papers).

[13] Dianne Watkins Stuart, *Janice Holt Giles: A Writer's Life* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 115-116 (hereafter cited as Stuart).

with writing material; after that, not so much, and after she began writing seriously, she had to sequester herself. "Quare" and unfriendly indeed! In the first five years, when writing her ridge books, she was critical and outspoken of the poverty, illiteracy, and unprogressive ways of the ridge. This is reflected especially in *Miss Willie* (1951) and *40 Acres and No Mule* (1952). "Over long slow years," she grew in understanding of and love for the hill country, and in some ways became Appalachian herself, although, she acknowledges, she never became fully integrated and the Southwest remained her spiritual home (*40 Acres*, 1-2).

Giles's religion

When considering what Giles says about the Brethren in Christ, we will be better able to judge her understanding and fairness if we know something about her religious views at the time of writing. She was reticent about her personal beliefs and spirituality, but we can get some idea of their tenor from her religious training and the totality of her writings.

Giles was grounded in evangelical orthodoxy and the basic doctrines of sin, repentance, forgiveness, salvation, and Christian living. She knew the Bible well enough to make many quotes and allusions, and she knew the words, both the hopeful and the hard-hitting, of many gospel songs. She was baptized in and primarily shaped by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—the faith of her parents and one staunch Campbellite grandmother.[14] Important to her adult spiritual formation, at age 28, was the warmhearted training she received at Pulaski Heights Christian Church (Little Rock) under the leading of Joseph Boone Hunter, later prominent in struggles against school segregation and McCarthyism.[15]

Giles began teaching Sunday school, and that led to a six-year period of work in religious education (1934-1939)—first as secretary and religious education director at Pulaski Heights, then director of children's work for

[14] Giles writes a bit about her religious background in The Kinta Years (37-38).

[15] Joseph Boone Hunter (1886-1987), the founding pastor of Pulaski Heights (1927-1940) and a distinguished churchman, is remembered especially for his service to interned Japanese Americans during World War II, his work with Daisy Bates and the Little Rock Nine in the battle for school desegregation, and his run-in with the press and the FBI during the McCarthy era ("Joseph Boone Hunter (1886-1987)," Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture, www. encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2723&media=print).

the Arkansas-Louisiana Board of Missions, and finally, that unwelcoming year in Frankfort. In all these positions, her work included teaching, training teachers, and writing curriculum materials and articles.[16] She apparently enjoyed most of this church-related employment, and in *Around Our House* (57) she particularly remembers training teachers as "fascinating and interesting work." It was most likely during the year after Frankfort that she studied to convert to Roman Catholicism but then gave it up as too legalistic.[17]

In September 1941, Giles became secretary/assistant to the dean of the Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, Lewis J. Sherrill (1892-1957), a leading scholar in Christian education and the role of psychology in theological discourse.[18] During the second year of the seven and a half she worked with him, Dr. Sherrill lost his vision to macular dystrophy, and she "became his reading eyes and, under his tutelage, his most trusted researcher" (*Around Our House*, 40). Working closely with him on his last four books, she later said, was like doing graduate research and was for her a time of "great mental and spiritual nourishment."[19] During these years, she took special Saturday courses at the College of the Bible in Lexington,[20] and most likely during this same period, became a Presbyterian (*Around Our House*, 32).

In practice, Giles was not much given to piety or outward religious display, but she sometimes reveals, in conventional ways, a strong personal faith in God. In her autobiographical writings she sometimes refers to God and the Lord (but not to Jesus or Christ), prays in times of crisis (but not for every need), and expresses thanks for God's gifts of health, family, and writing. Attendance at special services of the local black church is reported,[21] and in the 1950s, at least, she was known to attend the

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[16] Stuart, 26-27.

[17] Stuart, 123, quoting a letter to Oliver Swan, summer 1957.

[18] Susan Schriver and C. Ellis Nelson, "Lewis Joseph Sherrill," Talbot School of Theology: Christian Educators, www2. talbot.edu/ce20/educators/view.cfm?n=lewis_sherill.

[19] Stuart, 34-35.

[20] A Christian Church college, now Lexington Theological Seminary; James Goble, "A Lamp Burns Late on Giles Ridge," *Courier-Journal Magazine*, June 18, 1950, 17.

[21] Giles writes about the "colored folks' sacrificial [Christmas] feast" (Shady Grove, 163-164) and the August revival meeting held by "the colored people of our community" (*Little Better than Plumb*, 246). *In Around Our House*, Henry also writes about the Christmas service (159-161) and the August meetings (135-136).

[22] Elam Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.

Columbia Presbyterian Church (USA) "quite a little."[22] Regarding manner of worship, her novels make very clear her strong aversion to emotional spectacle. By ridge and Brethren in Christ standards, she followed worldly ways, but nothing worse than smoking or drinking.

Overriding all of this, and enunciated in all her works where religion is touched upon, are certain strong themes, and beliefs often surface which reflect the core of her religious outlook and philosophy of living. Among these are God as loving rather than condemning, the basic goodness of life and humanity, the necessity of self-reliance, and the importance of keeping faith with the land, family, and tradition. Above all, and reiterated most often, is her adamant conviction that every individual has the right to his or her own belief system and the responsibility of living up to it. As Becky in *Miss Willie* says of a young woman's risky conversion to a strange, unacceptable sect: "[E]ver'body is bound to believe accordin' to their lights. . . . Ifen Irma holds with the faith, an' holds hard an' strong, then I'd say it ain't nobody's business but her'n!" (147).

Miss Willie, a solid Presbyterian who speaks for Giles, finds these words wise and true. In several other novels, Giles puts similar words into the mouths of other positive and sensible characters who also speak for her.[23] As we shall see, this principle finds its way even into the novel lauding the Brethren in Christ, and, long after, it sways her final assessment of them.

Connections with the Brethren in Christ

Judging by private letters and her early published works, Giles's personal connections with the Brethren in Christ were limited but entirely positive on her part. In her first year on the ridge, she came often to church services (without Henry), in large part, apparently, to gather material for her writing.[24] When she moved on from books about the

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[23] Other novels in which Giles expresses her religious view through various characters: *Plum Thicket* (192), about religion and madness; *The Believers* (148, 167), about the Shakers; *Johnny Osage* (72), native American religion; *The Great Adventure* (122, 143), rough frontier religion; *Act of Contrition* (97-98), Roman Catholicism and divorce; *Six-Horse Hitch* (424), frontier religion; *Run Me a River* (89, 227, 258), broad-minded Christianity.

[24] Elam and Helen Dohner, interview, May 23, 1986; Elam Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986. Edgar and Annie Giles recalled that Janice came to church only once or twice, at Fairview and Knifley (interviews, August 1, 1986). Esther Ebersole could not recall that she ever came at all (interview with the author July 28, 1986).

ridge, her interest in the Brethren in Christ dropped off and church attendance with it. After the love feast (see below), Helen Dohner noted, "We never could get her to another one of our services."[25] Nevertheless, when the cornerstone of Knifley Chapel was laid in 1957, Giles attended the ceremony and gave a large check to the building fund.[26]

Giles's most ready source of knowledge about the Brethren in Christ was her husband, Henry (1916-1986). Born and bred on the ridge, he served as her primary source for all the ridge lore in the six non-historical books set there or nearby. During her first year on the ridge, she "was so eager to learn that she followed him everywhere he went," absorbing everything about the ridge that he let fall from his mouth (*Around Our House*, 35). Wade Hall, Giles's chief proponent, says of Henry's influence, "He provided her with literary material, subjects, themes and history; and he shared with her his state, his region, his community, his people, his folklife and his language."[27]

Henry was raised in the traditional Christian way of the hill country. The family church, a mile up the road from their home, was the Caldwell Chapel Church, which accommodated the travelling preachers of various evangelical faiths. Among these was the Church of God (Anderson), to which Henry's family laid claim. As a very young man, Henry served as song leader for several years at the home church and sometimes at others,[28] and known for his fervency, he was once thought a likely minister.[29]

According to Edgar Giles (see below), Henry attended a Brethren in Christ church before joining the Army, led singing and prayer meetings, and knew the doctrines and practices.[30] During a short visit to his home in 1986 by Edgar, Elam Dohner (see next paragraph), and myself,

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[25] Helen Dohner, penciled notes, ca. 1955, Dohner Family Papers; interview, Mechanicsburg, PA, April 12, 1994 (hereafter cited without place).

[26] Allyne Friesen Isaac, "P. B. and Edna Friesen: Reminiscences of a Family," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 17, no. 1 (April 1994), 38.

[27] Wade Hall, "Some Remarks in Defense of Henry Giles," in *Celebrating Janice: Proceedings of The Giles Symposium, held at Campbellsville University, Campbellsville, Kentucky, May 17-18, 1991,* ed. Clara L. Metzmeier for the Janice Holt Giles and Henry Giles Society (Nicholasville, KY: Wind Publications, 2005), 85. Hall, formerly chair of humanities at Bellarmine University, has written and edited several books about Kentucky and Appalachian literature.

[28] Henry Giles, Hello, *Janice: The Wartime Letters of Henry Giles*, ed. Dianne Watkins (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 19.

[29] Stuart, 40.

Henry vaguely acknowledged such involvements along with Edgar, and he specifically recalled participating in singing school.[31] Dohner, in a separate interview the same day, stated that Henry and Edgar would pray by the hour in the woods, a story presumably told him by Edgar.[32] Helen Dohner stated flatly that Henry was converted under Brethren in Christ preaching but later fell away.[33] Judging by his letters (Hello, Janice), his journal (The G.I. Journal of Sergeant Giles), and the Gileses' memoirs, Henry as an adult was no more religious than the average G.I. or typical ridge man. In any case, by the time Janice met him, Henry had shed all Brethren in Christ proclivities.

While Henry was Janice's handiest source of Brethren in Christ information, her foremost and most reliable source was the Dohners, Helen M. (1906-1998) and especially Elam O. (1910-1991), the new mission superintendent of the Kentucky field. They arrived on August 1, 1949, just two months after Giles moved to the ridge, and although they lived seven miles across the river at Ella, they became closer friends to her than did any of her neighbors.

About five weeks after the Dohners arrived, Giles asked if she and Henry could call on them at the Fairview parsonage. It was a fortuitous meeting, occurring just before *The Enduring Hills* went to press, just as she finished *Miss Willie*, and several months before she began *Tara's Healing*, the book in which the Brethren in Christ are featured most prominently. According to Elam and Helen, Giles quickly realized then that the Brethren in Christ could not be lumped with native "hillbilly" religion. When Elam showed her one of his new orders of service for the Millerfields church, Giles was impressed with the quality of the printing and the selection of hymns. As vividly remembered by the Dohners thirty-five years later, Giles put her face in her hands and said, "Oh, you will hate me when you read my books!"[34] Her perception of this small group suddenly escaped the stereotype of hill religion, and the literary fate of the

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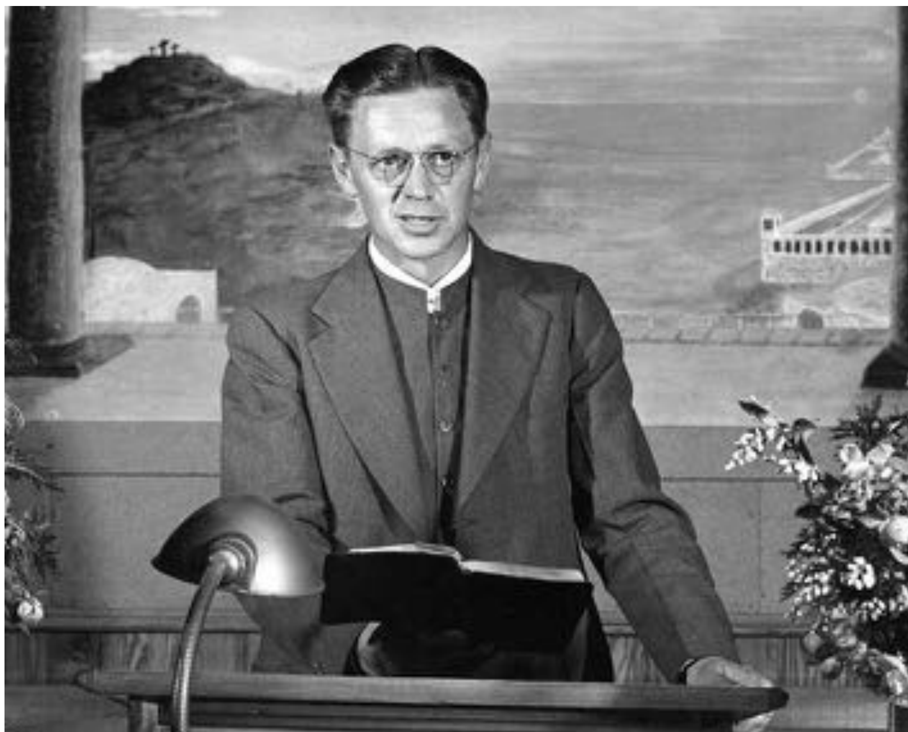
[30] Elam Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.

[31] Henry Giles, conversation, Spout Springs, Adair County, KY, August 1, 1986.

[32] Elam Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986. Related or not, Henry's neighbor "Joe Spires said that he and others often heard him praying aloud while he was out in the woods" (Stuart, 40).

[33] Helen Dohner, interview, April 12, 1994.

[34] Elam and Helen Dohner, interview, May 23, 1986; repeated in essence by Elam on August 1, 1986 and by Helen on April 12, 1994.



Elam Dohner, who served as mission superintendent of the Brethren in Christ work in Kentucky. Copyright © The Louisville Courier-Journal; *used with permission.*

Brethren in Christ bumped up a notch.

The warm and lasting friendship that followed this first visit was in large part driven by commonality in age and background, for as different as they were, both parties were outsiders from off the ridge and far better educated than any of their neighbors. The Dohners were Beulah College grads, and Giles had taken several college courses,[35] was well read, and had all that research experience for Dr. Sherrill at the seminary. With no one else like them to talk to, "she was always glad to see us," said the Dohners; they were often at the Gileses' home and had open access to

[35] In addition to classes at the College of the Bible, Giles also took courses at Little Rock Junior College, Transylvania College, and the University of Arkansas, some by extension and correspondence ("A Collection of Janice Holt Giles Biographies," *Bulletin of the Kentucky Association of School Librarians* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1965), 9, 13, 20, 22.

[36] Elam and Helen Dohner, interview, May 23, 1986.

them.[36] Janice had long talks with Elam, says Esther Ebersole, and Annie Giles (see below) also recalled Janice having talks with Brother Dohner about Brethren in Christ things.[37] When Janice began to work on *Tara's Healing*, it was the Dohners who supplied her with the *Constitution-Doctrine, By-Laws and Rituals*[38] and other church literature.

Something of the warmth of the friendship can be seen in Giles's letters to the Dohners around the time of a two-month breakup of her marriage in the fall of 1951 (see below). Writing from her daughter's home in Santa Fe, New Mexico, she thanks the Dohners for their letter and prayers and expresses confidence that the Lord will soon bring Henry and herself together again. As part of the reconciliation, Henry conceded to sell the 42-acre farm, and Elam lent a hand by serving as clerk at the public sale on December 21.[39] Reunited with Henry in Louisville, she writes gratefully of answers to her prayers "and those of other good friends like you, who have had us on their hearts."[40]

Giles's third major connection to the Brethren in Christ was Edgar Giles (1914-1988) and his wife, Anna Roberts Giles (1910-2004). Edgar was licensed as a minister in 1934 by the Home Mission Board, appointed to the Spout Springs mission pastorate in August 1944, and finally ordained on October 7, 1945, by bishop Wilber Snider, chairman of the Home Mission Board. During the years Janice was writing her early novels, Edgar variously pastored the Spout Springs, Knifley, Fairfield, and Millerfields churches. Until his death, he then continued to serve as pastor and evangelist among the Adair churches, as well as new churches in Tennessee and Virginia.

If Elam was her main *source* for doctrine of the Brethren in Christ, Edgar was arguably her main *model* for how they lived out their faith (see below.) A first cousin of Henry's, two years older and apparently a favorite,

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[37] Ebersole, interviews, April 28, 1986 and March 28, 2014; Anna Giles, interview, August 1, 1986.

[38] Specifically, this was the 1941 final adoption edition of the 1937 *Constitution-Doctrine, By-Laws and Rituals of the Brethren in Christ Church* (Nappanee, IN: E. V. Publishing House), "Including amendments up to General Conference of 1946" (hereafter cited as *Constitution-Doctrine*).

[39] Sale bill for public sale of 42-acre farm and personal and farm property, December 21, 1951.

[40] Letters cited here are dated December 28, 1951, and February 8, 1952, respectively. These and five other typed letters, 1952-1967 (Dohner Family Papers) are in most cases addressed "Dear Friends." Until 1956 they are signed "Sincerely, Janice H. Giles"; thereafter, "Affectionately [or Cordially], Janice."

Edgar was often close at hand for Janice to observe. She found him an admirable character. As a bi-vocational minister, he worked at various trades around the ridge, and in late 1949 Janice and Henry had him wire their house. "He did a nice job" for a third of what a city electrician would have charged, writes Janice, "and it was a privilege to have him in our home" (*40 Acres*, 226). He also served as the auctioneer when they sold the 42-acre farm.[41] Later, when both Giles couples were living at Spout Springs, there was neighborly visiting. Annie Giles claimed that Janice was closer to her than to any other Brethren in Christ woman, Annie being sympathetic to her while other hill people were not.[42]

Janice and Henry have much to say about Edgar in *A Little Better than Plumb* (1963), their book about building their log house at Spout Springs in 1957-58. Edgar had recently built his own house a quarter mile just across the fields (*Around Our House*, 204), and he was pulled into their project. He dismantled and hauled sets of logs from abandoned structures and helped build the rock chimney, construct the walls, and plumb the web of pipes, for all of which work he is gratefully credited. He is referred to in the book a total of thirty-three times (all but twice by name), is the subject of several wry anecdotes (106, 108-9, 129-30), and is twice quoted directly. In these pages Edgar is never identified as a White Cap, but it is clear that both Henry and Janice were fond of this capable, likable Brethren in Christ fellow.[43] Edgar is also named (once) in *Around Our House*, but again without connecting him to the Brethren in Christ.

Aside from Edgar, the Dohners, and Henry, Janice appears to have had no other substantial sources for her knowledge about the Brethren in Christ, although she would have observed closely the nurses at the clinic and every other White Cap she encountered. According to Annie Giles, she had no Brethren in Christ neighbors until moving to Spout Springs, six years after writing the books in which White Caps appear. Once, in October 1950, the Dohners took retired California bishop J. Harry Wagaman to meet the Gileses.[44] And once that same year, Esther Ebersole and Dortha Dohner (visiting her brother) were invited to the Giles home

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[41] Sale bill cited above.

[42] Anna Giles, interview, August 1, 1986.

[43] Confirmed by Elam and Helen Dohner, interview, May 23, 1986.

[44] Helen Dohner, interview, May 23, 1986; based on her diary.

[45] Ebersole, interview, April 28, 1986.

for a game of Scrabble. Esther and Henry won.[45]

Writing the books with Brethren in Christ content

There remains one more stratum of background to consider before examining what Giles actually wrote about the Brethren in Christ: the context of her life and writing career at the time she did the writing. Such, of course, affected the content and tone and the quality of her work.

Giles began her writing career at the age of 42, partly out of a desire to write, but mostly out of financial necessity. Before that, when working in religious education, she had written many lessons, programs, worship services, articles, dramatizations, and poetry for Sunday schools and adult and youth church magazines. She had also submitted for publication a short book (1945) about her "darling daughter," whom she raised as a single parent, first virtually and then actually,[46] and she had written, on commission, a short congregational history (1948).[47]

The turning point toward committed writing came fourteen months after marrying Henry and realizing that, for his personal survival, they would eventually have to leave Louisville and move to the ridge. There she would need a source of income as well as something stimulating to replace city life and professional work (*Around Our House*, 93-94). So when, in December 1947, Westminster Press announced an award of $8,000 for original fiction,[48] Janice and Henry got serious about writing a novel about the ridge. Together they worked out a plot, but it was Janice who plugged away at it for ninety nights and then, having lost the contest, worked the next two years with the fiction editor, Olga Edmond, to make it publishable.[49]

Once done with her apprenticeship and until she turned to her first historical novel, Giles wrote at breakneck speed. In less than three

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[46] The short book about Libby, "My Darling Daughter," was revised several times over the years and finally laid to rest in 1973 (Stuart, 232).

[47] Giles researched and wrote *The Glorious Heritage of the Warren Memorial Presbyterian Church* (30 pp.) for the church's centennial while working at the Louisville seminary.

[48] Giles saw the announcement in a mailing to the seminary (*Hello, Janice*, 226), but contrary to the impression she gives in *Writer's Digest*, it was actually the second time Westminster was running its contest. No winner had been selected the previous year so the original prize was more than doubled ("Books-Authors," *New York Times*, December 14, 1946).

[49] Giles recounts her struggle with this first book in several places and permutations: "Hill Writer," *Writer's Digest*, February 1951, 18-21; *40 Acres and No Mule,* 139-41; "Autobiography," Register of the Kentucky Historical Society 57, no. 1 (April 1959), 147-148; more truthfully in a letter to Oliver Swan, November 28, 1951 (Stuart, 78); also in her foreword to the second edition of *The Enduring Hills* (1971), 4-5. See also Stuart, 62, regarding Giles's grateful credit to her editor.

years—between September 1948 and June 1951—she wrote four novels, a memoir, four short stories, and three magazine pieces.[50] *Miss Willie* was two-thirds done when Giles moved to the ridge and it was completed there by the end of November 1949. With Olga Edmond, she began planning *Tara's Healing* in January 1950[51] and finished the first version on October 3. Immediately after, in three months, she breezily wrote *40 Acres and No Mule*, the ridge memoir, and right after that she churned out *Hill Man*, a steamy tale published under a pseudonym.[52]

But before turning to *Tara's Healing*, between September and December 1949, Giles drafted yet another novel, *Harbin's Ridge*. This novel is of interest to us partly because of its Brethren in Christ content (two paragraphs, discussed later), but more because of its curious history of publication. For in the process Giles more or less established her career as a capable writer and at the same time deprived herself, and perhaps the Brethren in Christ, of some excellent press.

The tantalizing history begins in August 1949 with a moonshine story she heard from a visiting deputy sheriff. Giles adapted the tale into "The Sheriff Went to Cincinnati" and entered it in the annual short story contest sponsored by *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*—but under Henry's name. Her story won first place and was printed in the March 1951 issue,[53] and the magazine's publisher asked Henry to try a full-length novel. Adapting another ridge tale and persisting with Henry's name, Janice then wrote Harbin's Ridge. Little, Brown turned it down, but Paul R. Reynolds, Inc., the old and respected literary agency,[54] to which Janice was just then

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[50] Dates of writing the short works are surmised from the magazine publication dates (*Peoples Choice*, Fall 1950; "Hill Writer;" Swan to Giles, October 13, 1949; November 9, 1950; February 16, 1951 and Giles to Swan, December 9, 1950, box 18, folder 1, Giles, Janice Holt, 1905-1979, MSS 39, Manuscripts & Folklife Archives, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green [hereafter cited as Giles MSS 39, WKU]).

[51] Stuart, 62.

[52] Originally submitted under Henry's name, *Hill Man* was finally published in 1954 as a Pyramid Books paperback under the name John Garth. (Stuart, 70-72, 88).

[53] Ellery Queen *Mystery Magazine*, March 1951, 63-78.

[54] Originally named Paul R. Reynolds and Son, the Boston agency was the oldest in the business, boasting such clients as George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Stephen Crane, and Willa Cather (*Around Our House*, 119). Among the authors Swan represented were Conrad Richter, Richard Wright, Morris West, Alex Hailey, and the estate of Henry James (Edwin McDowell, obituary of Oliver Swan, *New York Times*, February 24, 1988, www.nytimes.com/1988/02/24/obituaries/oliver-swan-83-literary-agent-with-eye-for-worthy-unknowns.html).

applying, was much impressed with "Henry's" work and Janice's potential. Both Gileses were accepted as clients and Janice thus found competent hands for all her future writing until the firm closed in 1974. Giles was grateful and proud to be so represented and soon developed a trusting friendship with Reynolds's partner, Oliver Swan (1904-1988).

What happened next could have greatly grown her reputation and reading public. Swan submitted *Harbin's Ridge* to Houghton Mifflin, and their noted editor, Paul Brooks (1909-1998),[55] enthusiastically received it. *Glamour* magazine then selected Henry as one of twelve outstanding first novelists and, in the September 1951 issue, with vignette and photograph, spread him alongside Thomas Styron and J. D. Salinger![56] Had she used her own name instead, who knows what renown she might have received? What she did gain was a major publisher for the rest of her career and a happy working relationship with Paul Brooks. As for the Brethren in Christ, who knows what greater attention might have been given to the real author's next book, *Tara's Healing* (published only nine weeks later), and what greater notice might have come to the denomination?

Neither her agent nor her readers could have suspected it, but Giles produced this proliferation of books amidst crushing personal circumstances. These she purposely omitted or reconfigured in the accounts she wrote for publisher notes, for *Writer's Digest*, and most notably, in *40 Acres and No Mule*. But often she wrote in great physical discomfort, and in the beginning of her career, in great emotional distress as well.

For most of her adult life, Giles was plagued with a dread of debt and financial insecurity, and this gave her bad nerves, ulcers, throat constrictions, and other serious physical problems. Her worries came with her first marriage, at age 18, to a failing and incompatible alcoholic and then, after their separation, as a divorced woman raising a teenage daughter. Wedding a soldier eleven years younger, a ridgerunner from

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[55] Paul Brooks worked at Houghton Mifflin for forty years, served as editor-in-chief of the general book department for twenty-five, and dealt with such luminaries as Sir Winston Churchill, James Agee, Archibald MacLeish, and Rachel Carson (from *Boston Globe* obituary, December 9, 1989, www.highbeam.com/doc1P2-8517882.html).

[56] "Young Authors: Twelve Whose First Novels Make Their Appearance This Fall," *Glamour*, September 1951, 202-205; preceded by Erskine Caldwell, "A Message to Young Authors," 201, 263-265.

This photo of Janice Holt Giles appeared on the inside back dust jacket of the original edition of Tara's Healing.

a hardscrabble farm, known only by way of a bus ride and wartime love letters, was not the surest path to financial security. Early on she saw that her income would always be crucial to their economic survival. But then, contrary to her fiscal principles and intuitions, they wiped out her savings to buy a run-down 42-acre ridge farm for an eventual move sometime in the distant future. Before a month had passed, however, when Henry's plant finally closed after several strikes and when Janice developed ulcers, Henry summarily moved them to the ridge, with no prospect of income except a one-acre tobacco allotment and her nascent writing.

Thus at the time of writing *Tara's Healing,* Giles's financial situation was dire and her living situation unpleasant and exhausting. From her comfortable Louisville apartment, they moved into a small shack of a house with no electricity, no indoor plumbing, and, at first, not even a well or an outhouse (*40 Acres*, 76-82). The ungraveled dirt road sometimes left them isolated, and in any case, Janice did not drive.[57]

Far worse, Janice found herself painfully caught in another troubled marriage. In a long candid letter to Ollie Swan, her agent, she explained her unhappy situation:

> For Henry [quickly] became a typical 'ridge' man . . . . At its best it isn't too nice. At its worst it is extremely difficult. I think I could have taken his lack of niceness, his not shaving or bathing often, his reversion to a kind of uncouthness, but when it became evident that he was sinking into [an appalling] inertia . . . . I was

[57] For reasons unstated, Giles stopped driving around 1937 and did not resume until May 1957 (*Little Better than Plumb*, 223).

[58] Giles to Oliver Swan, November 28, 1951; quoted at length in Stuart, 76-79.

almost desperate.[58]

When the royalties for *The Enduring Hills* started coming, he spent all his time hunting and fishing and soon went through all the $10,000, for activities she felt were better left unknown. At best he was inconsiderate; at worst, capable of violence. Once when questioned about a long absence, he hurled the coffee table and a glass bowl across the room (*A Little Better than Plumb*, 5). Janice toiled with garden, canning, and tobacco crop, bearing all her grubbing and worry alone—far removed from family and old friends and not fitting in well with her new neighbors or Henry's kin.

All this stress, worry, and drudgery inevitably caused emotional trauma and physical illnesses. By the time her fifth book was completed, she was hospitalized for two weeks, and after the sixth, she was laid up with "a lump in her throat" that for ten days prevented swallowing. While recuperating at her mother's home in Arkansas, in November 1951, Janice gave up on the marriage and Henry fled with relief back to Kentucky, as he had once done before, two months after their wedding.[59] They were reunited by January, both realizing they needed each other, and the marriage thereafter proved solid and congenial. Nevertheless, Janice continued to provide their financial security and to suffer that lump in her throat and other health problems.

During those first two difficult years on the ridge, Janice told Swan in that same long letter, she worked on her books with nothing but disparagement from Henry. He indeed provided her with a wealth of ridge country lore, but after *The Enduring Hills* lost the $8,000 contest, he washed his hands of the whole writing business. Although on the title page and in public statements, Janice gave him all due and undue credit,

Henry never had anything at all to do with the writing, was never interested in it except for the money, rarely read what I wrote or if he did laughed at it as tripe, and frequently made me feel I was a failure when a royalty check was small.[60]

As time went on and Janice proved herself a successful author, he became much more supportive, but during the writing of *Tara's Healing*

[59] The first separation was a month-long, one-sided walk-out even though relations had been pleasant (Stuart, 76-77).

[60] Same letter to Swan (Stuart, 78).

[61] Occasionally Henry filled in for Janice in her weekly column for the *Campbellsville News-Journal*, 1954-1956. Later he also wrote his own column for the *Adair County News*, 1957-1970, and several chapters for *A Little Better than Plumb* (1963).

he was decidedly not her literary ally.[61]

Despite all her financial, physical, and marital troubles during those early years, exhausted and desperate as she was, writing for Giles was an escape and a pleasure. Excepting the first, all the ridge books, she says, just "rolled out, happily and easily," "with so much joy and so little work," that she felt guilty for taking the money (*Around Our House,* 38). In those early books she poured out both her fascination and distress with the strange things of her new surroundings. *Tara's Healing* came at a low point. Although nowhere in letters or her published writing does she say so, it seems that the White Caps furnished her not only with fresh, colorful material but also with an appealing model for a happier way of living, one that sustained her innate optimistic faith in mankind and gave her hope for her own dismal situation.

Part 2. Brethren in Christ Content

We are now ready to examine what Giles actually writes about the Brethren in Christ. Almost all of this is found in two early novels—*The Enduring Hills* (1950) and *Tara's Healing* (1951)—and in her first memoir, *40 Acres and No Mule* (1952). The Brethren in Christ are also briefly referenced in *Harbin's Ridge* (1951) and in a later memoir, *A Little Better than Plumb* (1963). In addition, allusions to them are made in two later works, which, we shall see, present a far different perspective. We shall proceed topically under the general categories of history and character, practices and exemplars, doctrines and rituals.

History and character

The Brethren in Christ name

"Brethren in Christ" is spelled out seven times in four of Giles's books: first in *The Enduring Hills* (43), four times in *Tara's Healing* (7-8, 41, 219), once each in two autobiographical works, *40 Acres and No Mule* (41-42) and *A Little Better than Plumb* (158). "River Brethren" is also cited as an alternate real name in *The Enduring Hills* (43) and *Harbin's Ridge* (202). Usually, however, Giles sticks to the "White Cap" moniker, which appears seven times in *The Enduring Hills*, twenty-two in *Tara's Healing*, and six in *40 Acres*. Applied to both women and men by the local population, as well as by all Giles's characters, the nickname was common in Kentucky, but not elsewhere, and, back in the day, apparently used and accepted without offence.

Oddly, in the five instances where Giles aims to give the official denominational name, she never gets it quite right: "Church of the Brethren in Christ" rather than "Brethren in Christ Church." As the first form has virtually never been used in print or speech, it is impossible to guess why she used it.

Brethren in Christ origins and early history

Giles relates something of the origins of the Brethren in Christ in four of her first five books and in a magazine article written in the same period. The fullest account appears in *The Enduring Hills*, thrown into the

story primarily for the sake of local color. Hod Pierce, the main character, sitting in a White Cap tent meeting, remembers the story his teacher, Miss Bertha, had told him,

> how, back in 1770 an old Mennonite preacher, one Jacob Engle, had grown desperate under the religious persecution of his people in his native Switzerland, and how he gathered together thirty Mennonite families and by might and main had secured ships to transport them to the new world. Miss Bertha had said one of the ships had not weathered the storms, and had gone down in an angry sea, taking all aboard with it. The remainder of the small group settled in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and, because of their peculiar habit of baptizing in the river Susquehanna, had become known as the River Brethren. In time, Miss Bertha said, they had quarreled among themselves, mostly over small differences in their doctrinal beliefs—such a little thing, for instance, as whether in the washing of the saints' feet the one who washed should dry or whether another should stand by with the napkin and have the privilege. They had split up into little bands, and some of them had migrated southward, into Ohio and Indiana and Kentucky. Miss Bertha said their real name was Brethren in Christ, or "River Brethren," and their history went clean back to the Pietists of the Reformation days. (42-43)

Bits of what Giles writes here, right or wrong, she variously repeats in the other three books plus her *Writer's Digest* article. In *Tara's Healing*, a Brethren in Christ preacher says that his group is "[o]ne of the oldest in Protestantism. Actually we're descended from the Mennonites. We go back to the Pietists in Reformation days. We were brought to this country in the late eighteenth century by an old Mennonite preacher from Switzerland (41)." In *Harbin's Ridge* the narrator explains that the White Caps "had their beginning across the waters in Switzerland. Part of a Mennonite group that got dissatisfied under the persecution there and moved to America. . . . And they baptized different, too. . . . In the early days, back in Pennsylvania, they'd been named the River Brethren on account of it, I'd heard" (201-2). In *40 Acres and No Mule* (41), Giles mentions that the White Caps "came to America originally from Switzerland in 1770, and they are descendants of the Mennonites," and in her article about

writing *The Enduring Hills* she again identifies them as "descendants of the Mennonites."[62]

For Miss Bertha's detailed but faulty history, Giles relied primarily, if not exclusively, on one source: the *U.S. Bureau of the Census special report on Religious Bodies: 1906 (or 1916)*.[63] This report would have been available in the library of her Louisville seminary, and it is obvious that Giles took almost all her account directly from the first and third paragraphs of the section on the River Brethren. With a few misunderstandings, the details she includes are those of the report, presented in the same order: thirty Mennonite families escaping persecution in Switzerland; the loss of one ship on the disastrous ocean crossing; one group settling in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, near the Susquehanna River; becoming known as River Brethren because of their habit of baptizing in the river; in time splitting over small differences into smaller bodies.

Giles's historical information is half-way correct as far as it goes, but it is obviously incomplete and in several matters, plain wrong. She correctly identifies the Brethren in Christ as having Swiss Mennonite roots going back to the Reformation, and she also correctly notes their heritage of seventeenth-century Pietism. But these statements are misleading, obscuring the actual formation of the Brethren in Christ in the late eighteenth-century in America. Giles completely omits the impetus of the Otterbein-Boehm revival and the insistence on trine immersion as the main reason for starting a separate group. It was not to her purpose to set forth the denomination's entire complex history, but her short sketches suggest that she knew little more anyway.

Giles makes several strange errors about Brethren in Christ origins, errors not found in her source: that the group had long been formed in Switzerland, that Jacob Engle was its elderly leader at the time of emigration, and that it emigrated in 1750, about twenty years before their

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[62] "Hill Writer," *Writer's Digest*, February 1951, 18.

[63] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies: 1906,* part 2, Separate Denominations: History, Description, and Statistics, "Brethren, River" (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1910), 169-174. Four such reports were published, with only slight variations in the sections on the three River Brethren denominations. Giles's incorporation of a statement regarding modes of footwashing, present only in the section on United Zion's Children in the 1906 and 1916 reports, points to her use of one of these reports rather than either the 1926 or 1936 report.

ship, the Phoenix, docked in Philadelphia. Ignoring all but the 1770 date in the second paragraph of the Census report, and not knowing that Jacob Engle emigrated as an infant, she misconstrues the story. Regarding the name of River Brethren, she takes the less likely but more interesting explanation— baptizing in the Susquehanna—rather than the longer, more probable, but more prosaic—the dispersed communities (e.g., the Brotherhood in the North, the Brotherhood in Dauphin, etc.) referring to "the Brotherhood down by the River."[64]

Oddly enough, Giles has the brotherhoods soon migrating southward into three states that they settled in only much later. Wrong on two counts and bad for the reputation of the Brethren in Christ is her assertion that the moves were the result of quarreling over minor points and splitting into little bands. In fact, the Brethren in Christ spread out for the sake of land and mission, and they suffered only two major divisions—Yorkers in 1843 and Brinsers in 1853. Adding to the damage, in an attempt to explain the splits, Giles ignores the larger issues of nonresistance, nonconformity, polity, and meetinghouses, and instead latches onto an incidental observation about modes of footwashing.

Could Giles have drawn her historical material from sources other than the Census report? Not likely. Her first books were written in haste, without the extensive research she did for her later works. Furthermore, other Brethren in Christ histories were not available to her at the time of writing. Asa Climenhaga's 1942 history[65] was not supplied her by the Dohners; Wilmer Eshleman's long paper presented to the Lancaster County Historical Society in December 1948 was published too late;[66] and the early histories were out of her reach. Had she read any of these, she would have doubtlessly inserted some of their colorful stories (e.g., Jacob Engle being the only infant of 50 to survive the sea voyage; the secret initial baptisms; the vitriolic split over the Brinser meetinghouse). At any rate, whether she knew them or not, she did not follow the proffered

[64] See Carlton O. Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience: The Story of the Brethren in Christ* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1978), 15-27, for a careful account of origins.

[65] A. W. Climenhaga, *History of the Brethren in Christ Church* (Nappanee, IN: E. V. Publishing House, 1942) includes, as appendices, several early accounts of Brethren in Christ origins. Among them are excerpts from *Religious Bodies: 1916*, but without the part about modes of footwashing.

[66] Wilmer J. Eshleman, "The River Brethren Denominations: Old Order of River Brethren, Brethren in Christ, United Zion's Children," *Papers of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 52, no. 7 (1948). Paper presented on December 3, 1948.

facts or interpretations of any source other than that in the Census special report.[67]

After her first books, Giles says nothing more even remotely connected to Brethren in Christ denominational history. *In A Little Better than Plumb* (1963), however, as the sole piece of denominational identity, she offers that curious, well-known link to national fame: "I have been told that former president Eisenhower's mother was a member of this church but I have never tried to verify it" (158). Wilmer Eshleman devotes three full pages to the Eisenhower connection,[68] further evidence that Giles never drew upon that source.

History of the Brethren in Christ in Kentucky

When she comes to the origins of the Brethren in Christ in Kentucky, Giles is on surer footing, for here she had information from the Dohners and probably also from locals who knew this more recent history. In *Tara's Healing*, the preacher recounts how the White Caps came "around thirty years ago" (i.e., 1920):

> So Jory went on to tell how a wandering preacher came looking for his brother, and how he was amazed and distressed by the need he found in the hills. How he convinced the home group in Lancaster of the need to establish a mission in Kentucky, and how he himself took charge and administered it for years. How a few converts had been made, and . . . how they had, in time, established seven congregations, all in Adair County. (56)

This is a fair enough and mostly accurate summary of events as reported in the church's definitive history, in the autobiography of the first superintendent, and in a short history written by his daughter.[69]

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[67] Notable for their intriguing stories: John K. Miller, "The River Brethren," *The Pennsylvania-German* 7 (January 1906), 17-22 (modified in Climenhaga, 347-54); Morris M. Engle, comp., *The Engle History and Family Records of Dauphin and Lancaster Counties* (Mt. Joy, PA: Bulletin Press, 1927); J. N. Engle, "Origin of the Brethren in Christ" (n.d.; ca. 1930) in Climenhaga, 243-245; A Familiar Friend, "History of the River Brethren," in *History of All the Religious Denominations in the United States,* ed. I. Daniel Rupp (Harrisburg, PA: John Winebrenner, 1848), pp. 550-556. Rupp was likely available to Giles at her seminary, but she drew nothing from it.

[68] Wilmer J. Eshleman, 193-196.

[69] Wittlinger, 448; Albert Engle, *Saved to Serve in Kentucky and Elsewhere* (Mechanicsburg, PA: W & M Printing, 1977), pp. 32-33; Dortha Dohner, "M. L. Dohner and the Beginning of Brethren in Christ Work in Kentucky," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 14, no. 3 (December 1991), 396-414.

Walter Reighard (1889-1963) of Ohio, when visiting relatives in Taylor County in 1918, was told of needy areas in neighboring Adair and went to see for himself. The next summer he returned with Moses L. Dohner, bishop John Hoover, and others (including 9-year-old Elam Dohner) to hold the first Brethren in Christ tent meetings. Reighard ministered in the area from 1920 to 1925. Then followed a period of visiting preachers from Ohio and a few Kentucky converts who carried on alone. Under the superintendence of Albert and Margie Engle from 1927-1944, the work soon grew to encompass Sunday schools and congregations in eight communities.

In two other books Giles makes a couple of other statements about Brethren in Christ beginnings in Kentucky, but these are erroneous. In *Harbin's Ridge* (201), written before the Dohners' arrival, she repeats her misunderstanding that the White Caps had immigrated from Indiana and Ohio, and, in addition, she has them settling in around 1907 (90). In *40 Acres and No Mule*, written after she knew better: "The White Caps are a small group of people who migrated into Kentucky some thirty years ago from Pennsylvania, taking up a sort of mission work among the hill people" (41). Thus in *40 Acres* (1952), she is correct about the date and mission work, but wrong again about group migration, although a number of some mission staff were indeed from Pennsylvania.

Smallness and mission

Giles often references the smallness and relative obscurity of the Brethren in Christ. As seen above, in *40 Acres and No Mule* (41) she identifies the Kentucky White Caps as "a small group," and in *The Enduring Hills* (42-43) as one of the "little bands" that split from the original "small group" in Pennsylvania. In *Harbin's Ridge* (201), the narrator, speaking to a lawyer from town, assumes, "You wouldn't know about the White Caps, I reckon." The assumed obscurity is echoed in *Tara's Healing* when the Brethren in Christ preacher is not surprised that a newcomer to the ridge says, "Never heard of them." "Probably not," replies Jory, "We're a rather small group" (41). In the foreword, Giles introduces them as "a small group of the members of a religious sect" (7) and, later in the text itself, at a gathering of the several churches "scattered through the county" (48), she again notes "the smallness of their group" (53).

In the process of identifying the White Caps, Giles drops a little information about the denomination nationally. Jory explains, "We are largest in Pennsylvania, I suppose. Our national headquarters are there. There are only a few of us in Kentucky" (41). Later in the story (233), in July 1951, Jory is planning to attend "a church conference near Lancaster" (233),—a plausible destination, Roxbury being the location of General Conference in 1950, when the book was first drafted. In addition to Pennsylvania and Kentucky, as already seen, Giles reports the settlement of Brethren in Christ in Ohio and Indiana (*Enduring Hills*, 43) but not in any other state and not in Canada. The relative smallness of the total membership of the denomination—under 7,000 ca. 1950—she never discloses.[70]

While Giles often characterizes the White Caps as few in number, she also points out their faithful adherence to their mission. To the credit of the Kentucky mission staff in particular, she calls attention to the church's dedication and integrity—the essential criteria by which she judges religion of any sort. In her foreword to *Tara's Healing*, she points out that "they believe in a positive and active life of love and service to their fellow men" (7), and in the text, paraphrasing Jory, she elaborates that "while they had never been a sizable group, they had remained a constant group, going among the hill people, ministering to them, preaching to them, and praying over them.... Small bands of zealots, ascetic, ardent, self-sustaining" (56).

Her perception of Brethren in Christ dedication may have been based partly on what she had read in the *Constitution-Doctrine* about "a positive ministry of love," doing "good unto all men," and following Christ's teachings "of love, service, and sacrifice."[71] But to a much greater degree, her good opinion of the denomination was based on what she observed. According to Elam Dohner, speaking of *Tara's Healing*, Giles was impressed by the love and sharing of the Brethren in Christ and portrays it accurately.[72] From her years of religious education work with churches and a mission board, Giles herself knew something of the labor of faith and love the Brethren in Christ were engaged in, and Jory's

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[70] Wittlinger, 557.

[71] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 19.

[72] Elam Dohner, interview, May 23, 1986.

succinct summary statement can be read as her tribute to their small but earnest mission.

How all that preaching, praying, and ministering takes shape is mostly woven allusively into Giles's stories rather than described in detail. Scenes showing typical Brethren in Christ church services, Sunday schools, prayer meetings, and home visitations are absent from the novels, and a factual summary of the work of the Kentucky mission is missing from her memoir. By contrast, Giles devotes an entire chapter of *40 Acres and No Mule* (183-87) to a description of the Barnett's Creek Mission, also located in northern Adair County but nine miles and several ridges east. Established by the Evangelical United Brethren in 1930, it developed a clinic, a library, and a hand weaving cottage industry, and Giles details and praises its "wide, full program" addressing the "economic, physical, spiritual, and educational" needs of the people (185).

Not so for the Brethren in Christ mission. But Giles does reveal some specifics about the mission's outreach efforts through Bible schools, clinics, and evangelistic meetings. About revival meetings, see below. About vacation Bible schools (begun in 1928, the first ever held by the denomination),[73] she makes two short references, indicating that they began in May (to fit into the July-February school year) and that they required quite a bit of the preacher's time (48, 207). About clinics, she writes a lot more.

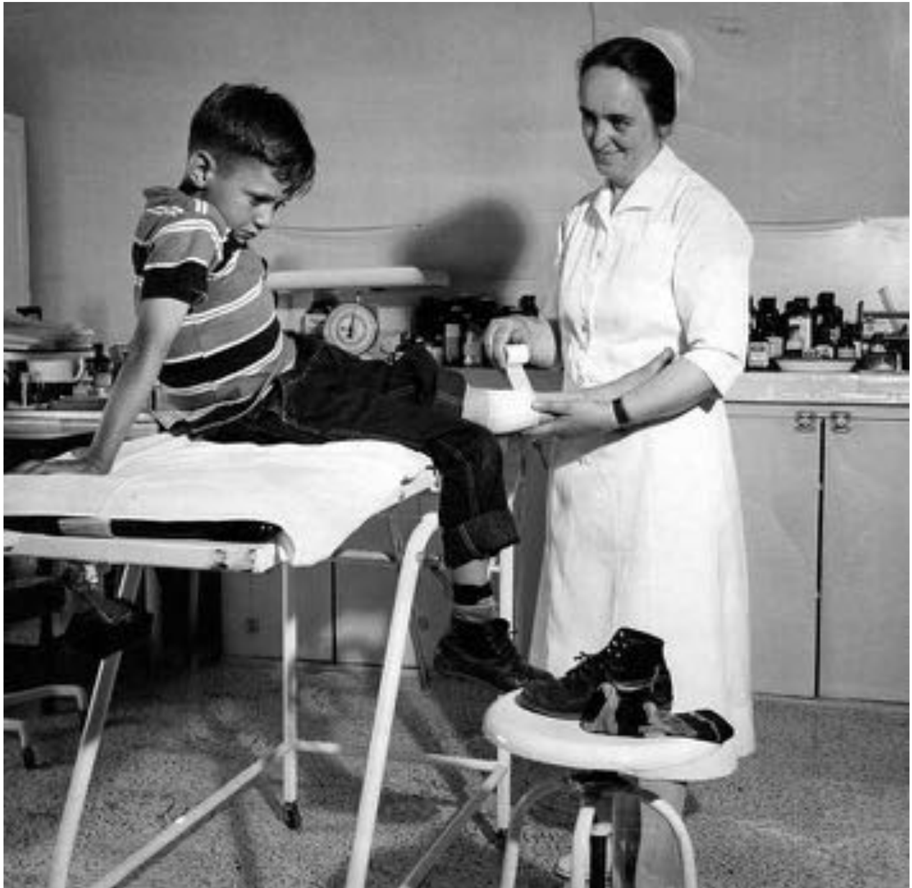
Aside from spiritual ministry, clinics and nursing more or less define the work of the Brethren in Christ mission in Kentucky as far as Giles presents it, and in fact, that was the one secular institutional service the mission provided. It was a significant and well-chosen service to the people the mission was there to serve, and of course it was also was infused with prayer and spiritual concern. The nearest doctor was in Columbia twenty miles away over dirt and gravel roads at a time when few families had a car, and sometimes flooding rendered the town completely inaccessible. Brethren in Christ medical service was therefore heavy: in 1950, a total of 776 nurses' calls in homes and 1,686 calls at the Knifley clinic were made.[74] *The Handbook of Missions*: *1950* reports, "Our two nurses . . .

[73] Wittlinger, 419.

[74] *Handbook of Missions, 1951, 96.*

have been busy caring for medical needs of the people day and night, and doing their full share of carrying Spiritual and Church responsibilities at the same time."[75]

Nursing was an important part of the Kentucky mission almost from the beginning. From 1927 to 1944 Margie Engle, RN, tended the sick from the Garlin station and developed good working relations with the Columbia doctors, who could seldom come out to homes themselves.[76]



Katie Rosenberger, one of several Brethren in Christ nurses who served in Kentucky. Copyright © Louisville Courier-Journal; *used by permission.*

[75] *Handbook of Missions*, 1950, 27.
[76] Albert Engle, 38.

In 1943 a clinic was established at Knifley, largely with the help of Beulah Arnold, an Adair County native and a newly graduated registered nurse.[77] During the time Giles was writing her ridge books, Elizabeth Hess served as RN at Garlin, and Mary E. Heisey, followed by Katie Rosenberger, at Knifley.

Giles writes in three books of the need for a local doctor and, with some ambivalence, the role of the White Cap clinic and nurses. In *The Enduring Hills*, in 1945, "there's a pretty good doctor at the Gap" (197)—probably a reference to Dr. Vigle, who practiced several years in Knifley. But by 1946 he had moved 50 miles away[78] and it was not until November 1947 when Dr. Shepherd, with a new practice in Campbellsville, began coming one afternoon a week to the Knifley clinic.[79] *Tara's Healing* contains description of the medical setup, and *40 Acres and No Mule* has a glimpse of a nurse in action.

In *Tara's Healing*, Jory explains to Tara Cochrane how the White Caps settled into the area:

> [h]ow they established a small clinic at the Gap, and brought on a registered nurse to conduct it. And how in another small settlement they placed another nurse. For the White Caps, if they themselves are other worldly, still recognize the sorrows and griefs of this world and do what they can to ameliorate them for the people. (56-57)

To the Waltons, in connection with divine healing (see below), he says, "That's why we train a few of the women in each church community to be nurses" (76). The statements about a clinic at the Gap (i.e., Knifley) and a nurse at another station (Garlin) are accurate enough, but there was never an attempt to place a nurse in each settlement where Brethren in Christ lived. For a short time, around 1946, Gladys Kraybill Feese also

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[77] Beulah Arnold attended Messiah Bible College (1934-36), took her RN degree at St. Joseph's Hospital (Lancaster, PA), and graduated from Beulah College (1941-43). She later attended the Frontier Nursing School of Midwifery (Hyden, KY) and took further training at the Harrisburg (PA) Hospital. From 1947 to 1962 she served in India with Brethren in Christ Missions (*My Story, My Song*, 1-10).

[78] Mary E. Heisey, "Knifley Clinic," *Evangelical Visitor Missionary Supplement*, February 10, 1947, 7.

[79] Mary E. Heisey, "Knifley Clinic Report," *Evangelical Visitor,* February 9, 1948, 43. Giles refers to a Dr. Mike in town (40 Acres, 111) but that may well have been another doctor in either Campbellsville or Columbia.

served at Knifley as a community nurse, but Beulah Arnold was the single instance of a native becoming a nurse.

Through the eyes of Dr. Cochrane, "the little clinic" (82) at Knifley, appears rather forlorn: "Across the road was the little building that housed the White Cap clinic. One room, very small. Couldn't be much of a clinic, he thought. But if the girl who ran it was a registered nurse it was better than the bottles [of patent medicine] on the [store] shelves" (82). The clinic Giles pictures here is fictitious, imagined to suit her story. The actual health center, opened in 1944, was housed in six rooms on the second floor of the old Gospel Hall, once a mechanic's garage. A separate new clinic, built next to the Knifley parsonage, was dedicated in 1954.[80]

Tara's Healing makes four other references to the clinic nurses, usually coldly referred to as "the nurse at the Gap" and relied upon only "when all else failed," mainly for shots of penicillin (57, 135-36, 142). The theme of the need for a resident doctor runs throughout the text. Jory frequently expresses his dream for a local medical man, much to the exasperation of Tara, who is certain no good doctor could ever be found "to bury himself" in the hills (86-87, 115-17, 249). Most likely unknown to Giles, Jory's hope mirrors the mission staff's "praying for a consecrated Doctor for this place."[81]

Although it does not identify either the clinic or the nurse as White Cap, *40 Acres and No Mule* contains Giles's most detailed account about the work of the Brethren in Christ nurses. In chapter 14 she agonizes over the illness and death of a girl with a neglected strep infection. Neighbors helped as the family permitted and took her to the Columbia doctor, but advice for a follow-up shot at the Knifley clinic was ignored, and after three weeks the family at last asked Henry to fetch the nurse (167):

> The nurse came, as she always does. Oh, she looked so competent, so efficient, so cool and calm, in her starched white uniform! We sat in the car and waited for her. I felt comforted, just knowing she was inside, doing for Noonie. When she came out finally, Henry took her back to Knifley. . . . The nurse had swabbed out her throat, asked what the doctor had said, given Noonie a shot of

[80] J. Wilmer Heisey, "There's Lots of Gold at Fort Knox and in Adair County, Kentucky," *Evangelical Visitor*, April 12, 1956, 7.

[81] Irvin Kanode, "Home Evangel," *Evangelical Visitor Missionary Supplement*, August 12, 1946, 4.

> penicillin, and told them to feed her, bathe her, make her eat, get her bowels to move, and that was all that lay within the realm of her jurisdiction. She could not prescribe, she could not diagnose, she could not recommend further. She could only allay the pain, and, under the doctor's orders, give her penicillin. (169-70)

The nurse would have been either Mary Heisey, who began serving at the Knifley clinic in 1946, or Katie Rosenberger, who replaced her in September 1949. Giles had moved to the ridge only four months before, but she could have encountered either by the time of writing 40 Acres. Photographs around 1950 show the nurses at work in standard white uniform but wearing the prayer covering rather than the nurse's cap.[82] If Giles sounds piqued, it is because she was appalled at the ridge ethos which prevented anyone but close family from taking action. In *Miss Willie*, written at the time of Noonie's pathetic death, Giles transforms the scenario so that her protagonist defies the non-interference rule and manages to save a similar girl stricken with typhoid (234-36).

Separation and nonconformity

Giles portrays the Brethren in Christ as a set-apart, isolated sect, accentuating their separation from the world even in the midst of serving it. As already noted, the foreword to *Tara's Healing* explicitly labels them "a religious sect." There she states further, "They are an almost ascetic people, of the world and yet apart from it. One cannot help thinking of them as a religious order . . ." (7). Twelve years later, in *A Little Better than Plumb*, even while recognizing them as a denomination, Giles still persists in identifying them as "a religious sect" (158).

Through the eyes of the locals, they are a tight-bound, exclusionary group. In *The Enduring Hills*, they are "the little knot of White Caps who stayed to themselves usually" (41), and compared to a family clan, are "a closer knitted band" (43). In *Tara's Healing*, Jory remembers, "I felt towards the White Caps like everybody else felt. That they were queer. Not my own folks at all" (57). Even a newcomer to the ridge notices that they are "bound closely together by the smallness of their group and by

82 *Courier-Journal Magazine*, June 4, 1950, 8. See also Kentucky, Home Evangel (Robinson Ridge) folder, General Photography Collection, Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives, Messiah College, Mechanicsburg, PA (hereafter cited as Home Evangel Photographs).

their separation from others" (52-53).

But in general, Giles treats the separatist nature of the Brethren in Christ in a positive light. To the visiting outsider, they are "friendly, soft-spoken, accepting" (*Tara's Healing*, 52). Giles describes them as "usually of quiet and modest manner" (*Enduring Hills*, 43), and "a happy, quiet people (*Tara's Healing*, 7). Although becoming a member might entail a separation from certain old relationships and although that carried a certain "solemn sadness" in the "putting aside of all worldly things, . . . [i]t did not mean that [the convert] would be less gay, nor that she would . . . don a long-faced, dreary habit of life" (*Tara's Healing*, 220).

By the time she wrote *Tara's Healing*, Giles had gained from the Dohners some understanding of the Brethren in Christ doctrines of separation and nonconformity. She had in hand the *Constitution-Doctrine* and *What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, a short tract listing the basic doctrines and rules of conduct.[83] Although she never explicitly cites *Faith and Doctrine* article 7, "Separation," it is clear she had read it. She also quotes the nonconformity declaration in "Our Creed": "We believe that the Scripture teaches that Christians should not be conformed to the world, but that they are a separate people . . ."[84] (*Tara's Healing*, 58). Separation is understood to be an integral part of the faith, and the differences it makes in their lifestyle and outward practices is appreciated.

The main differences that set the White Caps apart were their appearance and, not so obviously but nevertheless very seriously, their adamant stance against tobacco. These distinctions, dress especially, provided Giles with novelty and local color—something to write about—and will be given full attention later. Here we need only note that, despite their basic tenet of separation from the world, in many particulars the Brethren in Christ were not different from the prevailing Kentucky hill culture.

From the *Constitution-Doctrine* and the *What We Believe* tract, Giles could easily discover the Brethren in Christ taboos then current: worldly slang, lewdness, civil oaths; exhibitions, parades, theatres, banquets;

[83] *What We Believe and Why We Believe It* (Nappanee, IN: E. V. Publishing House, 1927?), [5]; hereafter cited as *What We Believe.*

[84] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 10, 21.

tobacco; secret societies, lodges; card playing, gambling; dancing, horse racing, "and all other vain amusements."[85] (Strong drink was a vice so obvious it didn't need to be listed.) Most of these were also the taboos of southern Appalachian Christianity.[86] In *Tara's Healing*, one character laments how the ridge frowns upon all drinking, parties, and dancing, even the old singing games and square dances (196). Analyzing hill country religion in her prologue to *40 Acres and No Mule*, Giles notes a barrage of contemporary ridge prohibitions: radio (except for news, weather, religion), movies, lodge meetings, skating rinks, bowling alleys, and all other sorts of "revellings" (15). In these ways the Brethren in Christ tenet of separation was quite in sync with ridge culture.

Giles makes much of Brethren in Christ unworldliness by emphasizing their simple manner of living. As already noted, she identifies them in *Tara's Healing* as "an almost ascetic people" (7) and "ascetic, ardent, self-sustaining" (56). They are "otherworldly" (57), "poor but untroubled by their poverty" who "believe . . . in a simple, plain manner of life" (7). And in *40 Acres and No Mule*, in appreciation for Edgar's inexpensive wiring job, she concludes, "The White Caps do not believe in making too much profit" (226).

But there is something disingenuous about these declarations of Brethren in Christ "poverty." The White Caps, whether mission staff or native, were no more poor than their neighbors, and in the hill culture there was an ingrained reluctance to overcharge in business. Giles devotes five full pages in *40 Acres and No Mule* to "the wonderful, fabulous Holcombs" (226) who refuse payment for days of labor on the Gileses' old car. Included are stories of their unpaid service to a stranded Sunday motorist and the gratuitous forging of Janice's fireplace grate and tools (226-30). In the same book, she also marvels at the small charge for three gut-wrenching days of spring-poling a well ($35 for three men) and the refusal of any payment at all by the very accurate water witch (96-107). Perhaps Giles's declaration about Brethren in Christ profits is based on the injunction against highly competitive business practices she found in

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[85] *What We Believe,* [5].

[86] A full 25 years later, Jack E. Weller, in *Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), reported that the stricter church groups still condemned dancing, movies, and commercial entertainments (p. 129).

the *Constitution-Doctrine* or on the condemnation of "sharp bargains" in *What We Believe.*[87]

Opposition

Separation from the world and being seen and felt as insular and peculiar is one thing; ill-willed opposition is another. Giles writes in *Tara's Healing* of the trouble the Brethren in Christ endured early on and even in the 1940s. Recounting his spiritual journey, Jory tells Tara:

> "The White Caps have always had a pretty hard time in these hills. When they first came, around thirty years ago, their meetings would be broken up and their property destroyed and their fields and gardens ruined. It was a bad place to live in those days. The law was generally a man's gun and his quickness to use it. And while there's more peace now, still there's gangs of boys like to make trouble at their meetings. I was one of them." (56)

Giles seems to be historically accurate, although we have no written reports about the destruction of Brethren in Christ property, and nowhere else does Giles mention such overt opposition. Certainly trouble from ruffians was common enough in the southern Appalachian mountains and experienced by churches of all stripes, as Harry Caudill states in his fascinating report, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands,* and as Jesse Stuart writes in his stories.[88] An article on the White Caps in the *Louisville Courier-Journal Magazine* highlighted in large print, "Early meetings were disturbed by ruffians." At the first tent meeting at Garlin, the article reports, "Ruffians cut tent ropes and threw stones. Boisterous drunken laughter interrupted the gospel messages."[89]

Although he purposely omits "the unpleasant experiences" from his

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[87] "In business they should not affiliate with organizations that use coercive measures and are so highly competitive that spiritual fervor and Christian influence are sacrificed"(*Constitution-Doctrine,* 21); *What We Believe,* [4].

[88] Harry M. Caudill, describing life on the Cumberland Plateau in the 1910s: "Gangs of rowdies habitually converged upon the little churches, firing off their pistols and yelling like wild Choctaws" (Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area [Boston: Little, Brown, 1963], pp. 86-87). A sample from Jesse Stuart, with a setting farther east: "the Devil had his gang . . . come to church to shoot and drink and fight" (Beyond Dark Hills: A Personal Story [New York, E. P. Dutton, 1938], 84-85).

[89] Thomas V. Miller, 6-7.

memoir, Albert Engle mentions "strong opposition" and "persecution" faced by the first Brethren in Christ converts, mostly by some leaders of other churches.[90] The same is reported in several early years of the *Handbook of Missions*.[91] As late as the 1950s, Esther Ebersole remembered, disruptive guys at services (there to meet the girls) would talk loudly and cause commotion outside, sometimes inside.[92] Once, Elam Dohner remembered, kids trampled the roof and tangled the ignition wires of his car, leaving him to ride home on a mule.[93] But neither Ebersole nor Dohner recalled any beatings or injuries inflicted on Brethren in Christ people.

Rather, the aggression against the Brethren in Christ came in a manner more passive but far more intense and effective. Family and kin, accusing converts of pride and lack of love, pressured them not to join this odd, new church but cling to the religion of their family. So although many were saved and baptized by the Brethren in Christ, most of them became members of other churches.[94] Edgar Giles, one of the few who resisted such pressure, recounted the reaction to his own conversion around 1930: "A big part of my family simply turned against me. . . . My father said he would rather see me in the grave than become a Brethren in Christ preacher."[95] Since his father was "the patriarch of the family-clan" (*40 Acres*, 10), this was a doubly dire threat. Edgar's brother-in-law then spitefully built a new Anderson Church of God near the Brethren in Christ church Edgar was pastoring.[96]

An underlying reason for opposition to the Brethren in Christ was simply that they were different. They came from the outside, "from off" (*40 Acres*, 5), not born in the hill country or anywhere else in southern Appalachia, and they thought and did things different from the ways of the local people. At the time, rejection of outsiders and all ways different was a prevailing ridge characteristic, and it went a long way in determining

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[90] Albert Engle, 34.
[91] *Handbook of Missions*, 1929, 1931, 1933, 1934, 1937, 1945, et. al.
[92] Ebersole, interview, April 28, 1986.
[93] Elam Dohner, conversation, August 1, 1986; interview May 23, 1986.
[94] Dohner, interview, May 23, 1986.
[95] Edgar Giles, sermon, Bloomington Brethren in Christ Church, Adair County, August 3, 1986.
[96] Edgar Giles, conversation, August 1, 1986.

the reception of the missionaries. In *Tara's Healing*, Jory explains that the ridge folks

> were content . . . to regard the white-capped women and the soberly dressed en with curiosity and a tinge of contempt. They were different. On the ridge that was the ultimate sin. Everything unfamiliar, unridgelike, different, went plumb foolish. The barrier of hill ways is rocklike, and the prejudice of set and settled people is always complacent. It was like battering with a thin rod against a stone wall. (57)

In her 1970 prologue to *40 Acres and No Mule*, Giles speaks directly about the attitude of the typical Appalachian to outsiders in general: “He feels superior to any outsider. He considers the outsider to be inept, ridiculous and foolish, does not like him, and the sooner the outsider goes his way the happier the Appalachian will be. To the Appalachian the outsider is ignorant of all the simplest, most basic things” (3).

Giles, of course, was an outsider herself. Her acute awareness of her difference, her growing understanding of hill culture, and her gradual adaptation (and lack thereof) underlie all of her writings about or set in Adair County. She addresses them directly in her non-fiction about life on the ridge: in *40 Acres and No Mule*, often with humor but sometimes with angst; in the prologue to the second edition, in the manner of an anthropologist. In the Piney Ridge trilogy, her main characters are all outsiders, and as they view life in the hills with puzzlement and frustration, they speak for her: Mary Pierce in *The Enduring Hills*, Willie Payne in *Miss Willie*, Tara Cochrane in *Tara's Healing*. In her early books, at least, this outsider perspective also made her more sympathetic to the new-come Brethren in Christ; certainly it enabled her to be more objective about their intentions and unusual practices.

Singular Practices and Sterling Exemplars

Having looked at Giles's portrayal of their history and general contours, we now turn to several distinctive practices and the models she sets forth as representative of the Brethren in Christ.

Dress

In nearly all of Giles's writings about the Brethren in Christ, dress and the prayer veiling form the central motifs. Dress is described in four

of the five books, and the prayer veiling is highlighted in all, as well as in her short Writer's Digest article. These are the distinctive markings that, initially at least, gave her reason to write about the White Caps—prime pieces of local color and reader interest. On the lone basis of doctrine, dedication, or service, no matter how uncommon, sincere, or altruistic, it is doubtful Giles would even have noticed the Brethren in Christ or found them interesting enough for a book.

In her first book Giles introduces the Brethren in Christ as much by their dress as their history, and identifies their singularity more by their appearance than their doctrine:

> The women also wore nunlike dresses, all made from the same pattern, ankle length, with long sleeves, high round neck, and a prayer bib. They wore neither jewelry nor make-up . . . . Equally simple was the dress of the men. Their suits were dark, plain, and simply cut. In the old days they were home-made, but now the men were allowed to buy them in stores. Ties were prohibited, as were rings and other forms of worldly vanity. (*Enduring Hills*, 43)

Women's attire, as usual, receives more attention than the men's. In *Tara's Healing*, one noticed immediately the uniform dresses of the women, different only in their material and color. None were bright. None were rich. A few were made of material with a small, neat-flowered print, but most were solid colors . . . [sic] blue, gray, lavender, and black. All had round necks with small round collars. All were long-sleeved, gathered into wristbands. All were sufficiently long to cover the calf of the leg. And all had a double thickness over the front to the shoulder. (49-50)

In these passages are most of the details she includes in her other descriptions of dress, with the emphasis on simplicity, modesty, and especially, uniformity.

With the term "uniform dresses" and the emphatic "none" and "all," uniformity is definitely stressed. In the foreword Giles had already stated that "they believe in a uniform dress for the women, in plain, dark clothes for the men" (*Tara's Healing*, 7), and in the book itself she again speaks of "the uniform of White Cap women" (220) and "the White Cap pattern" of their dresses (230). In *Harbin's Ridge*, the narrator denotes the White Caps as "all of them dressing just alike" (202), and in 40 Acres and No Mule Giles again points out that the "women also dress uniformly" (42).

Regarding simplicity, in addition to statements on the "simple" dress and "simply cut" suits of the men in *The Enduring Hills*, Giles states in *40 Acres* that the men "wear sober, plain suits, with vests and no ties" (42), and in *Harbin's Ridge* she again characterizes them as "never wearing ties" (202). In *Tara's Healing*, she states that the Brethren in Christ "believe . . . in a simple, plain manner of life" (7), and she later goes into some detail about a "plain and simple" wedding dress, with "no trimming" (230). The absence of jewelry, "rings and other forms of worldly vanity" (*Enduring Hills*, 43) is reiterated in *Tara's Healing* (7): "they wear no jewelry, nor ornaments of any kind." And once again in *Harbin's Ridge* (202): "none of them holding with the wearing of jewelry of any kind."

Regarding modesty, as already seen in *The Enduring Hills* quoted above, Giles labels the women's dresses as "nunlike," and in *Tara's Healing* she states directly that the White Caps are "modestly dressed" (7). Four times dresses are described as "long-sleeved," three times as having a high or small round neck. Skirts are "ankle length" in *The Enduring Hills* (43), "sufficiently long to cover the calf of the leg" in *Tara's Healing* (50). Most interesting, all the dresses have "a prayer bib" (*Enduring Hills*, 43), "a double thickness over the front to the shoulder" (*Tara's Healing*, 50). By the time she wrote *Tara's Healing*, Giles would have learned from the *Constitution-Doctrine* that "cape" is the proper term, but perhaps she thought to spare her readers that inside vocabulary.

The simple and modest (formal) attire of the men is presented in Giles's picture of a Brethren in Christ preacher: "Today he wore a dark gray suit—a thick, heavy, plain suit—and the erect collar of the high-buttoned vest gave it a clerical look. The shirt, which was buttoned out of sight by the vest except for an edge around the collar, was spotlessly white" (*Tara's Healing*, 49). His "clerical vest" is mentioned again when the preacher comes to Thanksgiving dinner (71), but it should be noted that Giles is not referring to the sort of black vest and clerical collar worn by Lutheran pastors. Nor by "plain suit" does she mean a suit with an erect collar and no lapels, the garb found now only among the more conservative Anabaptist groups. Rather, she simply means here that the suit is "dark, plain, and simply cut," as described in *The Enduring Hills* (43), without stripes or fancy weave; his vest, not his jacket, has the erect collar. Giles would have found "plain" in the *Constitution-Doctrine* in its

ordinary sense of not fancy ("suits of plain material") but not the technical terms of "plain dress" or "plain suit." If she knew these esoteric terms, she again spares her readers.

The *Constitution-Doctrine* provided Giles with the official details about dress as well as a pronouncement of the principles of simplicity, modesty, and uniformity. *Faith and Doctrine* article 7, "Separation," states that Christians "should be attired in modest apparel" and therefore the Church "sets forth a uniform" to guard against demoralizing fashions.[97] Article 8, "Christian Apparel," lists four purposes of "a distinctive garb": preservation of scriptural principles, prevention of drifting toward worldly fashions, presentation of a testimony for Christ, protection for the individual and the church.[98] *What We Believe* affirms, "We believe … in modest uniform, non-conformity to the world in dress," followed by six scriptural references.[99]

But while it is clear enough that White Cap suits and dresses have something to do with separation, Giles does not explicitly attribute them to doctrine or spell out the reasons behind the dress code. The apparel itself was the primary thing of interest. Still, it is strange that in *Tara's Healing*, which quotes some Brethren in Christ doctrine in full, she does not have the preacher make a simple explanatory statement.

Twice, however, Giles does link the shunning of jewelry with the tenet of non-conformity. In *The Enduring Hills* (43), as already seen, rings are labeled "worldly vanity," and in *Tara's Healing*, the lack of wedding rings underscores Brethren in Christ integrity:

> "There'll be no ring," Jory said.
>
> "No ring?"
>
> "We don't wear jewelry," Rose said simply.
>
> "Not even a wedding ring?"
>
> . . . [Jory:] "Especially not a wedding ring. We wouldn't want to make our marriage conform to the world like that."
>
> Tara . . . didn't pretend to understand this. But he recognized integrity when he saw it. No worldly ornaments meant exactly

[97] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 21.

[98] Ibid., 22-24.

[99] *What We Believe,* [4].

that to Jory and Rose. No worldly ornaments, not even adorning their marriage. (231)

Giles's observations about dress, the women's especially, are keen and accurate. According to Helen Dohner, most Kentucky Brethren in Christ women conformed to the dress standard, including the cape.[100] The cape dress was the only acceptable cut, collars were close fitting but not always round, and sleeves were invariably long. But according to Esther Ebersole and contemporary photographs, fabric and print pattern did not much matter, even bold stripes and big floral designs.[101]

In the 1950s the South was strict about modest dress for women, recalled Helen Dohner; jeans, for instance, were not permitted.[102] So it was the cape and uniformity that mostly distinguished the dress of Brethren in Christ women. Although not so intended, contrasts can be found in a long description of normal hill country dress in *Miss Willie* (57-58). In that passage, curiously enough, Giles applies the Brethren in Christ dress tag to the garb of the older women: "The dark dress, the starched apron, the slatted bonnet were apparently their uniform" [emphasis added]. As for the non-use of cosmetics, that was not so noticeable or unusual, and Giles mentions it only once: "They wore neither jewelry nor make-up" . . . (*Enduring Hills*, 43).

The men could more readily blend in, except when they put on their Sunday best without necktie and, if they had such, a genuine plain suit or a vest with erect collar. In the late 1940s, states Esther Ebersole, Brethren in Christ men more often wore ordinary suits, but in general suits and coats were seldom worn at all in the Kentucky hills, even to church. Overalls, denims, and perhaps white shirts were more common, sometimes sport jackets for the young bucks.[103]

Prayer veiling

If general apparel is a major motif in Giles's writings about the Brethren in Christ, the prayer veiling is the most notable and captivating. Head coverings were worn by all Brethren in Christ women in Kentucky, as

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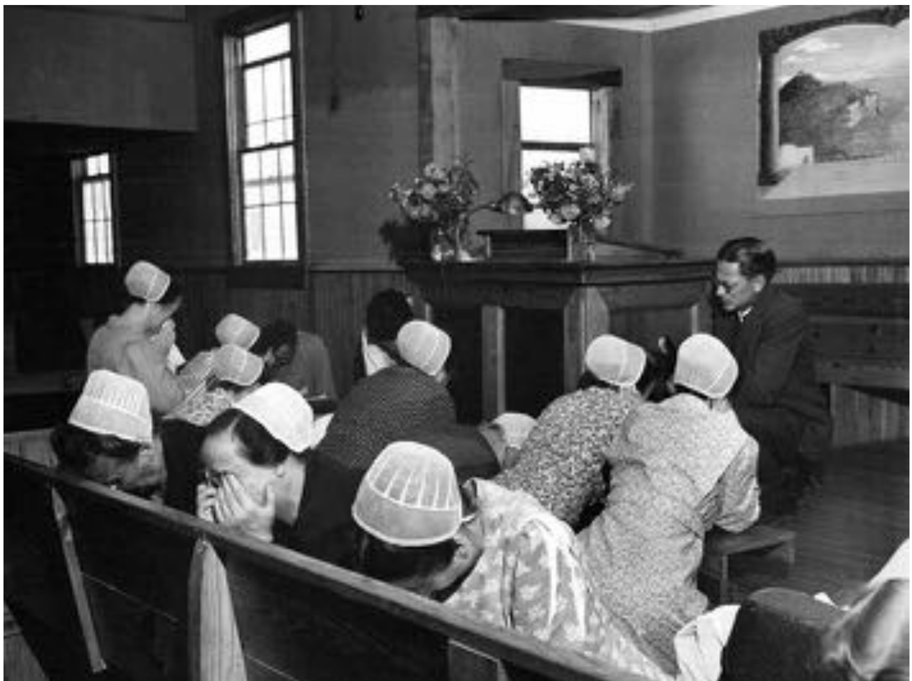
[100] Helen Dohner, interview, April 12, 1994.

[101] Ebersole, interview, July 28, 1986; Home Evangel Photographs, Brethren in Christ Archives.

[102] Helen Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.

[103] Ebersole, interview, August 29, 2014;

was the case throughout the entire church in North America in the 1940s and early 1950s. Albert Engle, the first superintendent of the mission, was a strong advocate of the veiling and published a pamphlet on the subject.[104] The ordinance was regularly preached, certainly at the semi-annual communion preparatory services, for which 1 Corinthians 11 was the prescribed sermon text. Shape and strings were not much of an issue in Kentucky. The square cut in the 1940s gradually modified to rounded, and the strings were usually white, sometimes black, tied together and hanging, most often at the front.[105]



This photo of a prayer service showing women in their "white caps" was the lead photo in the Louisville Courier-Journal's June 4, 1950 feature article, "The White Caps: Religion and Life." Copyright © Louisville (KY) Courier-Journal; *used by permission.*

[104] Engle first produced a mimeographed piece for the Kentucky churches, expanding it ca. 1933 into *Questions and Answers on the Doctrine of the Prayer Veil: Significance of "One of These Least Commandments:" A Study of I Corinthians 11:2-16* (Grantham, PA: n.d.). The booklet commended by the Board of Bishops and widely distributed, may have been one of the tracts the Dohners gave to Giles.

[105] Ebersole, interview, July 28, 1986; see also Home Evangel Photographs.

Giles describes the coverings in eight separate passages in six different works, with considerable repetition, as little, sheer, and worn at all times. Most of the descriptions are no more than a sentence long and almost always inserted to explain the nickname "White Caps," which term appears a total of forty-one times throughout her writings. Usually the "caps" are presented as merely an attractive curiosity, without any sense of denigration. Typical are the following:

> Here in the Kentucky hills they were called White Caps, because of the sheer little starched white caps the women wore at all times. (E*nduring Hills*, 43)
>
> They had some beliefs we thought queer in these parts, the women wearing the little white caps all the time, covering them in winter with black bonnets . . . . (*Harbin's Ridge*, 202)
>
> But we call them the "White Caps" because the women of the group wear, at all times, a sheer little white cap, pinned well back on their long, knotted hair. (*Tara's Healing*, 7)
>
> [Rose] should be able to wear the little white cap most gracefully. . . . and tomorrow the lovely, sheer little white cap would grace her head. (*Tara's Healing*, 216, 220)

The "black bonnets" in the second example is unique, and the "long, knotted hair" in the third appears in only one other passage. It seems odd that Giles never comments on the strings, such a noticeable, nonfunctional part of the curiosity.[106]

Aside from a reference to "the efficacy of the prayer veil" in *The Enduring Hills* (43), Giles gives no clue as to why these white caps are worn, with one exception. In *Tara's Healing*, the novel dedicated to the Brethren in Christ and delving deeply into their beliefs, she defines them as "prayer veilings" and explains their meaning, after first praising them effusively as lovely and beautiful:

> All the women had long hair, [Tara] noticed, and the sheer, beautiful little white caps, which they themselves called their prayer veilings, were pinned like pure white wings on the back of their heads. . . . [H]e was enchanted by the aesthetic beauty of

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[106] Three other short descriptions of the "white caps": *40 Acres*, 42 (here called "bonnets"); "Hill Writer," 18; *Little Better than Plumb*, 158 (here labeled "pretty").

> row on row of the small white caps bent humbly before the Lord. Indeed their prayer veilings did set them apart, he thought. And he wondered how many of the women thus kneeling were entirely unconscious of the loveliness of their heads so veiled! If he were a woman, he would be tempted to join this faith if only to wear that sheer, beautiful bonnet! (50)

Then follows a remarkably detailed and complete summary of their theological meaning:

> Jory had told him this [veiling] signified four things. First, it was a recognition of woman's position under grace. It signified that she, who suffered most by sin, was redeemed and enjoyed equal privileges with man in approach to God. Second, the veiling was woman's visible sign recognizing man's position as social head of the race. Third, it was a recognition of the interest and care of the angels. Fourth, the veil was to cover her own natural covering, because there was a difference between man's hair and woman's. And a woman in the Lord must cover her hair. The veiling symbolized woman's holiness, purity, undivided love and devotion to Christ, and the preservation of her glory, charm, and grace, as well as her person, for him. So Jory had explained. (50)

Giles's explanation is lifted directly from *Faith and Doctrine* article 12, "The Prayer Veiling," in the *Constitution-Doctrine.*[107] Following exactly the order and wording (except for the verb "signify"), all sentences are direct quotes or close paraphrases. Omitted, however, are the explications about the angels and about woman's "exalted position" despite her being last in the "divine order." Also omitted, oddly enough for this most important symbol, is the underlying scriptural reference (1 Corinthians 11). Nor does Giles specify here that the veiling is an "ordinance" or include the long argument for the covering being so, although several pages later she does. Neither does she include the paragraph directing that the covering be worn "constantly" or state that the veiling is a part of "the doctrine of non-conformity" and a requirement for membership.[108]

So there is Giles's explanation of the defining feature of the White Caps, the reasons behind this quaint, distinguishing practice. But does it

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[107] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 28-30.

[108] *Constitution-Doctrine*, By-Laws, article 21, "Requirements for Membership," 72.

really explain anything to the reader? The long, interjected rehearsal of the veiling doctrine concludes with the candid statement, "The theology meant little to Tara" (50), making it pretty clear that it is not understood by Giles herself. Nor does she expect it to be by almost anyone else. The four reasons are faithfully stated, but what could they mean to the uninitiated? Social position in the race, interest of the angels, difference between male and female hair—who of Giles's non-Brethren in Christ readers could fathom these mysteries?

Indeed, without being given the biblical citation, the reader is left to wonder how this teaching is derived. The only thing clear and sure is that somehow by reason of scriptural interpretation, the veiling is deemed an essential part of the dress for separation from the world. And probably that is enough. To have delved deeper would have taken more pages than her readers would have willingly waded through. Perhaps Jory gives a better, down-to-earth reason for wearing the covering when he answers Rose: "it might be the bonnet would remind you to pray oftener. And if you took a pride in your faith, the wearing of the cap would be like a bright flag flying for all the world to see" (*Tara's Healing*, 75).

While Giles admired the aesthetics of the white caps, knew in part what they symbolized, and appreciated the faith and faithfulness of those who wore them, the Kentucky natives, real and fictional, did not. The white caps were merely queer, neither things of beauty nor holiness, except in a negative, self-righteous way. From the beginning they caused trouble, as noted in an *Evangelical Visitor* report from Kentucky in 1920: "The prayer veiling is a new teaching here, and, since there are some who are wearing it as a result of the meetings last year, strong opposition has arisen from different sources which makes it harder for those who consider taking the whole way with the Lord."[109]

Mission workers and converts thirty years later were acutely aware of the stigma and of the attitude among other Christians that the White Caps considered themselves superior.[110] Giles captures some of the disparagement early in *Tara's Healing*: "'Them white bonnets,' Rose sniffed. 'The day'll never come when I put one on my head! . . . Prayer veilings! I kin pray without a bonnet on my head!'" (75). Later Rose gets

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[109] "Tent Work in Kentucky," *Evangelical Visitor,* September 20, 1920, 12.

[110] Helen Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.

in one more lick: "'When you goin' to marry one of them women wears a little white cap on her head, Jory?'" (207). Clearly the covering is no inducement for this ridge woman to join the Brethren in Christ.

Tobacco

As already noted, the Brethren in Christ stand against tobacco was one of the three main obstacles to the denomination's acceptance in Kentucky and a major deterrence to membership.[111] They were by no means the only ones against the "evil weed . . . the Devil's own work,"[112] but the Brethren in Christ maintained a clear witness against not only its use but also its cultivation and traffic. This was clearly spelled out in the articles on "Separation" and "Requirements for Members" in the *Constitution-Doctrine*[113] and also stated in *What We Believe*.[114] In Kentucky, although tobacco was not a main point in revival meetings,[115] delivery from its use was important enough to be sometimes reported in the *Handbook of Missions* and the *Evangelical Visitor*.[116] Cultivation was surely a much harder thing to preach against.

Such an intolerant stand was bound to be problematic because in the Adair County hills, smoking, snuff, and chewing were common, time-honored practices among both men and women. In Giles's ridge books, 18-year-old Hod smokes at revival meeting (*Enduring Hills*, 42), God-fearing Becky takes a little chaw before bed (*Miss Willie*, 75), Dr. Tara Cochrane smokes in the hospital (*Tara's Healing*, 14), and Giles herself rolls her own cigarettes (*40 Acres*, 133). More serious, tobacco was the area's only cash crop. Certainly it was as great a factor as dress in keeping Brethren in Christ membership small. Esther Ebersole said that the Baptists flourished on Brethren in Christ converts because of both the stand against growing tobacco and the insistence on the covering.[117] Elam Dohner maintained that the strict tobacco stand was even more a factor than dress and the prayer veiling.[118]

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[111] Elam Dohner, interview, May 23, 1986; Ebersole, interview, April 28, 1986.

[112] Jesse Stuart, *Beyond Dark Hills*, 80-81.

[113] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 20, 72.

[114] *What We Believe*, [5].

[115] Ebersole, interview, July 28, 1986; Albert Engle, 60.

[116] *Handbook of Missions:* 1931, p. 66; 1933, p. 61-62; 1939, p. 105; *Evangelical Visitor Missionary Supplement:* February 18, 1952, xii; *Evangelical Visitor*, January 16, 1956, 11.

[117] Ebersole, interview, April 28, 1986.

[118] Elam Dohner, interview, May 23, 1986.

Giles was acutely aware of the importance of tobacco for the livelihood of most ridge families, and in *Miss Willie*, she writes with feeling about the tortured condemnation a fiery traveling revivalist causes in the hearts of these deeply religious people (121). She was also well aware of Brethren in Christ policy and preaching but brings up the subject only once. In *Tara's Healing*, the White Cap preacher helps his neighbor strip tobacco and the wife points out the irony:

> "Did you know that his religion forbids him to grow or to use tobacco? And tobacco is the only cash crop we grow around here. All of us depend on it for money." . . .
>
> "Well, if he's not allowed to raise tobacco, what's he doing helping Hod with his?"
>
> "His religion also commands him to help his neighbor. But he'll not take one penny for helping." (45)

Elam Dohner and Edgar Giles laughed over the scene of Jory working in the tobacco barn: "a Brethren in Christ pastor would never have touched the stuff" and Giles knew it![119] Likewise Dortha Dohner, who served intermittently in Kentucky, wrote to her sister-in-law Helen, "[W] herever did she get the idea that we who won't raise or use tobacco, would nevertheless consent to 'help a neighbor' by working in it *except in a Black-leaf 40 factory?* That is a laugh!"[120]

Tent meetings and revivals

Giles writes about revival meetings in all seven books set in her section of the Kentucky hills, not counting the historical novels set thereabouts. In three of the seven she describes revival meetings held by groups other than the Brethren in Christ. *Miss Willie* (1951) portrays, most unfavorably, a tent meeting held by a wandering evangelist (120-21). *Hill Man* (1954) describes fired-up hill preaching (12) and immoral goings-on at revivals (12-13, 17-18). *Shady Grove* (1968) praises "protracted meetings" in general and comments on a couple of revivals put on by unnamed churches (97-105). Giles also writes at some length about a Negro camp meeting in *The Plum Thicket* (130-37) and the great Kentucky Revival in *The Believers.*

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[119] Elam Dohner, interviews, May 23 and August 1, 1986.

[120] Dortha Dohner to Helen Dohner, February 14, 1952.

In two of the seven Adair County books, White Cap revivals are mentioned only briefly, but with appreciation. *Tara's Healing*, although it features the Brethren in Christ throughout, refers to a revival meeting only once—as the circumstance of Jory's conversion (57). *Harbin's Ridge* presents some information about the timing and attendance of ridge country revivals in general and a White Cap series in particular:

> When the hot season rolled around in July and August, the revivals commenced . . . and no matter what denomination favored the revival, everybody on the ridge went and took part. The White Caps had the first meeting near by. . . . They had some beliefs we thought queer in these parts . . . . But whether we held with them or not, we always went to any of their meetings. Like we did when the Methodist or Baptist people had a meeting . . . and we'd given to all and gone to all their meetings. So as a matter of course we went to the White Cap meeting that July [and well into August]. (201-3)

So we learn that the White Caps had the first of the numerous midsummer revivals, that folks supported them just as they did all the others, and that the meetings went on for two or three weeks.

These facts are also presented in her first novel, *The Enduring Hills*, and in her first memoir, *40 Acres and No Mule,* and it is in these books that Giles describes a Brethren in Christ tent meeting in great detail. Her description in *The Enduring Hills* is closely based on a tent meeting to which Henry's family took her on one of her early visits to Adair County, in July 1945. Notwithstanding the impression given in *40 Acres*, this experience took place a full year after her first visit to the ridge.[121] The meeting was held on the grounds of the Spout Springs schoolhouse, and it was her inspiration to begin writing: "One night, Henry's folks took me to a White Cap revival meeting. . . . Suddenly, for no good reason, the

[121] In *40 Acres* (33-43), Giles writes about the White Cap revival as though part of her first visit to the ridge in July 1944, but in fact the "one night we went to meetin'" took place the following summer. Henry comments on her account of the meeting in his letter to her on August 17, 1945, and not in any letters after her first visit in 1944 (box 13, folders 6-8; box 14, folder 5, Giles MSS 39, WKU). The 1945 letter is accurately printed in *Hello, Janice* (220), but in *Celebrating Janice* (108) it is inaccurately combined with Henry's letter of August 16, 1944. Janice's letters to Henry were all lost in the war.

thought came to me that I could write a wonderful book about the hill people and their way of life. And this White Cap meeting must have a place in it."[122]

So Giles says in her *Writer's Digest* article about her struggles with that first novel. But this inspiration story should be tempered with more realistic explanations (see above). At any rate, she did not begin the book until January 1947, and the fictional version is set twelve years before the factual occurred. Nevertheless, the tent meeting she experienced seems to have served well as a model. Henry, who collaborated with Janice in forming the plot and characters, apparently found it authentic enough. Certainly he found her initial description of the actual meeting satisfactory, for in his reply to her letter he wrote, "Your account of the meeting at Spout Springs was good. Seems like I was there myself. Just like I remember them."[123]

The first half of chapter 4 of *The Enduring Hills* is devoted to the opening meeting of a three-week White Cap series beginning on a Sunday night in June 1933 in the "Big Springs" schoolyard.[124] The visiting evangelist is a Dan Wilson, who "'they say [has] really got the sperrit, an' kin expound somethin' wonderful'" (25). "'Hit's powerful early to be startin' a meetin', but them White Caps, they allus have the first 'un'" (19).

True enough, the Ohio-Kentucky Joint State Mission Board usually ran three tent meetings in Adair County every year, sometimes beginning in early summer and each lasting two or three weeks, and often a visiting evangelist was brought in from the outside. But usually the revivals were held in July and August, and they were not necessarily the first of all the others.[125]

In a long scene set at the tent meeting, Giles provides a full, detailed description of the tent, its furnishings, the singing, the preaching, and the behavior of the people. She presents this as typical of all Kentucky hill tent

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[122] "Hill Writer," *Writer's Digest,* February 1951, 18-19.

[123] *Hello, Janice,* 220. Cf. box 14, folder 5, Giles MSS 39, WKU..

[124] Since the story closely follows the life of Henry Giles and since his fictional double turns 19 the day after the last night of the revival (69, 71), the precise dates of *The Enduring Hills* revival can be calculated as June 4-22, 1933.

[125] Helen Dohner, interview, April 12, 1994. Cf. reports of 1930s and 1940s in *Handbook of Missions* and *Evangelical Visitor.*

meetings, not different from that of any other denomination, but it is of special interest here as a sort of documentation of the Brethren in Christ way of holding revivals and as a revelation of Giles's first perception of the Brethren in Christ themselves.

First the tent and the people who attended:

> A tent had been pitched on the grounds, its sides rolled up to permit the circulation of air. A platform had been built at one end of the sawdust-covered enclosure, and a pulpit stand of rough lumber stood about midway of the platform. The preacher's Bible and a stack of paper-backed songbooks rested on the pulpit. Seats, made of the same rough lumber, fanned out from the platform in three staggered sections. Strung inside the tent, and suspended at intervals outside, were dim, tired lights which flickered with the asthmatic breathing of a sputtering old engine. (*Enduring Hills*, 41)

Inside, the tent is "comfortably full" (42) of folks of all ages, including entire families with young children, come there partly for the good of their souls but also just to gather sociably, and for the boys to meet their girls. "Most of the ridge folks sat to the middle and back, the White Caps crowding the front" (42).

The meeting begins and Giles devotes a page and a half to the singing (43-45). The opening song leader (not a White Cap) calls for his cousin to come forward with his guitar, and they launch into all five stanzas of a lively gospel song, followed by two more fast songs, the crowd standing, "panting and hot," and belting them out. A second song leader (also not a White Cap) leads a somber song at a slower tempo and then "another warning hymn," which evokes an anguished "Amen" and a chorus of fervent voices, "Have mercy, Lord, on me a sinner! Lord, hide me in the darkness! Let not the light shine! Lord, remember me, a sinner!" (45). The change is deliberate. "Before the preacher took over, the mood must be shifted to sin and guilt. The probing finger of fear must dig into scared hearts, scavenge certain secret sins, and invoke judgment" (44).

The preacher then announces Revelation as his text and launches forth on the terrors of "the last days [that] are upon us" and the need to "Repent and be prepared!" "for no man knoweth the hour."

> For an hour the lush, sonorous voice rose and fell majestically. He spoke of scorpions and seals and death and hell, and he charged

> the people with black sins and the lusts of the flesh. His face flamed and his voice roared as he pictured the fiery furnaces and the everlasting torment waiting down below. (45-46)

Finally "the exhorting, threatening voice . . . softened, rich and full, sweetly pleading." The song leader starts "Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling," followed by "one petitioning song after another." "One by one persons [answer] the call."

> They came forward to fall on their knees at the long bench in front of the platform. Some silently buried their faces in their hands; others moaned and sobbed and sang. The preacher's voice rose above the tumult as he went from one to the other, placing his hand upon them, and urging them to lay their hearts bare. The noise of the moaning voices and the hot odor of sweaty bodies fused into one purgatorial overtone. . . . (46)

Eventually Matt Jasper has one of his epileptic seizures and lets out a high scream. "'He's got it," shouts the preacher, "he's seen the light! He's got the old-time religion in his heart! Praise the Lord! A soul is saved tonight!' And he raised his hands high over his head" (47). Without disillusioning the preacher, Matt is carried out, and the meeting comes to an end.

Thus Giles gives a full and unvarnished picture of an old-fashioned tent meeting, complete with rough furnishings, animated preaching, hell-fire content, and an audience stirred with anguish. Unequivocally pegged as a White Cap meeting, it presents her readers with a particular view of the Brethren in Christ that is accurate in many details.

As was true all through the southern Appalachia region, Brethren in Christ tent meetings were usually well attended because they were one of the few social events available; people were entertained by good community singing and lively preaching. The exact size of the crowds or the tents cannot be ascertained since various tents were pitched over the years. A couple of hundred people is probably a good figure. Nor can the tent size and furnishings or the order of the service be corroborated by reports in the *Evangelical Visitor* or the *Handbook of Missions*, for while these faithfully report professions of faith and other responses to the preaching, they do not comment on such mundane details. But Giles's depictions of the tent interior and the order and length of the service

in *The Enduring Hills* do closely match the research findings and keen remembrances of Morris Sherk, a Brethren in Christ historian, 50 years later.[126]

About some of the preliminaries to the preaching—prayer, testimonies, the offering—Giles unfortunately says nothing. As noted above, however, she does say a lot about the singing, but something here is out of character: three men with no connections to the White Caps are in complete charge. They do an admirable job, but one suspects their main function is to weave in the characters of Giles's story. The method they follow seems to be typical of revival meetings, and those song-books stacked on the pulpit are surely the four-part harmony, shape-note sort that dominated all ridge music and were also adopted by the Brethren in Christ in Kentucky. Giles names four of the songs, but of these, only the altar call is in the Brethren in Christ hymnal in use at the time.[127]

What about the anguished emotional tenor—the probing of sin and guilt, the preacher's flaming face and roaring voice, the fervent cries for mercy, the moaning and sobbing, the "purgatorial overtone"? Add to all that Giles's final comments on the revival: "The meeting was coming to an exhausted close after three burning, passion-charged weeks. The preacher was worn out by the heat and the violent outpouring of his energy; the people were sated of their emotional hunger"(68). From *Evangelical Visitor* and *Handbook of Missions* reports, it is clear that the Brethren in Christ were earnest in bringing the salvation message; shouting and tears are often recorded. But was the preaching and response at this White Cap meeting as emotional as Giles presents them? Helen Dohner thoughtfully answered that emotion was naturally expressed, more so in the South than the North, but not purposely worked up.[128]

For the sake of her story, Giles probably melds in other revivals she

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[126] Morris N. Sherk, "Tent Evangelism Among the Brethren in Christ," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 11, no. 2, (August 1988), 159-60; reprinted in *Windows to the Church*, ed. E. Morris Sider, *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 26, no. 1 (April 2003), 140-69.

[127] Ebersole, interview, September 28, 2015. Shaped notes were entirely new to Giles and she explains the system and talks much about gospel singing in *40 Acres* (59-64). The songs Giles names: "God Put a Rainbow in the Cloud," "That Will Be Glory," "Hide Me, O My Saviour, Hide!" and "Softly and Tenderly."

[128] Helen Dohner, interview, April 12, 1994. Plenty of fiction and non-fiction writers touch on this fascinating subject, e.g., Weller, *Yesterday's People*, 123-27 and Jesse Stuart, *Beyond Dark Hills*, 83.

had experienced or read about, and she probably adds some emotional intensity. She could have painted the scene even more darkly traumatic. Indeed, in her second novel, *Miss Willie*, she describes another tent meeting through the eyes of an outsider who, like Giles herself, is trying to come to terms with ridge ways:

> [Miss Willie] felt as if she were witnessing a scene lifted straight from Dante's Inferno. These moaning, sobbing people were . . . actors upon a ghostly stage, with the dirty sides of the tent providing a slovenly backdrop, and the sputtering, spitting lanterns hissing a monotonous orchestral accompaniment. It was lurid, tawdry, and gross.... She saw neither dignity nor truth there. Only frenzy, and emotional fury, and chaos. (121)

The "purgatorial overtone" in *The Enduring Hills* is unflattering, but the Brethren in Christ can be thankful that Giles does not attribute the infernal revival in *Miss Willie* to the White Caps or make any allusion to them throughout the entire novel. When Giles first met the Dohners at Fairview in September 1949, she had just sent her publisher the final revisions to *The Enduring Hills* and had just finished the first draft of *Miss Willie*, to which, she says, she made no changes at all (2nd ed. foreword). Perhaps it was because of the revival passages in both these books that Giles, on that first memorable visit to the Dohners, expressed chagrin for lumping the Brethren in Christ with hillbilly religions.

In *40 Acres and No Mule*, her second book featuring a Brethren in Christ revival—which begins, "Í want to be as honest as I can in telling this story of our first year on the ridge"—Giles gives her impressions of the tent meeting she attended in 1945. Again she reports the emotional intensity, but this time she focuses mostly on the preaching style, a sort she had never before encountered:

> I have seen the Negro camp meeting in the South, and a few times I have attended a Holy Roller meeting. But I had never seen anything before like the White Cap meeting that night. Not only was there the emotional release of shouting, singing, praying, and crying, but to me there was a new type of preaching. Here in the hill country a preacher is considered good when he works up to a pitch of speaking that to the uninitiated is entirely unintelligible. It is delivered in a high monotone, in rapid, running form, punctuated

> with "ahs" every few words. "I tell you, ah, my brethren, ah, that the time, ah, is coming, ah, when every man, ah, shall be judged, ah, and be found wanting, ah. . . . [sic]" There never seems to be a period or a paragraph. The faster he goes, the more "ahs" he gets in, the higher and shriller his voice becomes, the more emotional the congregation becomes. . . . [I]t sounded to me exactly like the chant of a tobacco auctioneer. . . . That kind of preaching is not reserved wholly to the White Caps. It is also true of the primitive Baptists and the Church of God. (42)

This, then, is the basis for Giles's depiction of the emotional revival in *The Enduring Hills*. The presentation here exhibits the Brethren in Christ all the more as a rather volatile people, but given perhaps a bit of writer's license, it rings true with what she likely experienced at that Spout Springs revival.

The fast-speaking preacher she heard in August 1945 was brother E. J. Broyles (1887-1955) of California (but raised in Tennessee),[129] and he was not the only Brethren in Christ preacher prone to an animated style. Jesse Eyster (1874-1958) of California, a favorite evangelist in Kentucky, also put in a lot of "ah's" and was kindly known as "Gruntin' Eyster" in order to distinguish him from "Jumpin' Eyster," Bishop David Eyster (1866-1955) of Oklahoma.[130] As Giles indicates, the preaching style which so astonished her was common in other churches. In *Hill Man* (12) she makes the same observations about hill preachers in general and inserts a similar sample from the sermon of a Primitive Baptist preacher. Lynwood Montell, a folklorist, social historian, and Kentucky native, declared Giles "right on target in her portrayal of unlettered hillcountry [sic] preachers, who often punctuate their words with frequent 'ahs' rather than silent pauses."[131]

Exemplars and models

So far we have seen how Giles presents the White Caps by their history, their emotional tent meetings, and their peculiar practices of plain dress, prayer veiling, and total opposition to tobacco. Although so presented with respect and even appreciation, the Brethren in Christ are

[129] Ohio-Kentucky Joint Council Minutes: 1946, p. 36; *Evangelical Visitor,* November 21, 1955, 14.
[130] Elam Dohner to author, June 30, 1986 (Dohner Family Papers).
[131] William Lynwood Montell, "Folklore in the Works of Janice Holt Giles," in *Celebrating Janice*, 64.

nevertheless portrayed primarily as small, separatist, and revivalistic. But that skewed perception is moderated, and the Brethren in Christ placed in a very positive light, by Giles’s creation, in *Tara’s Healing*, of a new and thoroughly admirable character—White Cap preacher Jory Clark.

Tara’s Healing is the story of the psychological recovery of Tara Cochrane, former Army captain of Hod Pierce, at whose hill country farm he is staying. His restoration comes as he gets involved in the affairs of family and neighbors, largely through his friendship with Jory Clark, a young White Cap convert. Their stories are intricately bound together, and Jory is as much the protagonist as Tara. It is through Jory, mostly as observed by Tara, that much is told about the Brethren in Christ, all of it attractive and appealing.

There is no doubt that Jory is modeled primarily after Edgar Giles and somewhat after Elam Dohner. It was indeed fortuitous for both Janice Holt Giles and the Brethren in Christ that she became friends with the Dohners and Edgar just when she was open to the sort of warm, personal religion offered by the Brethren in Christ and just when she was ready to write a third book and was looking for material. Both within the Tara’s Healing text and in subsequent references to it, Giles makes amply clear the connection between her White Cap exemplar and these models.

In *Tara’s Healing*, the superintendent (i.e., Elam Dohner) compliments Jory, and in so doing, he identifies him as the mission’s only native-born preacher (i.e., Edgar Giles):

> The superintendent came, and Tara met him. . . . “Fine man, Brother Clark,” the man said to Tara, “fine man. Only native preacher among us, but he can do more with the people in five minutes than the rest of us can do in a month. Seems to understand them better.”
>
> “Because he’s one of them, perhaps,” Tara said.
>
> “Perhaps. It doesn’t always work out that way, though. Sometimes a native raised up among the people antagonizes them. It takes a fine talent of humility to do otherwise. Brother Clark has it” (49).

This passage is later referenced in *40 Acres and No Mule,* where Jory is explicitly identified as Edgar:

> Edgar is a White Cap preacher, and I may as well admit that in *Tara’s Healing* I used about Jory a remark that the superintendent

> of the work in Kentucky had made to me about Edgar. Mr. Dohner told me one time that Edgar, being native to the country, had more influence and accomplished more good than all the rest of them put together. I thought that was an extremely fine thing to have said about one. And I knew it was justified . . . . (226)

A couple of caveats here. First, while Edgar was the only native-born Brethren in Christ minister at the time and the only ordained minister, he was not the only native-born Brethren in Christ minister ever to preach in Kentucky. Lambert Bottoms, a first cousin of Edgar on his mother's side, was licensed 1941-44,[132] but he was off the scene before Janice or the Dohners moved to Adair County and is never mentioned in her writings. It is a bit puzzling that Giles never states directly that Jory is ordained. He is always merely a "preacher," although it is clear from his church roles and duties performed that he is fully credentialed. The book reviewers and critics usually call him a "lay preacher," but "lay" is erroneous.

Second, a portion of Giles's portrait of Jory is also based on Elam Dohner. The Dohners said that she intermingled facts relating the two men.[133] Regarding preaching, Elam wrote, "she was reflecting some of my thinking and transferring to a local color man."[134] Regarding dress, Edgar did not wear a high buttoned, erect-collar vest, contrary to the description of Jory (49), but Elam often did, especially for church occasions.[135] In a reply to a letter from a reader, Giles herself gives much of the credit for Jory to Elam:

> I shall be happy to give you the name of the superintendent of their work in Kentucky . . . . He is a splendid person . . . [sic] as a matter of fact, the character of Jory is patterned to a large extent after him. He has the large heart and outflowing love that I tried to give Jory. He is the Rev. E. O. Dohner, of Ella, Kentucky. I can assure you he will open every door possible to your interest.[136]

Nevertheless, most of the character of Jory, as the native White Cap preacher, matches the life of Edgar rather than the life of Elam. In a letter

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[132] Lists of licensed ministers in *General Conference Minutes: 1941-1944*.

[134] Elam and Helen Dohner, interviews, May 23, 1986 and August 1, 1986.

[135] Elam Dohner to author, June 30, 1986, Dohner Family Papers.

[135] Home Evangel Photographs show Elam in a suit with erect-collar vest but Edgar in a suit with regular V-cut vest or white dress shirt and no coat.

[136] Giles to Vern L. Campbell, San Francisco, February 8, 1952.

to their agent defending the authenticity of *Harbin's Ridge*, and writing as Henry, the supposed author, Janice states that "all of our books are drawn from life," and she especially vouches for her character Jory: "And in the new book you are now reading [*Tara's Healing*], Ferdy Jones and Corinna are real, the belled ha'nt is real, Old Man Clark is real, and Hattie is very real. She's my own mother. Above all, the White Cap preacher is real.[137] Listing Jory along with these other characters modeled on actual ridge persons, it is certain Giles was thinking of Edgar the native son, not Elam the mission superintendent.

Likenesses with Edgar are easily found, although as with any fictional character, there must be some variance from the model. Through the course of the story we learn that Jory went as far as eighth grade at the local one-room school, served in the ground force of the Air Corps, and took some Army courses, which "sort of straightened [him] out on [his] grammar"[138] and opened his mind so that he "kept up some kind of reading and studying ever since" (106). He came home from the Pacific and fell hopelessly in love with his brother's wife (55), joined the White Caps (two to three years before *Tara's Healing* begins), and became a fully ordained minister. He still holds his love in painful check even though his brother is now dead (58), lives alone in a cabin on an acre of ground, and reads pretty much, including the newspapers (239) and Augustine's *Confessions* (105)!

Edgar Giles also had only an elementary education (at the same school as in the fiction) but only to the third grade. He would not have read Augustine[139] and was never in the military.[140] Like Jory, he began preaching at a young age (18-19),[141] but at the opening of *Tara's Healing*, Jory is about 23 years old and single, whereas at that time Edgar was 36, married, and the father of four children.

Regarding Jory's livelihood, Giles draws information directly from what she knew about the finances of Brethren in Christ home mission

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[137] Stuart, 66, quoting letter to Oliver Swan, October 11, 1950.

[138] In public or private, unlike all his ridge-born neighbors, Jory speaks standard English, rarely using Appalachian idiom.

[139] Ebersole, interview, July 28, 1986; Elam and Helen Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.

[140] Elam Dohner, interview, May 23, 1986.

[141] By 1986 Edgar had been "fifty-four years a minister" (sermon, Bloomington Brethren in Christ Church, August 3, 1986).

staff, which Mary passes on to Tara: "He has a large garden each year, and he has a cow and chickens. He gets the freewill offerings from his church, which amount to eight or ten dollars a month. And he also gets the princely sum of fifteen dollars a month from his Church board"(45).

Giles's figures are perhaps from Elam Dohner, who stated that, except for the $8-10 offering, the financial arrangements matched his own, not Edgar's. The $15 per month accords with the allowance for mission workers approved by General Conference in 1948.[142]

In *40 Acres and No Mule*, Giles skips over Edgar's mission stipend and writes instead about the bi-vocational nature of his work: "Edgar preaches for love. He makes his living doing almost any kind of honest work he can find to do"—as farmer, builder, auto mechanic, plumber, electrician, maintenance worker (226). As for offerings, Edgar himself stated that he never asked for money for preaching, even at first when destitution loomed.[143] Both Edgar and Jory thus fit the expected pattern for any respected preacher in southern Appalachia.

Beyond these outward similarities, Jory is closely modeled after Edgar in character and personality. Throughout the entire novel, Giles presents Jory as both likeable and exemplary, and elsewhere she says much the same of Edgar, as did others. Jory is loving of all he meets, beloved by his parishioners, and (contrary to the spurning of White Caps in *The Enduring Hills*) respected and liked by all his neighbors (49, 219). "[E]asy, gentle, slow-spoken" (49), he is long-suffering and self-giving, accepting of people and their own thoughts and ways (27, 41, 59, 74-76, 224), never preachy or pontifical (227). He is a bit naïve on occasion (132-35), sometimes in need of help (122), and mortal enough to get exasperated (85), be frightened by a belled haunt (111-14), and act out in hurt, anger, and "flaming longing" (208-9). In short, "There was a lot of the saint in Jory Clark" (247), but he is also an approachable human being.

By all accounts, Edgar was the same sort of self-giving minister as Jory and had the same kindly personality. Kentucky mission staff remembered

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[142] Elam Dohner, interview, May 23, 1986. But this does not entirely agree with either the allowance for a superintendent (50 percent above the basic) or with that for a mission pastorate ($90 per quarter plus $15 per child) (*Handbook of Missions: 1948, 49*; *General Conference Minutes: 1948*, 77-78). As a native pastor, Edgar seems to have been treated differently from imported mission pastors. Sermon, Bloomington Brethren in Christ Church, August 3, 1986.

[143] Sermon, Bloomington Brethren in Christ Church, August 3, 1986.

him with fondness and respect, and there are frequent appreciative reports of “Brother Giles” in the *Evangelical Visitor* and *Handbook of Mission*. Elam and Helen Dohner lovingly recalled his slow-spoken manner, affirmed the praise others gave his preaching, and credited him with doing “as much real shepherding as . . . anyone.”[144] Esther Ebersole remembers him as even-tempered and a good preacher and pastor, and she adds, “I don’t know that anybody has not liked Edgar.”[145] In his memorial tribute to “this saint of God,” Owen Alderfer, then bishop of Central Conference, wrote, “Edgar Giles has been the representative type of the Brethren in Christ witness in the South. . . . Brother Giles had a way with words and put ideas together in such a manner that they powerfully impacted the listener. . . . Many persons today regard him as their spiritual father since they have come to know Christ through his ministry.[146]

Regarding the countenance and bearing of Jory, Giles is highly complimentary and seems to base that positive image on Edgar. From *Tara’s Healing*:

> [Jory] looked, as always, scrubbed and clean. He was a fine-looking man, Tara thought, one who would feel at ease anywhere. His poise came from his lack of self-consciousness, from his concern and interest in others, and from some serious, inherent dignity which had been implemented with the finding of his own place in life (71).

From *40 Acres and No Mule*, where she admits that Edgar is the model for her “fine-looking man” with a “lack of self-consciousness”: “[Y]ou’ll look far and wide before you find a sweeter man than Edgar Giles. His face is the most pleasant face I think I ever saw. Clear, candid eyes; frank, open countenance; good, broad forehead and square chin. And he always wears a smile. Always (226).

That smile so impressed Giles that she makes it the defining mark of Jory’s inherent sweet nature, and it is pointed out in no fewer than eight separate passages. The two longest contain the essence of the others:[147]

> [Jory] stood back from the bed and smiled. The smile flashed quickly across the concern on his face. Quickly, and almost shyly.

[144] Elam and Helen Dohner, interview, May 23, 1986.

[145] Ebersole, interview, July 28, 1986.

[146] Owen H. Alderfer, tribute to Edgar Giles, *Evangelical Visitor,* September 1988, 27.

[147] The other six occurrences of Jory’s smile: pp. 51, 188, 227, 231, 247, 253.

> It sweetened his face unbelievably. It laid his face bare of defenses. It offered the man himself, timidly, tenderly. (26)
>
> Jory's face was gentle when he looked at John, and he smiled. When he smiles, Tara thought, it's like a lamp being lighted. I never saw a smile so sweet . . . [*sic*] so loving. It's as if his whole big heart had opened up before you. (223)

Giles's effusively positive portrayal of Jory Clark is a good thing for the Brethren in Christ, for in this novel he bears nearly all the weight of representing the entire denomination. He is the only White Cap with whom Tara has much contact. The superintendent appears only twice, speaks but little, and remains nameless. The clinic nurse also figures briefly but speaks not at all. Several individual church members are named and described in passing, at one particular service, but they are singled out primarily for their idiosyncrasies.

To Edgar Giles, the model for this strong, attractive character, the Brethren in Christ are indebted indeed. How Janice Holt Giles uses Jory and his prototype to further present the denomination will be apparent as we consider her treatment of various Brethren in Christ doctrines and rituals.

Doctrines

The 1941 *Constitution-Doctrine*, *By-Laws and Rituals* contains sixteen articles in part 2, Faith and Doctrine. One way or another, Giles presents or at least touches on all but two.[148] In the above section, we have already seen how the doctrines of "Separation," "Christian Apparel," and "Prayer Veiling" get the most attention. Some of the other doctrines, not always labeled as doctrines or beliefs, also manifest themselves in various practices depicted in the stories. Most are concentrated in *Tara's Healing*.

Actually, it is only in *Tara's Healing* that Giles devotes attention to Brethren in Christ doctrine per se. Most of the diverse doctrines, other than those regarding separation and apparel, show up on one page, where Jory recites for Tara "the majestic" and "sonorous words of the creed" (58, 57). Here Jory repeats verbatim three of the nine paragraphs from

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[148] Doctrinal articles not referenced are "The Holy Scriptures" and "Dedication of Children."

[149] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 10. Giles has several typological discrepancies, the worst being the insertion of ellipsis marks at the end of the first two paragraphs, which give the false impression of omissions.

the *Constitution-Doctrine*, article 5, "Our Creed"[149]—a lot to spout out all at once, but the Dohners were quite sure that Edgar, his model, could have quoted the *Constitution-Doctrine* at length.[150] The underlying beliefs concerning the Bible, the Trinity, and the Great Commission are skipped over, these being much like doctrines common to many other denominations. Instead, she incorporates those statements of belief that are distinctive to the Brethren in Christ: justification, sanctification, and transformation of life; the five universal ordinances (baptism, footwashing, communion, holy kiss, prayer veiling); separation, nonconformity, and nonresistance; and, rather strangely, the Second Coming. Mostly she focuses on the doctrines associated with the more interesting ordinances and rituals.

To write about all these doctrines and rituals, Giles had at hand church documents and other literature supplied by the Dohners, as mentioned above. Specifically, they had given her a copy of the 1937 *Constitution-Doctrine, By-Laws and Rituals* as finally adopted in 1941, the *1940 Manual for Ministers* (the first such manual, still current in 1950), and the little pamphlet *What We Believe and Why We Believe It* (1927).[151] In her foreword to *Tara's Healing*, Giles thanks "Rev. E. O. Dohner, superintendent of the work in Kentucky," for providing her with "the constitution and the creed" and "various tracts and pamphlets regarding the work of the Church," and she also thanks him and "Rev. H. G. Brubaker, Th.D., General Conference Secretary" for their approval to quote from the documents (7-8 of first printing and of second edition.).[152]

Justification, regeneration, and sanctification

Giles makes only one brief foray into the Brethren in Christ theological doctrine that is foundational to all the more interesting stuff (ordinances, rituals, distinctive practices). For Tara's benefit, Jory recites the third

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[150] Elam and Helen Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.

[151] Elam Dohner to author, June 30, 1986 (Dohner Family Papers); interview, May 23, 1986. Dohner's letter states, "We gave Janice a copy of the 1939 Constitution and By-Laws . . . ," but the (revised) text quoted in Tara's Healing makes it clear that Giles had in hand the edition whose cover reads, "Final adoption General Conference of 1941."

[152] Giles's foreword is replaced in the University Press of Kentucky reprint with a foreword by Wade Hall.

paragraph of the Creed: "We believe that the work of Calvary is made effective to the believer through justification (forgiveness of committed sin), and sanctification (heart cleansing and empowerment); and that the work of grace thus wrought in the heart will effect a transformation of life and conduct (58).[153] Quite a lot to digest, but Giles makes no effort to explain or interpret. The meaning of "transformation," however, is made clear enough through the character of Jory, changed from a drinking and roistering, "wild and crazy" malcontent. But for "justification" and the esoteric doctrine of "sanctification," the reader is left with only the short parenthetical definitions of the Creed itself.

Giles would have noticed the emphasis given to sanctification in Faith and Doctrine article 4, which "endorsed the essence of perfectionism" [but] without the term "second work of grace."[154] But except for the six words of the Creed, she ignores the subject entirely and never makes reference to "perfectionism" or "baptism of the Holy Spirit." "Holiness" is mentioned only when Jory explains the meaning of the prayer veiling (*Tara's Healing*, 50), and negatively, when *Miss Willie* repudiates a revival as a "spectacle of rampant holiness" (*Miss Willie*, 122).

Holiness and sanctification were preached in Kentucky from the beginning and into the early 1950s,[155] but without regularly attending Brethren in Christ services, Giles would not have picked up on that. Most likely she did not understand the concept of sanctification or grasp its significance. By 1950 the once volatile issue had been resolved into just another accepted doctrine and was no longer a hot topic that would have caught her attention.

Nonresistance

Tara's Healing is the only book in which Giles sets forth the Brethren in Christ doctrine of nonresistance. Since a main purpose of the novel is to present the curious sect, she could not very well ignore this key and

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[153] *Constitution-Doctrine,* 10.

[154] Wittlinger, 330-31. Owen H. Alderfer, "The Mind of the Brethren in Christ: A Synthesis of Revivalism and the Church Conceived as Total Community" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School and University Center, 1964), 239.

[155] Helen Dohner, interview, April 12, 1994. Reports of sanctification preached and experienced in Kentucky appear in *Handbook of Missions,* 1933, 1935, 1941, 1952-55; see also Albert Engle, 20-21.

distinctive tenet of the faith. The *Constitution-Doctrine* sets forth the doctrine briefly in the Creed and expounds upon it at length as Faith and Doctrine article 6.[156] *What We Believe* boldly proclaims belief “in non-resistance in a qualified sense—that war, dueling, suicide and prenatal destruction of human life is murder, as well as all other forms of human lifetaking.”[157]

Besides reading about the doctrine, Giles would also have heard of this unpopular tenet from other people, for in Kentucky the Brethren in Christ held true. A report in the *Evangelical Visitor* report in 1949 commends Edgar Giles for courageously weaving the doctrine of “non-resistance into his sermon” even though “[t]his subject isn’t preached about around here” [in other churches.][158] The *Courier-Journal* article quoted above reported that the White Caps “are unalterably opposed to the bearing of arms, classifying themselves as conscientious objectors in line with a policy of nonresistance.”[159]

Giles addresses the subject directly in the *Tara’s Healing* foreword: “They do not believe in violence of any kind, not even the violence of the tongue. They believe in nonresistance . . .” (7). In chapter 4, Jory recites the entire seventh paragraph of the Creed, which links nonresistance with nonconformity and separation:

> We believe that the Scripture teaches that Christians should not be conformed to the world, but that they are a separate people; and we believe that it teaches nonresistance in a qualified sense, that it is not the Christian’s privilege to take up the sword or to fight with carnal weapons; yet it is his duty to be strictly loyal to the Government under which he lives in all things that do not conflict with, or are not forbidden by the Word. (58)

Jory’s words are backed up by his actions, and his non-resistance conviction is clearly shown to spring from no lack of courage. Before the story begins, he had served with the Army in the Pacific (55, 106).

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[156] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 10, 18-20.
[157] *What We Believe*, [5].
[158] Esther Ebersole and Esther Greenawalt, “Fairview Report,” *Evangelical Visitor Missionary Supplement,* February 21, 1949, 9.
[159] Thomas V. Miller, 5.

In the story itself, he twice puts himself in harm's way. First, he flings his own body over Ferdy's to protect him from being stabbed by his wife gone berserk, and with Tara, he corners and wrestles her down (132-34). Second, in the climactic scene with a desperate old murderer, Jory shows up uninvited to forestall a gunfight and to rescue a young woman taken hostage:

> [Tara] saw Jory climbing . . . steadily and certainly toward the flame of the old man's rifle. Jory, who did not believe in violence. Jory, whose whole faith rested in the doctrine of nonresistance. He was as sure as death that even now Jory did not have a gun. Would not have used one had they given it to him. And he was as sure as death that what waited for Jory at the top of the niched steps was violence that he would not even try to resist. (240)

He is spared only because Tara pulls him back and another man holds him down. Giles thus makes a point of showing that Jory does not shy away from danger even when his commitment to defenseless nonresistance subjects him to certain fatality.

The two lead characters of *Tara's Healing* differ radically in their backgrounds and experience with violence: Captain Tara Cochrane, MD, Hod's "reckless, tough, tireless officer" all through the worst fighting of the war (97), always addressed as "Cap'n," never "Doctor;" and plain, gentle Jory Clark, a White Cap preacher, whose (noncombatant?) service in the Air Corps ground force is only incidentally referenced. Giles does not point out these underlying contrasts in the story of their warm friendship, but the contrasts are nevertheless there. Sometimes she accentuates the difference in their ideas about the use of force, as when Tara sobers up Ferdy by fist fighting and dowsing and, in the scuffle, twice scoffing at Jory's notions of "love and forbearance" (184).

Giles herself was by no means a pacifist. She had married a soldier, was proud of his war record and the feats of the U.S. military, and published two works of non-fiction about World War II—*The G.I. Journal of Sergeant Giles* (1965) and *The Damned Engineers* (1970). Most of her novels have plenty of violence and bloodshed, not necessarily extolled, but when committed by her protagonists, condoned and justified. In *Shady Grove,* a late novel set on the ridge, her narrator pokes fun at a preacher's fear of getting involved in a gunfight and slyly denigrates his draft deferment (78-79, 81).

On the other hand, in a couple of places, Giles speaks directly against "violence and needless destruction" (*Harbin's Ridge,* 212) and is well aware of the horrors of war—"the death, the dirt, the disease" (*Plum Thicket*, 55-56). In *Tara's Healing* she muses regretfully that men forget all that and remember war "Nostalgically and sentimentally. Their finest hour. Which is one reason why there's always another war" (18).

All in all, Giles takes some risk in presenting the idea of nonresistance to the degree she does. Most readers would endorse and admire the phrases of love and service which Jory lifts from the Non-resistance article of the *Constitution-Doctrine*. Few, however, would embrace nonviolence, nonresistance, and love of enemies—radical notions, especially for early readers only five years past victory in a total war against undeniably evil forces. Most of her readers would be more apt to look askance at Brethren in Christ pacifism and to share the feelings of her young father/farmer character in 1943: "'I ain't any too happy 'bout stayin' out. Sorta feel like I'm lettin' somebody else do my fightin' '" (*Enduring Hills*, 167).

Divine healing

Giles deals with the subject of faith healing at some length in the second book of the Piney Ridge series, *Miss Willie*. In that novel Irma and John Walton lose their young son to pneumonia when Irma, newly converted to an unbending faith-healing sect, refuses medical help. The couple separates for several months until, in *Tara's Healing*, Jory shows them a way back together through the Brethren in Christ's more tolerant and nuanced doctrine of divine healing.

Early in *Tara's Healing*, Giles introduces the matter when Rose taunts Jory about curing Hattie's stomach troubles: "The White Caps believe in faith healin', don't they, Jory?" (75). His reply clearly states the Brethren in Christ open-minded stance: "We believe that there are some who can be healed by faith. I have been myself. I know others who have been. But we believe also that it is not open to all. That's why we train a few of the women in each church community to be nurses. That's why we have medical missionaries. It is not given to all to be healed divinely" (76). Concerning the relationship of faith and medicine, Jory tells Tara that he never ceases praying for a doctor for the settlement (115-16), and he explains to John and Irma, "'Sometimes, too, we must believe the doctor's

way is the Lord's way. It isn't a doubt to use medicine and to call in the doctor! It isn't a lack of faith!'" (224). And though "sometimes we are powerless to use it," he says, we practice divine healing "[b]ecause it's there to be used if we can. Because for some of us it has power" (224); "Faith doesn't try to stop death. It only tries to keep death from being the victor. It only says, If this flesh can be useful to you longer, Lord, heal it and use it. If it has done its work, take it away" (223).

Jory's statements indicate that Giles had read the "Divine Healing" article in the *Constitution-Doctrine*. Faith and Doctrine article 14 takes care to state that "divine healing is the privilege accorded to every believer of resorting to or trusting in the exercise of divine power" but also that the gifts of faith and healing are "for individual cases," that "not all have these gifts," and that "divine healing does not immunize against physical death."[160] She would also have read Rituals article 13, "Anointing the Sick," and the detailed instructions in the Manual for Ministers.[161]

Giles most likely would also have heard stories of local healings through the Brethren in Christ mission.[162] The first tent meeting in 1919 had attracted the interest of many after the healing of a Mrs. Stevenson, long an invalid,[163] and healings continued to take place in the years following, as evidenced by occasional reports in the *Evangelical Visitor* in the 1940s and 1950s.[164]

In *Tara's Healing*, Irma and Hod's mother, around whom much of the story revolves, is apparently one of those for whom divine healing is powerless. But in any case, the story has no room for an actual healing service. Given ridge sensibilities, it is only natural that Hattie and her family (except for Irma), though grateful for Jory's care, have no mind to be involved in any White Cap anointing ritual.

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[160] *Constitution-Doctrine,* 32-33.

[161] *A Manual for Ministers: Authorized by the General Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church* (Nappanee, IN: E. V. Publishing House, 1940), 30-32.

[162] Elam and Helen Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.

[163] Albert Engle, 33; Dortha Dohner, 409.

[164] *Evangelical Visitor,* February 14, 1944, p. 8; February 20, 1950, p. 75; *Evangelical Visitor Missionary Supplement*, August 12, 1946, 5; May 5, 1947, 4; August 11, 1947, 8. Elam Dohner was involved in a flurry of healings in 1951, but all that was after Giles had finished writing *Tara's Healing*, except for editing (*Evangelical Visitor*, September 17, 1951; *Handbook of Missions*, 1951, 13; Helen Dohner, interview, April 12, 1994).

Whether Giles gets everything right on the doctrine may be open to debate, but she at least shows the Brethren in Christ as having a sane and sensible position. In contrast with the dismay she expresses about the unbending, dogmatic sort of faith healing in *Miss Willie,* she seems to present this more balanced doctrine in *Tara's Healing* with favor and relief. At the same time it gives her a way to resolve the unhappy situation of two of her main Piney Ridge characters.

Second Coming

Giles seems to have an exaggerated sense of the importance of the Second Coming in Brethren in Christ theology. In the foreword to *Tara's Healing,* she heads her short summary of their doctrines with "they believe in the imminence of the Second Coming of Christ and live in constant readiness for it" (7), and she repeats that word for word in *40 Acres and No Mule* (42). In the tent meeting scene in *The Enduring Hill*, she has the preacher exhorting repentance because "the last days are upon us . . . . The bridegroom cometh, and no man knoweth the hour" (45). Again in *40 Acres*, on which that scene is based, she quotes the preacher ranting on "that the time, ah, is coming, ah, when every man, ah, shall be judged, ah, and be found wanting" (42).

It is easy to see where Giles picked up the notion that the Second Coming was basic to Brethren in Christ faith and practice. As just noted, it was the sermon topic on the occasion of her first exposure to the White Caps. Further, she could not miss it in the *Constitution-Doctrine,* which forthrightly states, "We believe that the second coming of Christ is imminent."[165] (Jory skips this when he recites the Creed; perhaps the clauses about a premillennial resurrection and punishment of the wicked were a bit too much.) The *Constitution-Doctrine* also makes reference to this fundamental belief in three different articles in part 2, Faith and Doctrine.[166] In the *What We Believe* pamphlet, a full quarter of the text is given over to "the personal return of the Lord Jesus in Glory."[167]

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[165] "Our Creed," *Constitution-Doctrine,* 10.

[166] *Constitution-Doctrine*, part 2, Faith and Doctrine: article 2, "Sin and Redemption," p. 14; article 5, Christian Stewardship, p. 17; article 10, "The Lord's Supper," 25.

[167] *What We Believe,* [5-6].

In the mid-1940s and the 1950s, numerous articles about the Second Coming are sprinkled through the *Evangelical Visitor*, and it was not unusual for reports from Kentucky to refer to the last days and the Lord's return. An article about the Brethren in Christ in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* stresses three times over the White Cap belief in "hour-by-hour readiness for the second coming of Christ.[168] Mission staff found that to be overstated, although the Dohners allowed that to the reporter the Second Coming may have sounded emphasized.[169] Esther Ebersole stated that it was not preached any more in Kentucky than in the North.[170]

Service of love

In Brethren in Christ theology, compassion for and service to neighbor and all mankind, although not doctrines themselves, are tied closely to the basic doctrines of redemption and regeneration. No matter how fundamental the underlying tenet of God's saving grace through Christ, following Jesus' way of love is essential to their entire belief system and, in the end, the primary test of genuine conversion. From the "Regeneration" article in the *Constitution-Doctrine*, Giles could read, "Being now justified . . . [the believer] now manifests a life of righteousness, a new love toward his fellowmen, and a desire to do God's will."[171] And from the "Non-resistance" article:

> (1) Individually, we . . . exercise a positive ministry of love rather than hatred, and therefore, "Do good unto all men." This feature of love, service, and sacrifice is further enjoined upon us in His teachings about going the second mile, lending to the borrower, and saluting those outside the household of faith, etc. (2) Socially, we show submission, fidelity, courtesy, tolerance, and sympathy. (3) Commercially, we labor with our hands the thing that is good that we may have to give to him that needeth. . . . (4) Religiously, our attitude is one of unity, love, fellowship, peace and harmony.[172]

We have already seen how in the foreword to *Tara's Healing*, Giles

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[168] Thomas V. Miller, 5-8.

[169] Elam and Helen Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.

[170] Ebersole, interview, July 28, 1986.

[171] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 15.

[172] Ibid., 19-20.

noted the mission's mandate to pursue "a positive and active life of love and service to their fellow men" (7). We have also noted that as an institution, this mandate is carried out mainly through its spiritual ministries and the nurses and clinic. But much of the service of the Brethren in Christ comes in the form of mundane personal interactions with their neighbors. Giles shows this almost entirely through the self-giving actions of the saintly Jory Clark, and, she lays it on thick!

In telling Tara how he came to join the White Caps, Jory quotes and paraphrases the *Constitution-Doctrine*, applying the injunctions of love and service directly to himself:

> "It made me . . . want to live like that . . . [*sic*] going the second mile, lending to the borrower, saluting them outside the household of faith. It made me want to toil with my hands so I might have that with which to give my brother, and it made me want to live clean and in unity, with fellowship and love, with my neighbor." (58)

As revealed in a heated exchange with Tara, he is motivated by a genuine love for people as people—people mired sometimes in "filth and disease and dirt and shame" (Tara's disparaging assessment), but also holding hopes and dreams, worthy of respect and needing to be loved:

> "I don't look at the kind of people they are. All I see is what they need. There's nobody who doesn't need love. . . . the kind that sort of spreads out from one person to another, and lets 'em know that no matter what they've done, or what they are, or how they live . . . [*sic*] no matter what, they're still worth loving. You take love away, and there's nothing left. Someone's got to let folks know they're important. Everyone's worth something. And worth saving. And I don't know of but one way to save folks . . . [*sic*] and that's to love them . . . [*sic*] and to let them know they're loved." (108)

It is a remarkable declaration of the conviction underlying Jory's tireless service, and by implication, that of his brethren. But also remarkable is Giles's steering clear of any reference to God or Christ, to whom Jory's model would have pointed as the prime impetus of all Christian living. Only once in the whole story does "the Lord" get credit, for moving "in mysterious ways his wonders to perform" (85).

"And can you go around spreading that kind of love everywhere?" Tara questions. No, but Jory intends to do so "up Wishful Hollow and the ridge" on every last person he knows (108). And he so does, with the

strange exception of his own family,[173] so that three times Tara calls him a "good Samaritan" (122, 130, 183).

As already noted, he is first seen mending fences and stripping tobacco for Hod (fresh out of the hospital) because "[h]is religion . . . commands him to help his neighbor. But he'll not take one penny for helping" (45). He then moves unbidden over to Hod's parents' house, for five long months, to care for Hod's mother, dying of cancer (122).[174] Twice he gets Ferdy Jones home when found drunk on the road (83, 130), and he rustles up walnuts for the family to shell (84), takes the parents and all eight children to the clinic for three weeks of daily shots (142), and searches two counties for a suitable job for Ferdy (145). He also drives other people to the doctor in town twenty miles away (48), collects household stuff for Gault and Becky after their fire (187), and helps fell logs (194) and build their new house (196). Finally, perhaps his most telling act of caring, he tenderly and unobtrusively saves Tara from despair and disgrace when found drowning his sorrows in whiskey (214).

This last act, a sort of emotional culmination of Jory's relationship with Tara, illustrates what Giles might have read in the Manual for Minsters: "[The pastor's] work outside of his immediate membership leads him to be on the lookout for those who are discouraged and down-hearted, always pursuing lost souls with a zeal which knows no respite . . . ."[175] But there is never a sense that Jory is merely following a forced directive to rescue a poor sinner. Rather, all the experiences Jory shares with Tara evince a genuine and mutual friendship. The White Cap really likes and appreciates the unbelieving Tara for who he is, and Tara reciprocates.

In the midst of all this activity, Jory continues to perform "his Sunday's work" (83) and many pastoral duties. "I've not been neglecting my work at the church all this time," he tells Rose (207). Earlier he talks to Tara about getting around to the scattered churches, tending to the Bible schools, going to see folks, and taking folks to the doctor (48). How he could keep

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[173] Even though Jory's father is central to the novel's mystery and climax, Jory has no direct contact with him or the rest of the family (not counting his brother's widow and child), and even when his father is killed, he remains coolly (and unconvincingly) aloof (246-247).

[174] Not at all realistic; the family would have called in a woman (Ebersole, interview, July 28, 1986).

[175] *Manual for Ministers*, 95-96.

doing all this, plus prepare his sermons, feed his livestock, and tend his garden, is hard to imagine. However that may be, Giles in this way gives a glimpse of the busy life of a White Cap pastor, but not in any detail and not with any description of normal worship services, Sunday schools, or Bible schools. Giles's portrayal of Brethren in Christ religious services is confined almost entirely to her presentation of a tent meeting (already discussed) and a love feast (see below).

Lest Brethren in Christ service and altruism, as seen in Jory's self-giving life, be overrated, it should be noted that the ridge also had its own ethos of service and mutual aid. Giles often praises that community spirit and shows it in action. She writes of neighbors pitching into the house and farm work in times of illness (*Enduring Hills*, 117; *Tara's Healing*, 190; *40 Acres*, 50) and women helping her move in, paint, and paper (*40 Acres*, 52, 57). Whenever asked, car owners drop everything to take anyone to the doctor (*40 Acres*, 166, 172) and they help each other with repairs (*40 Acres*, 50). Household goods are shared with a burnt-out family (*Tara's Healing*, 187) and a new house raised (*Tara's Healing*, 184, 196). Neighbors watch all night with the bodies of the dead (*40 Acres*, 170-71), the settlement's "pauper idiot" is comforted and humored (*40 Acres*, 202-9), and the appeals of chronically dependent neighbors, though exasperating, are nevertheless met (*40 Acres*, 161-74).

In both fiction and memoir, Giles comments on how ridge folks are bound and "knit so close together" (*Enduring Hills*, 117; *40 Acres*, 210). Good, ugly, or moonshiner, "everyone is your neighbor. And they stand by you when you need help, and you stand by them" (*Enduring Hills,* 201, 210; *Miss Willie*, 161). As Tara observes, "It seems to be the business of everyone up here to be his brother's keeper" (*Tara's Healing*, 188). The Good Samaritan enterprise is not a monopoly held by the White Caps.

Rituals

Brethren in Christ rituals are laid out in fifteen articles in part 4 of the 1941 *Constitution-Doctrine,* By-Laws and Rituals, and these and several others are further elaborated in *A Manual for Ministers*.[176] Giles presents or at least mentions six of the rituals and writes at length concerning one. With the exception of baptism, mentioned in four of her books, they

are treated only in *Tara's Healing*, with most of the material packed into chapter 4. That chapter is largely dedicated to a love feast and focuses on the preparatory meeting and footwashing service, which afford a brief look at the congregation and at the White Cap preacher in his pulpit.

Love feast

In describing the love feast, Giles for the most part follows the procedures and language of the *Constitution-Doctrine* and the *Manual for Ministers*, but she also incorporates her firsthand observations of an actual love feast. The spring love feast at Evangel Chapel, on Robinson Ridge, three miles north of Knifley, was held on Saturday, May 20, 1950, and Giles, who was then working on *Tara's Healing,* was eager to attend. Furthermore, she asked to have the services covered by the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, to which Elam Dohner and the churches agreed, so long as the event would be treated respectfully.[177] Two weeks later a full front-page article about the service and the White Caps, with thirteen photographs, was published in the *Courier-Journal Magazine*.[178]

With no reference at all to the unusual presence of spectators, superintendent Dohner merely reported in the *Evangelical Visitor* that the Evangel Chapel service "was a time of sweet fellowship even though the attendance was not large."[179] On her part, Giles was fully aware of the uniqueness of this meeting of public press and private ritual and was very appreciative of the exceptional opportunity. In her foreword to *Tara's Healing*, she thanks "the joint congregations for allowing [her] to witness the 'love feast' described in these pages," and years later, in *A Little Better than Plumb*, she again acknowledges "the generous cooperation of the church itself in writing the book" (8).

Chapter 4 begins with Tara ready to go to the love feast. His hosts, Hod and Mary Pierce are astonished at his attending any White Cap service

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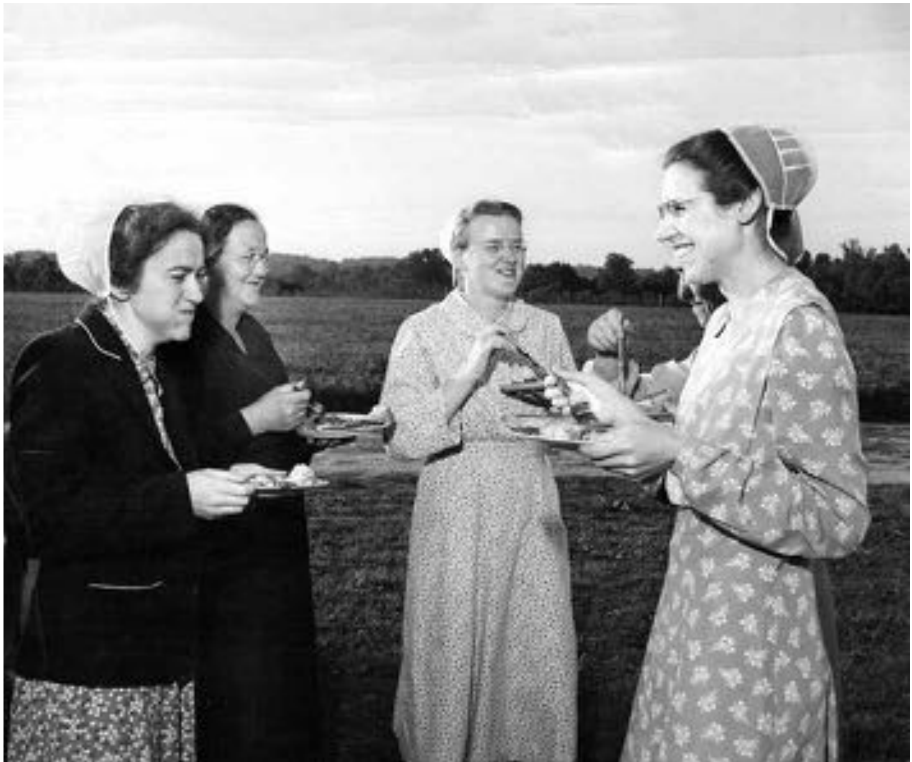
176 *Constitution-Doctrine,* 93-110; *Manual for Ministers*, 20-25.

177 Elam Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.

178 Thomas V. Miller, "The White Caps: Religion and Life," *Louisville Courier-Journal Magazine*, June 4, 1950, 5-8. In addition to those photographs appearing in the magazine, others taken at the service are also preserved in Home Evangel Photographs, Brethren in Christ Archives.

179 Elam Dohner, "Kentucky General Report," *Evangelical Visitor Missionary Supplement,* August 21, 1950, viii.



Several ladies enjoy a love feast snack at Robinson Ridge. Esther Ebersole, one of the interview sources for this article and a home mission worker in Kentucky, is second from the right. Copyright © Louisville (KY) Courier-Journal; *used by permission.*

and seem completely ignorant as to what this could be: "Lord, help us to get right! What's a love feast?" (*Tara's Healing*, 47). Hod may have grown up with White Caps around him, and he and Mary may be good friends of the preacher, but apparently not much is known of the sect's practices. To accommodate her story line, Giles sets the love feast on a Saturday in November rather than May, which makes little difference in the telling, there being no difference between the regularly scheduled spring and fall services.

Giles first describes the White Cap church she dubs "Cedar Grove": "a plain little white chapel which sat back off the road in a grove of cedar trees" (49). This is much like other hill churches (cf. *Miss Willie*, 58), including those of the Brethren in Christ, but the factual Evangel Chapel

stood on top of a hill with trees and bushes cleared back to the woods.[180]

> Inside, the chapel was bare, clean, plain. The benches were handmade, but they had been finished by a deft craftsman who had smoothed and polished them lovingly—Jory, very likely.
> Up front was a low platform which formed the pulpit, and directly before it was placed a long, low bench. This was the prayer bench . . . [*sic*] the altar, the heart and center of the church. (*Tara's Healing*, 50)

Giles is apparently right in calling the prayer bench "the altar." Albert Engle refers to "an extended altar (or 'mourner's bench') as it was often well-called in Kentucky" (but not a term much used later, at least by the Dohners).[181] As for the benches in Evangel Chapel, they were not made by the real life Jory, Edgar Giles, but perhaps by Eli Hostetler of Ohio on one of his service visits, or they were bought from another church.[182]

At the love feast, "when all the congregations meet together" (48), Giles's readers are given a rare view of the Brethren in Christ membership, including several specific individuals other than Edgar and Elam. In actual fact, as was the practice in Kentucky, only a few members came from other churches to any one of the love feasts held at various places, and as Elam Dohner noted, the gathering at Evangel Chapel was quite small. Counting all those photographed by the Courier-Journal, there were only about fifteen women and ten men, ten of the total being mission staff. But even if attendance had included the total Kentucky membership (52 women, 23 men),[183] the women could not have produced Giles's exaggerated scene of "the aesthetic beauty of row on row of the small white caps bent humbly before the Lord" (50).

Regardless of size, the congregation at Cedar Grove comprises a loving community—"friendly, soft-spoken," greeting one another as "brothers" and "sisters," and warm and hospitable to Cap'n Cochrane, a friend of their beloved pastor but nevertheless a stranger and outsider (49). Following the afternoon service, when "huge baskets of food" are unpacked onto benches in back of the church,

> [Tara] watched them laughing together, at ease with one another,

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[180] Photograph, May 1950 (Home Evangel Photographs).
[181] Albert Engle, 91; Elam and Helen Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.
[182] Edgar Giles, interviews, August 1-2, 1986.
[183] *General Conference Minutes: 1950*, Church Statistical Report [tipped-in table].

> bound closely together . . . . That they loved Jory was evident. They clustered about him, the women plying him with food, the men talking familiarly with him about crops, the weather, the market on calves and hogs. And Jory was at home with them, stopping to talk with Aunt Mahaley, the old blind woman, about her chickens; listening carefully and patiently to the old bearded man, Uncle Jake, tell [for the nth time] about the great blizzard of 1888. (52-53)

A happy gathering of a contented, salt-of-the earth sort of people. With thanks to the Courier-Journal article and Esther Ebersole, the two White Cap individuals Giles sketches here can be identified as "Blind Becky," Sister Rebecca Alberson, of Knifley, who truly did tend chickens, and "Uncle Buck," Brother Buchanan Gaskins, of Ella, 79, the oldest of the Kentucky members.[184] All in all, Giles paints an agreeable picture of the Kentucky Brethren in Christ and, by extension, the entire denomination.

Preparatory service

Giles devotes almost two full pages (51-52) to the preparatory service before footwashing and communion, paying most attention to the segment for testimonies. Closely following the wording of Rituals article 12 in the *Constitution-Doctrine,*[185] she explains, through Jory, "that the afternoon would be given over to examination and preparation for the observance of the ordinances in the evening. . . . [and] that the Scriptures for both services were proscribed [*sic*]" (51).

First, Jory reads Ephesians 4, and Giles quotes in full verses 31-32, about putting away all bitterness, anger, malice, and evil and instead being kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving. This is "amened by a chorus of voices," and Tara, speaking for Giles, ruminates for a long paragraph over the "beautiful ideal." But "[s]o long as the heart was human," he deems the injunction impossible to attain.

Deviating from the spelled-out instructions in the Manual for Ministers, the service, as Giles presents it, gives no place for exhortations on unity, the gravity of the occasion, or the need for self-examination and worthy participation in communion.[186] Nor does anyone read from

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[184] Ebersole, e-mail to author, September 25, 2014; Thomas V. Miller, 7-8.

[185] "Sacrament and Washing of the Saints' Feet," *Constitution-Doctrine*, 106-107.

[186] *Manual for Ministers*, 20-22.

1 Corinthians 11, also prescribed "as preparatory instruction,"[187] perhaps because Giles had already said enough about head coverings. Prayers are also skipped over except for the reference to the bowed veiled heads, and there she does mention that the women (and the whole congregation) are kneeling. So indeed did the Kentucky Brethren in Christ always kneel for every prayer in every worship service and also in revival meetings,[188] and so they are shown in one of the *Courier-Journal* photographs.[189]

After the reading of Scripture, 'Someone raised a hymn then," (51) and again later, in the footwashing service, "There were hymns" (53). But Giles says nothing more about the music—not which hymns, their character, the hymnal or songbook, nor the accompaniment of a pump organ.[190] Apparently she found here nothing novel enough to write about, but out of her ken lay the story of the mission's transition from Brethren in Christ hymnals, Spiritual Songs & Hymns (1935) and New Spiritual Songs & Hymns (1938), to the people's preferred shape-note gospel songbooks.[191] Perhaps the hymnals as well as the songbooks were used, for the *Courier-Journal* article reports, "Singing *sometimes* [emphasis added] is from old shape-note songbooks,"[192] thus leaving room for the church hymnals, which were printed only in round notes. Regarding the organ, Giles was apparently also unaware that, while always used in the Kentucky churches, instruments were not then sanctioned in most Brethren in Christ churches elsewhere.[193]

Following the hymn, "there were testimonies, witnesses to the glory of the Lord," (51) and about this central component of the preparatory ritual, Tara (and Giles) is amazed—and very uncomfortable. "Some of the

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[187] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 106.

[188] Helen Dohner, interview, April 12, 1994.

[189] Thomas V. Miller, 5.

[190] Photographed being played (ibid., 7).

[191] The Brethren in Christ brought Northern-type hymnals to Kentucky, but by the 1940s, the popular Stamps-Baxter songbooks were used almost exclusively (Ebersole, interviews, July 27, 1986 and September 28, 2015; Helen Dohner, interview, April 12, 1994.) Yet when Giles first saw the hymn titles in the order of service for Millerfields, she was surprised and pleased: "Why, these are the songs that we [outsiders] sing!" (Elam Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986).

[192] Thomas V. Miller, 7.

[193] Ebersole, interview, July 27, 1986. Confirmed by Albert Engle's recollection of members' dismay when the bishop forbade use of their piano at the dedication of Beulah Chapel in 1942 (Wittlinger, 361).

testimonies were given in calm, assured voices. Others were tremulous with emotion, tearful in expression, repetitious in phrasing. But all were testimonies of joy in the Lord" (51). Emotion is released:

> One woman who, in the midst of testimony, flung her arms high and began to shout and scream, long, high, piercing screams. Others joined in immediately, crying, praying, shouting, sobbing. There was swaying, moaning, weeping. "Yes, Jesus," a bearded old man cried over and over, "Yes, Lord . . . [*sic*] precious Lord!" And the amens mounted and rolled, and the women covered their faces with their hands.
>
> . . . [A] white-haired old woman . . . stood, brokenly giving her testimony, the tears furrowing her cheeks and dropping onto the bosom of her dress. "I was in sin," she wept, "in sin . . . [*sic*] buried deep in sin, until the Lord came and set me free." Her hands were knotted, twisted before her . . . . "Yes, Lord!" the people shouted. "The Lord sets me free!" (52)

It is a long account, closely based on what Giles witnessed and felt at Evangel Chapel, and one that incidentally provides a sketch of several more Brethren in Christ individuals. In the *Courier-Journal* article, two photos show two older women speaking calmly and two others show Sister Callie Smith praising the Lord with great animation—eyes closed, one arm raised high above her head.[194] Elam Dohner watched Giles, seated on the fourth seat from the back, looking in wonder at the first person to testify, then at each of the others during the half-hour period.[195] Her feelings were like those of Tara, who sweats with "squirming embarrassment" and queasy stomach, and after the ordeal, reflects on what Jory calls "the joy of witnessing for the Lord": "Joy? Tara wondered. Joy. Emotional release . . . [*sic*] autohypnosis . . . [*sic*] religious enchantment. Maybe it was joy at that . . . . He felt let down and unkeyed, but he was thankful there were no more testimonies" (52).

But uneasy though she was, Giles is far more sympathetic here with the emotional scene than in those gut-wrenching revivals in *The*

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[194] Thomas V. Miller, 5-7. Giles can be seen in the second photo on page 5. Helen Dohner confirmed that at testimony services "people would get blessed" and there would be tears (interview, April 12, 1994).

[195] Elam Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.

Enduring Hills and *Miss Willie*. Throughout the preparatory service, in great contrast to the *Enduring Hills* revivalist, Jory is presented as quietly and lovingly engaged in worship with his congregation:

> Now he took his place behind the altar, and his lean, brown face was alight with tenderness and love. Slowly he looked out over the congregation and his smile lingered sweetly upon them as he took up his Bible . . . and there was in his voice beauty and majesty. (51)
>
> Jory was standing with his eyes closed, his face rapt and adoring. His deep voice rolled a heavy amen to each testimony, rolled and reverberated through the room and came to rest in benediction. (51)

Answering to the above description, Giles makes a similar general observation in *40 Acres and No Mule* about Edgar's comportment as a preacher: "In the pulpit he is winsome and winning, and his strong, deep voice is firm in its "Amens" to the congregation" (226).

But in this picture from *Tara's Healing*, we cannot equate Jory with Edgar Giles, for according to the Dohners, neither Edgar nor Elam was in the habit of closing his eyes in the pulpit or repeatedly uttering "Amen."[196] Moreover, Edgar was not even present at the actual Evangel Chapel love feast. Edgar indeed served as her overall model, but it was Irvin G. Kanode, the pastor of that congregation, who shared the service with Elam that day.[197]

Footwashing

Next to the testimonies, the part of the love feast most fascinating for Giles is the "Washing of the Saints' Feet," as the *Constitution-Doctrine* and *Manual for Ministers* officially name the doctrine and ritual.[198] To this novelty, sure to be of interest to her readers, she duly gives it a good page and a half of careful description (53-54). The Brethren in Christ service was evidently the first such service she herself had encountered firsthand. Probably, however, she was aware of various hill country groups

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[196] Elam and Helen Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.

[197] Ebersole, telephone interview, March 19, 2016. Neither Edgar nor any of his family appear in the multiple photographs taken at the actual love feast (Home Evangel Photographs).

[198] *Constitution-Doctrine*, part 1, "Faith and Doctrine," article 11, 27-28, and part 4, "Rituals," article 12, 106-107; *Manual for Ministers*, 22-23.

who practiced the ritual,[199] and she had definitely read something about it when she sketched the White Caps' history in *The Enduring Hills* (42).

Giles sticks closely to her official sources and to what she actually witnessed, but she does not attempt to state the seven points for which the ritual stands, succinctly enumerated in the *Manual for Ministers* for the minister's "appropriate remarks."[200] Nevertheless, she catches and communicates the general drift of love and humility,[201] although she misses one key point that underlies all Brethren in Christ practice: "Obedience is the keyword of our creed in this and other ordinances."[202]

Giles notes that the "feet-washing" takes place in the evening in conjunction with communion, that the ritual is "one of the ordinances" (*Tara's Healing*, 53), and that the superintendent (not the pastor) is present to administer them. She describes the two long benches, facing each other, in opposite corners of room, with basins of water and stacks of towels nearby, and reports the actions of the men. About the women she says nothing, except that they are in the other corner.

After the singing of hymns, in Giles's account, comes "the reading of the Scriptural injunction," John 13:1-17 (*Tara's Healing,* 53). To clue in her readers, but without citing the reference, she quotes in full the most pertinent verses (4-5)—about Jesus girding himself with a towel, pouring water into a basin, and washing and wiping the disciples' feet. Then follows this full, step by step description, the only aberration of order being that the Scripture is read before, rather than during, the performance, and no comments are made on it:

> The congregation separated, the men going to one corner, the women to the other, and seated themselves thus on the long benches facing each other. The steward poured water into a basin, and the superintendent came down from the pulpit and removed his shoes and socks.
>
> . . . [T]he steward girded himself with a towel and knelt before

[199] Footwashing churches ca. 1950 were numerous, especially in southern Appalachia, as cited in Elmer T. Clark, *The Small Sects in America*, rev. ed., (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949); also in J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions,* 4th ed., Detroit: Gale Research, 1993. In her next novel, begun February 1951, Giles refers to "the primitive, foot-washing, shouting-and-singing kind of religion common to the hills" (*Hill Man*, 11).

[200] *Manual for Ministers*, 22-23.

[201] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 27-28.

[202] *Manual for Ministers,* 22.

> the superintendent and washed and wiped both his feet. Finished, he rose and the men clasped hands and exchanged the kiss of fellowship. Then the superintendent girded himself with the towel and knelt before Jory and repeated the washing of feet and the wiping. Jory then took the towel, and so the washing and the wiping went from one to the other until all were washed and all were wiped and all were shod once more. (53-54)

Tara, again speaking for Giles, reacts initially to this ritual with the same distress he suffered from the emotional testimonies:

> Tara felt repugnance at the sight of the bare feet. Feet were so ugly, so essentially private! . . . Tara had watched with curiosity and with the queasy feeling of revulsion sitting heavy in his stomach. This washing of feet publicly . . . [*sic*] even in the name of religion! How could such a service be religious? (51-52)

But as the service progresses, he has a sudden insight into its meaning and into his own soul:

> But so quietly was the service conducted, so earnestly, so humbly, so tenderly was all of it done, that a sense of wonder took possession of him. . . . [W]ith a flash of insight he knew . . . his own lack of humility. He could not wash another's feet tenderly. But these people could and did. With dignity and beauty and humility. (54)

Thus Tara (and Giles) sees in the strange business of washing feet not only a demonstration of humility and brotherly love, but also an act of beauty and dignity—hardly the concerns laid out in the *Manual for Ministers* but nevertheless a valid insight vouchsafed to the mind of an outsider. Reflecting further on the limits of sophisticated intellect, he contrasts his prideful skepticism, which has brought him only dejection, with the White Caps' simple, literal acceptance of the Scriptural teaching that has led to their peace, humility, and love. The entire footwashing section almost becomes a tract on an obscure Brethren in Christ practice.

Communion and holy kiss

The six-page section on the love feast ends abruptly with a mere statement that "the Communion service" followed the footwashing. And that is Giles's only reference to what the *Constitution-Doctrine* calls "The Lord's Supper" and defines as "one of the most sacred ordinances

of the church."[203] As Faith and Doctrine article 10 explains and the Manual for Ministers directs, the "sacrament" holds deep meaning as commemoration, communion, and covenant.[204] Just as it is the central ritual for almost all other Christian bodies worldwide, so it is the heart and climax of the Brethren in Christ love feast.

Giles would have read all that but apparently thought the service itself was not of sufficient interest to write still more about White Cap rituals. But here she missed several colorful details: the special home-baked unleavened bread, the common cup (one for the brethren, one for the sisters), and "the unfermented fruit of the vine."[205] Especially novel was the poignant practice of the communicants, all standing, each breaking off bread for his neighbor and asking, "Beloved brother, this bread which we break, is it not the communion of the broken body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?" And then, "[T]he cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the shed blood . . . ?"[206] How could a writer intent on lifting up this special sect skip over these appealing elements?

Most surprising of things glossed over is the holy kiss. Although the "kiss of fellowship" is reported in the footwashing service (54) and although "the holy kiss" is mentioned when Jory recites the Creed (58), Giles does not state that the kiss is an "holy ordinance" or make any attempt to convey the five things it signifies as set forth in the *Constitution-Doctrine* and the *Manual for Ministers*.[207] The "Salutation of the Holy Kiss" was specifically required as a link between footwashing and communion, and since the Kentucky church followed the entire love feast service as prescribed,[208] she could not have missed the repeated kisses.

It seems odd, then, that Giles does not comment on this singular Brethren in Christ ritual, surely nothing like it in her experience nor

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[203] *Constitution-Doctrine,* 25.

[204] Ibid., 26-27; *Manual for Ministers,* 27-28

[205] *Manual for Ministers,* 26.

[206] Ibid., 25-26.

[207] Ibid., 24-25: "Through this ordinance the church shows: (1) Its sacred partnership with each other in Christ. (2) The closing of the lips in speaking evil one of another. (3) A betrothal to Him who deserves our utmost fidelity. (4) Our love one for the other in Christ Jesus. (5) Reverence and subjection to all things holy and pure." Cf. *Constitution-Doctrine, Faith and Doctrine* article 13, 31-32, where the five points are stated differently." *The Constitution-Doctrine* has no separate Ritual article for "the kiss" but embeds it in article 12, "Sacrament and Washing of the Saints' Feet," 106-107.

[208] Helen Dohner, interview, April 12, 1994.

practiced by other churches in the area. It is also strange that she makes no reference to any such loving greeting when the members gather for the preparatory service—a general practice then among the women, and also a few of the men, at every church service.[209] Perhaps she figured that the brief mention of the footwashing kiss was quite enough.

The practice of the holy kiss at a love feast in Kentucky. Copyright © Louisville (KY) Courier-Journal; *used by permission.*

[209] Ibid. A few men, especially the young, would even greet Helen so; she was "safe!" Though not selected for the *Courtier-Journal* article, a photograph taken by the reporter is prominently displayed in the Brethren in Christ Archives; copy also in Home Evangel Photographs.

Reception of members

"Admission of Members" is the first Ritual article in the *Constitution-Doctrine*, equaled in length only by article 3, "Disfellowshipping of Members."[210] In the believers church tradition, becoming and staying a member is serious business, and Giles shows in *Tara's Healing* that she understands this by giving considerable space to the reception of Rose.

Just a week after being finally won over by his deep and passionate love, Jory takes Rose to the superintendent for "preparation for church membership," for "her examination," for "instruction in doctrines and practices" so that "she might know, without error, what it meant to be a fellow of the Church of the Brethren in Christ." Giles states that Jory, as pastor, could have "conducted the examination" himself, but as the distracted fiancé, he declines. Because she is about to marry the preacher, Rose is further instructed so "that she might understand fully what it meant to be the wife of a minister of that Church" (219). When she says she understands everything, the superintendent tells Jory, "we may proceed to lay the matter before the officials of your congregation" (218-19).

With one major exception, Giles follows the specified process, but with some different vocabulary. Regarding vocabulary, an applicant is made acquainted with the church's doctrines and practices, not given an "examination," and although welcomed into church fellowship, one is not made "a fellow of the Church." Giles's major departure from protocol is skipping over the key stipulation that before a convert apply for membership and meet with the "bishop or an authorized deputy," she should attend a number of "[s]pecial meetings or classes for doctrinal instruction."[211] Without those classes, it is hard to see how Rose manages to absorb all that she needed from that one meeting with the superintendent.

Only one week after meeting with the superintendent, at a regular Sunday morning service (apparently the first she has ever attended) Rose is received into membership by the White Caps. Despite having "talked such a heap" against them (209), she is accepted without any objection. This time pastor Jory does the honors himself and conducts the reception

[210] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 93-95, 95-97.

[211] *Constitution-Doctrine,* 93.

ceremony "at the end of the service." Rose, dressed for the last time in her usual "cotton print dress" and "flowered hat," goes forward and with "quiet voice answer[s] the vows which Jory's voice so tremblingly charged her with" (220).

Never having attended an accession service, Giles draws the scene entirely from her imagination[212] and omits a great deal in her abbreviated account. Omitted are the reading of Matthew 18 and the prescribed "short concise personal testimony of [her] acceptance with the Lord," although earlier Rose is said to be ready to stand and "make my testimony" (220). Also omitted are the seven questions eliciting pledges for a deep "allegiance to God and fidelity to the Church" and promises to seek "to lead a life of holiness" and "to be governed by our church rules."[213] And again Giles passes over the salutation of the holy kiss.

Not quite right again is the timing of the service—at least two weeks too fast. The *Constitution-Doctrine* specified that after the church officials are satisfied with an applicant, an announcement should be made at a regular public service and that the reception should be held after another week or later and so allow time for objections.[214] Rose's trajectory to membership barely even gives time for the officials to meet, let alone for her to learn the doctrines and to sew her own White Cap dresses (220).

Baptism

Giles writes briefly about Brethren in Christ baptism in four of her first five books. In all six references[215] she emphasizes that the rite entails trine immersion, usually pointing out the uniqueness of that method and twice explaining it is done face forward:

The doctrine of the founding fathers had included several unique beliefs, such as that of trine immersion . . . . On Piney Ridge folks watched the queer baptism, face forward three times, with curiosity . . . . (*Enduring Hills*, 43)

And they baptized different, too. Face forward in the water, three times. (*Harbin's Ridge*, 202)

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[212] Helen M. Dohner, "The Story of 'Tara's Healing,' *Sunday School Herald*, May 8, 1955, 4.

[213] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 94.

[214] Ibid., 93.

[215] In addition to references quoted below, see *40 Acres* (42) and *Tara's Healing* (7, 58).

In *40 Acres* she merely states, "They believe in baptism by immersion" (42), but in *Tara's Healing* she names baptism as an ordinance (58) and presents a little more about the content of the ceremony, which happens to be for a group of three candidates: "Three who knelt together in the water for the trine immersion and in name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (227-28).

The three who are baptized together are Rose and the Waltons. To the limited extent she describes the service, Giles adheres to the injunctions in the *Constitution-Doctrine* and the *Manual for Ministers*.[216] She takes some liberty in having them kneel together in the water, but she does not mean they were dunked forward simultaneously.

Given her repeated reference to the oddities of White Cap baptisms, one wonders why she does not highlight here the differences or say something about the singing, the pronouncement of blessing, the recommended baptismal gowns, and the location of the service (usually in Sulphur Creek or some other creek).[217] Perhaps most of this was all too similar to the immersion rituals of other denominations,[218] including her own baptism (*Around Our House*, 203). Besides that, she had already written extensively about a river baptizing in *Miss Willie* (124-26).

Rose's baptism is initially set for two weeks after her reception into church membership (219, 221), thus complying with the sequence and timing specified in the *Constitution-Doctrine*: "As soon as convenient, following the reception service, the ordinance of Water Baptism shall be administered."[219] The Waltons' baptism, however, occurs before membership, although they are eagerly intent on joining. Nevertheless, baptism separate from joining the church was certainly allowed. In fact, in Kentucky the "rare instances in which it would be expedient to baptize individuals without [ever] requiring church fellowship"[220] were not all that rare.

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[216] *Constitution-Doctrine*, Faith and Doctrine article 9, 24-25, and Ritual article 1, "Water Baptism," 95. *Manual for Ministers*, 23-25.

[217] Helen Dohner, interview, April 12, 1994.

[218] Earl Brewer reports that in 1959 most rural dwellers (70.3 percent) preferred baptism by immersion (*Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey,* 212); cf. Harry M. Caudill, 58.

[219] *Constitution-Doctrine*, Rituals article 1, "Admission of Members," 95.

[220] Ibid.

Those who had read *Miss Willie* would realize that for the Waltons, and most likely for Rose also, theirs was a re-baptizing. Although not so stated in the *Constitution-Doctrine*, rebaptism of new Brethren in Christ converts was expected regardless of any previous baptism.[221] Whether Giles was aware of that or of the underlying Anabaptism tenet of believers baptism is doubtful, and even if she did, explaining all that would have taken much too long.

Marriage

Love and marriage, prominent features in most of Giles's books, are given a Brethren in Christ focus in two of the Piney Ridge novels. In *The Enduring Hills*, marriage to a White Cap is briefly mentioned regarding the separateness of the sect from the general community, which is composed almost entirely of Pierce relatives: ". . . and occasionally a Pierce connection married a White Cap. He became less a Pierce when he did that, withdrawing from the clan solidarity and becoming one of a closer knitted band" (43). In *Tara's Healing*, a happy exception to this general rule is presented in the last-chapter marriage of Rose Pierce to Jory Clark. Because of the ridge's esteem for Jory and its liking for Rose, everyone is pleased with the match: "They'd make out fine together. They'd be suited to one another. They'd do good" (219). The union was unusual, but the family does not view it as the loss of a daughter.

Within the subplot of Jory's winning of Rose, Giles reveals two basic concepts about the Brethren in Christ doctrine of marriage: that it is to be taken very seriously and that for a member, "the choice of a companion should also be made within the Church, of one who is 'of like precious faith.'"[222] At the beginning of the book, the second condition is not yet the case, as Jory explains to Tara:

> "You see, now I'm a preacher of the faith, I can't marry except in the faith. And Rose don't hold with the White Caps."
>
> "You mean your religion now stands between you? Man, you don't really love that girl!"

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[221] Rebaptism was challenged for several years, but acting on a proposal by the Ohio-Kentucky Joint Council, the position was modified by General Conference in 1955 (Wittlinger, 488-489).

[222] *Constitution-Doctrine,* Faith and Doctrine article 15, 34-35.

[223] Ibid., 34.

> "I love her more than any other human being in the world. But I can't go against my faith. I wouldn't have anything left to give her if I did that. And until she comes of her own free will into the fold, it wouldn't be right for her." (59)

Rose does eventually come into the fold, and the injunction to marry within the Church is so seen to be practiced. Hopefully, readers understand that while in this passage Jory the minister speaks for himself, Giles intends to show that the teaching is taken seriously by *all* members. Regarding another main point in the doctrine, the inviolable permanence of marriage, she makes no reference at all. Indeed, the two strong paragraphs in the *Constitution-Doctrine* on divorce and remarriage[223] might well have caused the remarried author to flinch away from that sore subject.

The marriage of Jory and Rose also affords opportunity for Giles to describe a White Cap wedding, but she says almost nothing about the actual ceremony. Certainly the ceremony laid out in the *Constitution-Doctrine* and the *Manual for Ministers* provides nothing unique to write about.49 Giles does emphasize that the Brethren in Christ dress code is willingly followed: no rings, as discussed above, and the bride's dress "plain and simple. Made, of course, by the White Cap pattern," without trimming, but of rich material—"a pale ivory silk with tiny rosebuds scattered over it" (230).[224] Giles also mentions that the ceremony lasts only five minutes (251) and is held in a home—this one, for the sake of the story, the home of friends rather than the bride or the minister as was then often the case.[225]

Becoming Brethren in Christ, or not

As already indicated, with the Brethren in Christ, church membership is a matter of first importance, intricately tied to doctrines concerning conversion, justification, and regeneration. In *Tara's Healing,* through the stories of five different characters, Giles (unconsciously) presents four different approaches to becoming members of this close-knit group which obliges so much devotion and such radical nonconformance to the world.

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[224] About the richness of the material there would have been no objection (Ebersole, interview, March 28, 2014).

[225] Ebersole, interview, July 28, 1986; Helen Dohner, interview, April 12, 1994.

Jory Clark: Total conversion

How Jory becomes a White Cap is a classic Brethren in Christ conversion story. Asked by Tara, he tells how he returned from the Army unhappy and, unable to settle down, finally came home to the ridge, fell madly in love with his brother's wife, and "[t]ook to drinking too much and roistering around" (56):

> "And then one night I wandered into a White Cap meeting. Went just for something to do and with more of an idea of stirring up some mischief than anything else. . . ."
>
> "At the revival that night," Jory went on, "I don't know how to explain what happened. Something kept pushing me to go up to the altar, and I was more ashamed of it than anything else. . . . I fought it two or three nights, but I kept wanting to go back. So I did. And when I got up to the altar, it was like a white light shining, and I knew I was through wasting my life. I knew this was the way for me, and I knew I wanted to preach the way. It was like a clear light, or a plain call. And something inside me was willing and made answer." (56-57)

Jory's story is one of repentance and conversion in the basic gospel sense, how he "found salvation" (40), and it meets all the Brethren in Christ expectations (cited in the Creed) of a definite, personal experience of justification and "transformation of life and conduct."[226] His call and his response, especially the "white light shining;" rings true—perhaps reflecting a testimony Giles had somewhere heard or perhaps something Edgar Giles had told her about his own conversion.[227]

Asked for further explanation about joining the White Caps, Jory goes on to tell Tara of his long, hard study that followed: "It wasn't simple at all. It took a powerful lot of praying and studying and examining myself. I had to learn the doctrines and everything they believed. And I had to be sure I believed them too. But I did. You couldn't help believe" (57). Jory might be speaking of preparation for membership, as discussed above, but his thorough study is more likely due to his out-of-the-ordinary, simultaneous call to preach this new-found way. Presumably he studied

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[226] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 10.

[227] Edgar was converted in the Church of God (Anderson) Caldwell Chapel (Edgar Giles, interview, August 1, 1986.)

the *Constitution-Doctrine* and other denominational literature, just as Edgar Giles did when deciding to become a Brethren in Christ minister—for him, a two-year process before being licensed.[228]

Rose Pierce: Marrying in

Rose comes into the church through marriage. As with other denominations, this is not an unheard of route for Brethren in Christ, and one wonders if Giles knew of such cases or merely intuited the possibility. At any rate, in the beginning, Rose is newly widowed from her wild and handsome Tay and not the least interested in his plain and steady brother, especially since he is a preacher of that queer white-capped sect. Though well aware of his deep love and concern for her, she evades him and taunts him without mercy until, in one of the novel's few (mildly) humorous scenes, Jory inadvertently wins her over by means of an angry, hot embrace.

> “I bet you never expected to convert me by kissin' me, did you?” she asked when she could talk again.”
>
> ...“I'll bet I didn't either! But the ways of the Lord are mysterious... [sic] and I'm not going to question them. But don't you ever tell this, Rose! This way of winning a convert is strictly between us! It's not in the book!' (209)

Indeed it is not, and nothing at all like Jory's conversion—nothing about repenting or seeing the light or earnestly desiring to follow the way. Yet Rose is absolutely sincere in adopting Jory's faith when she troths herself to him. “I'll learn about the White Caps,” she promises, “an' I'll try to be the faithfullest White Cap was ever converted” (209). By the day of her reception into membership, she tells Tara,

> “I've studied that there book the man give me, an' I've had Jory explain it to me, till I know it by heart. I know better'n I ever done before the ways they believe. . . . Hit's all in the Scriptures, Cap'n, an' I know hit's right. I ain't jist joinin' on account of Jory. Of course I wouldn't lie to say Jory was the main cause in the beginnin'. But I'm ready, now, to take my place alongside of him.

[228] Edgar Giles, sermon, Bloomington Brethren in Christ Church, August 3, 1986.

An' I kin make my testimony today in my own name" (219-20).

A lot of reading and progress within two short weeks! The book she studied is surely the *Constitution-Doctrine*, and in the By-Laws she would have studied the expectations for "Ordained Officials' Wives," and in the Rituals, the vow she would take for the "Consecration of Officials' Wives."[229] The story has no room or need to go into the intricacies of either of these requirements, but Giles does cryptically mention "her dedication" (221), which seems to be projected as a separate ceremony following her reception into membership, her marriage, and her baptism.

John and Irma Walton: Finding a home

The Waltons come into the Brethren in Christ by yet a different route, one of willing persuasion. As noted above, the couple had separated after Irma's insistence on all-or-nothing faith healing resulted in the death of their son. In a very sensitive manner, Jory helps them find a way to come together and still keep their individual convictions on divine healing. John is assured he doesn't "have to accept divine healing" or ever have to "try to make use of it,"(224) and Irma is helped to a more nuanced understanding:

> "But there is room for all in what we believe, John. . . . And there's no need for it to divide you. Side by side you can share the same house of faith, neither of you denying its sheltering roof, both of you accepting what you can of it, fully!"
>
> . . . "You mean . . . that if Irma an' me was White Caps, she could believe like she wanted about this faith healin', an' I could believe what I wanted, an' we could both be in the same religion?"
>
> "That's just exactly what I mean!" (224)

Here is displayed a remarkable broadness in Jory's view of personal religion. With similar broadmindedness he earlier responds to Irma, who is desperate to maintain a literal-minded faith: "How are we to measure faith, Irma? How are we to know? . . . So do I [believe in divine healing]. But I would not want to test the faith of any other man. I believe. I cannot say what another must believe" (76). And earlier, to Rose's snide remark regarding "[t]hem white bonnets," Jory gently and philosophically replies,

[229] *Constitution-Doctrine*, 85, 102-3.

"Religion is a thing that all people must decide for themselves. None of us has got a right to try to make others believe our way" (75).

Perhaps Giles puts such words into his mouth because she read in the Manual for Ministers that a pastor must be "void of religious bigotry,"[230] but more likely they reflect her own strong sense of an individual's right to his own personal faith. In the context of the story, Jory speaks only with regard to evangelical Christianity, but in any case, the openness he expresses indicates a commendable latitude in Brethren in Christ theology, however strict the ordinances and dress code.

Jory's assurance of the open-minded stance of the Brethren in Christ on divine healing gives the Waltons sufficient reason to join the church: "We'd like to be baptized into the White Caps. Hit appears to be the way fer us. We kin go in together, like you said. Under one roof they's room fer the two of us, believin' a mite different, but allowin' fer the difference" (227).

The very next week they are baptized along with Rose, but unlike Rose, they appear to slip into membership without the preliminary instruction and reception service stipulated by the *Constitution-Doctrine.*[231] There would have been no point for Giles to repeat any of that for these minor characters, but readers are nevertheless may be given to understand that the process of becoming Brethren in Christ could be blithely shortened to baptism.

Tara Cochrane: Almost persuaded

The main character of the book is not converted to the Brethren in Christ, or to anything religious at all. He is deeply impressed with the words of the Creed and respects Jory for his integrity, but he does not profess to understand it (58). He may long for such a simple faith as enjoyed by Rose and the Waltons, and he may know that "he and his sophisticated generation were the losers" (54), but sophisticated he remains. Given that, a salvific conversion experience, let alone joining the Brethren in Christ, could not be part of his story.

But the possibility is at least broached. Early on, in their first significant conversation, Tara describes himself as "jittery and half nuts."

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[230] *Manual for Ministers,* 95.

[231] *Constitution-Doctrine,* 93.

Jory replies that, like most people one time or another, so had he been himself, until he "found salvation." Tara impatiently rejects such "pious words" as fanatical and meaningless: "Well, we can't all find salvation like you." "You could. But it may be you won't." (40-41)

Tara later hears further testimony regarding salvation when he asks Jory how he became a White Cap. Jory tells his conversion story and recites the Creed on justification and sanctification, but not, however, on redemption (58). Nor is there any talk of an eternal afterlife or a conversion process. Tara listens carefully to Jory's faith story and responds with a respectful "Yes." "He couldn't understand it, but no one could listen to this man and not know what his religion meant to him. And every integrity in any man demands respect. Is worthy of respect" (58). Further pondering Jory's testimony and the love feast he had just observed: "Never before had he come into such close contact with such a faith. It was a good thing, he thought. A very good thing. There was so much healing in such a community of faith" (59).

At the baptismal service for Rose and the Waltons, he feels

> [a] wistful yearning for the simplicity of such a faith . . . a homesickness for the intellectual innocence of another, less complicated, day and age. He did not know. But he did know that he and this present sophisticated generation were the losers. And he did feel grateful that somewhere in this complex, disillusioned world there still was a faith that was open to those of childlike hearts and believing minds. (228)

So we see that Tara is exposed to a great deal of biblical teaching and testimony—from Jory in several conversations, from the Cedar Grove congregation at the love feast, and from the baptismal service. In addition, he hears all the church doctrine and membership instruction when he (inexplicitly) goes along with Jory for Rose's session with the superintendent (218), and yet more when he attends her reception into membership (220). His response is much like that of Giles herself, who once said to the Dohners in a conversation regarding Brethren in Christ life and faith, "'It's wonderful!' I don't think it's for me, but it's wonderful!'"[232]

But in addition to and overriding all this spirituality, Giles also offers a

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[232] Elam Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.

more secular view of conversion and salvation. In their first conversation, when Tara cannot accept the notion of salvation "in a religious sense," Jory suggests that "finding a body's health and strength is a kind of salvation," an idea which, ironically, Giles may have picked up or found confirmed in the *Constitution-Doctrine*: "The first phase of divine healing is the correcting of all abnormal physical appetites and tastes, as well as physically centered emotions. This healing is realized in the experience of salvation."[233]

Later, in his spirited debate with Tara about bothering with the likes of Ferdy Jones, Jory asserts a salvation not enunciated in the *Constitution-Doctrine:*

> "Everyone's worth something. And worth saving. . . . "Are you talking about saving them for the Church now?"
>
> "No! I'm talking about saving them for themselves! Saving them for the good that's inside of them! Saving them for usefulness! Saving them for another chance!" (108)

A rather liberal statement about salvation from a Brethren in Christ minister, but nonetheless wrapped up in the gospel and an aspect of salvation Tara could certainly appreciate.

"The truth," Tara concludes, "appears to each man in its own guise . . . and each must receive it in the measure he is able" (228). And in the end, for Tara, salvation primarily takes on the meaning of psychological healing, finding one's bearings, coming to terms with himself. Finding his place in the world, with a good measure of love and purpose, is thus the best that Giles can muster up for him. Through hard work and serving people in difficulties and from the good-hearted people themselves, he learns compassion and so finds a peace and wellness.

At the beginning of the book, when Tara takes his first step to help someone and gets a blister stripping tobacco, Jory warns him he will get many more. "Salvation by blisters, huh?" says Tara. "Maybe," says Jory (44). The premonition seems to come to pass.

In an abstruse passage at the conclusion, trying to make sense of the peace he has come to experience in mind and heart, Tara reflects that through Jory he now sees "a lot of the saint in himself," that he now knows

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[233] *Constitution-Doctrine,* 32.

that "it lay in all men," and that because one man had dared to show him goodness and love, "he needn't go on looking anymore." (247-48). Not exactly Brethren in Christ soteriology.

In effect, Giles says that Brethren in Christ faith is good for hill and hollow people but would not work for individuals more cultured and urbane, even though they might sometimes yearn for such a satisfying faith. Early in the story, at the footwashing service, Tara "felt a pang of envy for the mind that could accept literally and simply this admonition to humility, and he knew remorse that his own complex and sophisticated mind could never do so. This was what the intellectual mind forfeited, he thought—this peace, this humility, this love" (54). Although he does find a good measure of all three before leaving Piney Ridge and his White Cap soul mate, the thought of going through an evangelical conversion experience, let alone becoming Brethren in Christ himself, is something that cannot be seriously entertained—not by himself nor by Jory nor by anyone else, including the reader.

Reconsiderations

We have now looked at every instance in the writings of Janice Holt Giles in which the Brethren in Christ are explicitly identified. These, her early works, are the main sources by which her readers learn something of the history, doctrines, and practices of the denomination and by which they acquire an overall impression about it—by and large, all very favorable.

But to complete this review, we must also consider two later works, written more than 15 years after *Tara's Healing*, which express a view far less favorable. During these years of living in the hills and, by hard knocks, learning the ways and thinking of ridge society, Giles gradually adopted a critical perspective on the Brethren in Christ mission. She names no names but she does make unmistakable allusions, and they are not at all commendatory.

Anti-missionary sentiment

Before looking at the two works, it is instructive to note Giles's latent dislike of missionaries in general. This life-long objection to all missionaries grows out of her central tenet of religious philosophy that

every individual is entitled to his own understanding of God and to the practice of his own religion as best he can, no one religion having all the truth and no one superior to another. Her conviction grew as time went on and her dislike manifests itself in a number of her novels, *Tara's Healing* being the great exception. By the time she was writing Johnny Osage (1960), her anti-missionary tone was strident enough to cause her agent to object to her unsympathetic characters, to which Giles replied:

> What I did not count on was my inherent dislike for missionaries. . . . These Union Mission people are not attractive in any way you look at them. They blindly followed a bigot and zealot. . . . I don't like missionaries anywhere, anytime. The kind of person who can go into any land and say to its people, your religion is all wrong, your way of life is bad, I have the truth and the only truth, is not a person I can admire and respect.[234]

Giles's attitude against missionaries and zealots shows up even in her second novel, *Miss Willie*, which climaxes in an insightful passage contrasting know-all missionary zeal with Christ's way of living with and loving the people (256-60). In later works, through the words and thoughts of other protagonists, Giles jabs at various historic missions and their leaders—cruelly unbending Shakers in *The Believers*; over-holy Methodist Jason Lee in *The Great Adventure* (313-17); "preachy and mean-mouthed" Marcus and Narcissa Whitman in *Six-Horse Hitch* (45).

In *Johnny Osage*, set near the Union Mission to the Osage in the early 1820s, Giles makes missionary misguidedness the novel's underlying theme. While admiring the missionaries for their courage, endurance, and determination (195), her hero berates the mission leader, Epaphras Chapman (1793-1825), as arrogant, stiff-necked, and pious (53), "a damned fool . . . with God in one hand and self-righteousness in the other" (55), steeped in "a cold and bigoted faith" (61). Her castigation of Union Mission continues in *Voyage to Santa Fe*, a sequel. In that novel the heroine catalogs the "jealousies, bitternesses, strained nerves, errors, pain and suffering" at the mission and she berates the men as "forever racked with fever . . . vacillating . . . inexpressibly dull" (54).

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[234] Giles to Paul Reynolds, fall 1958, in Stuart, 136.

Such is the dark side of Giles's feelings about missions and her writings about missionaries. In a way, her negative attitude is rather surprising. She herself had served seven years with a mission board and she enjoyed a warm friendship with Elam and Helen Dohner. She had written very positively of the Barnett's Creek mission in *40 Acres and No Mule* (183-87) and the Brethren in Christ mission in *Tara's Healing*. But perhaps she viewed her educational work with children as a strictly non-proselytizing, in-church endeavor, and why should she not have genuinely liked the Dohners, missionaries or not? Maybe her early complimentary writing about the two missions can be chalked up to her newness as an author and her adoption of a sunny writing persona. Even so, looking on the dark side, one can see that *Tara's Healing* is mostly about one exceptional member of the invading group, that he is a native, and that the institutional work of the missionaries is given short shrift. Indeed, the main social service of the mission, the health clinic, is pictured as rather insignificant and patronized only "when all else failed" (82, 57).

Prologue to "40 Acres and No Mule"

In 1965, at a time of national focus on Appalachia and the War on Poverty, Giles wrote an article setting forth the religious and family concepts held in the region, her purpose being to correct a great deal of public and government misconception about what Appalachians actually thought and felt. *Harper's Magazine* did not accept it, but when Houghton Mifflin wanted to reissue *40 Acres and No Mule* (1967), Giles was pleased to have it published as a thirty-page prologue to that "second edition."[235]

The prologue is a perceptive essay based on the understandings Giles had acquired during her seventeen years of living in Kentucky. In the section on religion, she explains the form of Christianity entrenched in southern Appalachia. Survey statistics notwithstanding, she stresses, the vast majority of the hill people are deeply religious, basing their beliefs and practices on a literal interpretation of the New Testament, especially the Pauline Epistles. They are, she writes, individualistic, adamantly anti-denominational, terrified of "going against the Bible" by "adding to the Bible," and abhorrent of official membership, salaried ministers, sermon notes, printed orders of service, and church literature. In short they are

[235] Stuart, 182-184.

"Bible Christians"—the term Giles applies in *Around Our House* (31, 297) although not in the *40 Acres* prologue.

After explaining why southern Appalachians are "bitterly antagonistic" to denominations of any stripe, Giles writes two paragraphs critical of the two missions in northern Adair County (14). She leaves them unnamed but one is obviously the Evangelical United Brethren mission and the other the Brethren in Christ. Despite their social programs, she avers, neither made more than a few converts, and the people quit using their nursing clinics just as soon as good roads permitted access to doctors in town.

Even more devastating, Giles writes of "the deep resentment felt against them," although, she says, that was never realized by the missionaries because they were always treated with Appalachian courtesy. "They made some converts, and the divisiveness and strife they caused in families, neighborhoods, and communities has lasted to this day" (14). Worst for the Brethren in Christ:

> One denomination practices plain dress and the women wear small white caps on their heads. A neighbor stood beside me not long ago watching a woman of that faith walk down the road. "If I could," she said bitterly, "I'd gather up every one them white caps and burn 'em, and I wish there was a law to make all them people git out." (14)

And to this condemnation she adds, "By their singularity this sect offends not only the religious concepts but the social pattern of the area" (14). Yet for all that, judging by letters written around the time of writing and publication (November? 1965-February 1967), Giles continued to maintain warm relations with the Dohners and even called their attention to the release of the *40 Acres* second edition.[236]

Is Giles's harsh assessment justified? It is true that the Knifley clinic was phased out (beginning in mid-1954) and closed (June 1957), and it is true that Brethren in Christ membership was still small in 1965 (around 70). Nevertheless, by the time she wrote her essay, Adair County had five self-sustaining congregations and 250 Sunday school students.[237] It

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[236] Giles to Elam and Helen Dohner, June 26, 1966; April 25, 1967, Dohner Family Papers.

[237] *Minutes of the Central Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church, 1966*, 46. No report from one congregation.

is also true, as discussed above, that dress and the prayer veiling were prime reasons for offense against the Brethren in Christ, yet the bitterness expressed in 1965 over this matter seems somewhat dated. Some Kentucky members still stuck to these forms, but the requirements for such had disappeared a good ten years before.

However close to the truth Giles's vitriolic statements may be, the Brethren in Christ can be thankful that the first edition of *40 Acres and No Mule* carried no such prologue. It is included in the University Press of Kentucky reprint (1992), but far fewer readers are apt to see it. A reworked version is also included in *Wellspring* (1975), an anthology of some of her essays and short stories, but the Brethren in Christ can again be thankful because the paragraphs about the missions are omitted.[238]

"Shady Grove"

Giles takes her last whack at missionaries in *Shady Grove* (1968), directing her ire at contemporary missions in southern Appalachia.
In fact, she gives them a sustained beating. The novel evolved through several permutations over a period of years and took its final shape in 1967 in the midst of the nation's preoccupation with southern mountain poverty. Told in great earnest by an incensed ridge native, this funny story refutes the negative press coverage, exposes the foolishness of the government anti-poverty programs, and discredits and lampoons the invasive missionary efforts of outside denominations.

"My first target, of course, was the established church, with its arrogance," Giles wrote in a letter to her grandson.[239] Later, discussing the novel in *Around Our House* (1971), she proudly writes that Shady Grove makes "the orthodox missionaries in the region look like the insensitive people they usually were" (298):

> I knew, too, with the exception of a handful of converts, how little respect and regard [the Kentucky natives] felt for the "missionaries" who had early come into their region. How courteous they always were, but how little they could ever have rapport with such ministers who, to them, had such wrong ideas of religion. . . . [T]hey were Bible Christians and neither needed nor wanted denominational ties. (297)

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[238] "According to His Lights," in *Wellspring* (Houghton Mifflin, 1975; University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 96-107.

[239] Giles to Mike Hancock, in Stuart, 194.

As Frony Fowler, the outspoken narrator, says:

> We are good Bible Christians here and always have been. . . . It takes a mighty proud-walking man, or a foolish one, to come into this country and let on his religion is better than ours and he has come to save us. We are not benighted heathens and we don't appreciate being treated as such. We know we have laid hold of the truth and they are false prophets (6).

Frony's protest is at variance with the perception of the Home Missions Board. A glowing *Evangelical Visitor* report in 1956 begins, "The Brethren in Christ, working in Adair county, are striving to bring today's generation to a living relationship with the Lord," and it goes on to speak of "hungry hearts all around longing for deliverance from the bondage of sin."[240] How Giles would have reacted had she read this article when it appeared is uncertain, but by the time of writing *Shady Grove*, she would have been as offended as Frony.

The mission at Broke Neck is lambasted for "adding *to* the Bible" with denominational publications, orders of service, and sermon notes; for its paid clergy (5-6); for its youth work which "keeps the young folks all agitated up" (150); and for its insistence on the "noble old hymns of the church" no one could sing (100, 104). But the most caustic criticism is reserved for the "talky and mouthy . . . "[s]mily and knowing" preacher (15), with his arrogant attitude and failure to learn ridge manners and customs (152). Thus both mission and preacher are rejected because (1) they are denominational and therefore perverse to the Bible Christian ethos, and (2) they are ignorant and ill-mannered aliens barging in from the outside (153). Repeating almost exactly what Giles writes in her *40 Acres* prologue (3), Frony narrates, "I have seen but few outsiders that weren't ignorant, foolish, pushy, braggy, nosy, and bad-mannered. We don't like them. We just plain mistrust them and we have had good reason to" (*Shady Grove*, 5).

The comical goings-on at Broke Neck seem unbelievable to readers from off the ridge, but Giles swears that every incident is based on fact, most having actually happened within the Giles clan (*Around Our House,*

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[240] J. Wilmer Heisey, "There's Lots of Gold at Fort Knox and in Adair County, Kentucky," *Evangelical Visitor*, April 12, 1956, 7-8.

298-99).[241] The pictures of the preacher and the mission, however, are composites, and fortunately, neither the denomination nor the preacher can be singled out or positively identified. Giles reassured her editor, who was concerned about libel, that only one character in the novel is "drawn almost entirely from real life"—Barney, the "pauper idiot," of the same name in *40 Acres and No Mule.* As for the preacher, Giles wrote, "Any one of half a dozen preachers connected with several missions in the very general area of southern Appalachia might see themselves in the character."[242]

A few details about the Broke Neck mission fit the Brethren in Christ: begun in the1920s, membership never over one hundred, several full-time preachers and a lot of buildings (6), plenty of visiting bishops, preachers, and out-of-state friends (132). Several of the thirty-some details given about the preacher fit in a general sort of way to Brethren in Christ pastors and superintendents: from the North, about forty years of age (9), a (past) deferment from the draft as a ministerial student (81), a fearful avoidance of gun fights (78-79). These traits and others (e.g., a large family, an interest in community affairs, promotion of youth activities) could also fit staff at other missions. As for the personal mannerisms and faux pas Giles roundly derides, who knows which, if any, could be laid to any particular preacher?

Other details definitely do not apply to the Brethren in Christ: giving to the town ministerial association, radio speaking, hospital chaplaincy, and going off to conferences (7); lack of interest in revival meetings and soul winning (98, 105); formal litanies (104); a "bishop [who] wore his collar turned backwards" (104); an ecclesiastical system allowing the preacher to request a transfer "next time the Assembly meets" (154). We also know that no Brethren in Christ preacher got mixed up with a raid on a still and was sent home with a nervous breakdown. And thankfully, Giles kindly refrains from mentioning any distinctive doctrine, ritual, or dress.

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[241] At the Giles Symposium in 1991, Edith Walker, a native off Adair County, also staunchly vouched for the veracity of the incidents ("Janice Holt Giles: The Autobiographical Focus of Her Work," in *Celebrating Janice,* 79).

[242] Giles to Anne Barrett (Houghton Mifflin editor), quoted in Stuart, 189. One reviewer labeled the preacher as Presbyterian, but without warrant (Dorothea J. Snow, "Giveaways Way of Life in Appalachia," *Fort Wayne News Sentinel*, January 27, 1968).

Nevertheless, the Brethren in Christ mission was the one and only mission within Giles's immediate territory and surely the one foremost in her mind. Readers who remember her early books might well ask upon reading this sixth ridge novel—her fans' "most favorite book," according to one reviewer[243]—if perhaps not everything about the White Caps was so beneficent and commendable as earlier portrayed. After twenty years of living on the ridge and being married to a born-and-bred ridgerunner, Giles had acquired a different perspective.

[243] George Brosi, "Write-Ups," *Appalachian Heritage* 30, no. 4 (Fall 2002), 106.

Part 3. Response and Influence

Having looked at all of Giles's writings that include anything at all about the Brethren in Christ, we will now examine how well these books were received and what publicity their reception provided the church. We will touch on Giles's overall reputation but primarily consider the responses generated by one book only—*Tara's Healing*, the novel with the most Brethren in Christ content. As one would expect, the books that treat the Brethren in Christ only incidentally elicited no denominational comment at all.

Contemporary Responses

Sales and book clubs

Sales are one crass measure of the reception of an author and her books. As noted in the introduction, during her lifetime, Giles managed to rack up a total sales of some four million copies,[244] and she was pleased to be able to number herself among the scant two percent of American writers who could make a living solely by their writing (*Around Our House*, 232). This is impressive, but when measured against the sales of prominent authors, literary or popular, now or then, her sales numbers are not astronomical. Her three biggest sellers by far—all from her American frontier series—sold half a million copies each by 1971, and three others, between 275,000 and 350,000.[245] These figures fall well short of the 750,000 hardcover copies that Alice Payne Hackett, the doyenne of statistics at Publishers Weekly, set as the bestseller threshold.[246]

Moreover, that threshold applies to sales to bookstores and libraries only, but the main reason for the relatively high sales of Giles's books was their selection for the book club trade. Thirteen of her novels were selected by various book clubs,[247] and the clubs accounted for a full 90 percent of their total sales.[248] Giles was most fortunate in having her first book catch the attention

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[244] The precise figure for copies sold by 1966: 3,964,363 (Stuart, 183).

[245] *Around Our House*, 42, 161, 231, 246; Stuart, 150, 183.

[246] Alice Payne Hackett, *80 Years of Best Sellers, 1895-1975* (New York: Bowker, 1977), 3, 5.

[247] Stuart, 234.

[248] Giles, interview with a Georgetown College student, spring 1966 (Stuart, 183).

of John W. R. Beecroft, editor-in-chief of the Literary Guild of America and ruler of the Doubleday book club empire, for until his retirement in 1962, he took all but two of her novels for one or more of his clubs. Not one of her books, however, was selected for the prestigious Literary Guild, although five, including *Tara's Healing*, were selections for its Young People's Division.[249]

Giles's earliest books, containing most of her Brethren in Christ material, are not the books that sold the most. In contrast with her later novels, *The Enduring Hills* initially sold only 150,000 copies, including book club sales (*Around Our House*, 96). No statistics are available for *Miss Willie* (or *40 Acres*), but Giles reports that *Tara's Healing* "certainly sold fewer copies than either of the first two [Piney Ridge] books, even though it, like them, was a book club selection" (*Around Our House*, 84). Giles blames this in part on the title, which "couldn't have been worse" (*Wellspring*, 9). She much preferred her own title, *Scarlet Ribbon*, rather than "that asinine title . . . dreamed up" by Mr. Beecroft, which "suggested sickness of itself, and I think prejudiced the public to some extent against it" (*Around Our House*, 84).[250] Giles's working title was *Preach Me No Sermon*,[251] but her agent requested something better. *The White Cap* and *Way of Love* were suggested, but Giles rejected the first as likely to convey only a maritime meaning and the second never gained traction.[252]

Publisher notes and finding aids

Short publisher notes are often the closest many people come to actually reading any particular book. What might a browser learn about the Brethren in Christ from the covers and dust jackets of *Tara's Healing* and from other

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[249] Woodbridge, "Folklore in Janice Holt Giles," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 55, no. 4 (October 1957), 335.

[250] Stuart, 186, quoting a letter from Giles to Oliver Swan, September? 1966. *Scarlet Ribbon* may actually have been a title Giles wished for after publication; ""The Scarlet Thread" is the title of her piece for *Miss Willie* in *The Peoples Choice* (Fall? 1950), the magazine for members of the Sears Peoples Book Club.

[251] *Preach Me No Sermon* is the title typed on the manuscript sent to the Reynolds agency (box 3, folder 1, Manuscripts, Janice Holt Giles Papers, 1949-1965, Special Collections, University of Kentucky, Lexington). Elam Dohner was aware of this initial title but attributed its rejection to the publisher rather than the book club czar (Giles to V. Campbell, March 1952, Dohner Family Papers).

[252] Swan to Giles, October 13, 1950; Giles to Swan, October 17, 1950; Swan to Giles, August 4, 1951, all in box 1, folder 2, Correspondence, Janice Holt Giles Papers, 1949-1965, Special Collections, University of Kentucky, Lexington (hereafter cited as Giles Correspondence, UK).

blurbs meant to entice purchase? What sort of press did Giles in this way inadvertently give the denomination?

The dust jacket of the first edition reveals nothing about the Brethren in Christ to the uninitiated. The back says nothing at all about religion in the story. The front inside flap tells the would-be reader that Tara meets "Jory Clark, a young White Cap preacher" and that their many experiences together contribute to Tara's healing, but from that the average reader could have no inkling as to what church Jory belonged.

In Doubleday's *Family Reading Club News* for January 1952, six of the eight pages are devoted to *Tara's Healing*, with three full-color paintings despite the fact that the book itself is without pictures of any sort. The totally idealized illustrations and the distorted write-up make one think that neither illustrator nor blurbist had read the book. Jory and the White Caps are completely ignored.

Jumping ahead for a moment, the note on the front flap of the dust jacket of the 1972 reprint is much more explicit. Primary credit for Tara's recovery is given to the White Cap preacher and the denomination is identified, but a bit inaccurately:

> On Piney Ridge Tara meets Jory, a minister of the Church of the Brethren of [*sic*] Christ, a sect popularly known as the White Caps because of the little caps worn by the women members. Jory's selfless love for humanity helps Tara to rise above his despair. . . . Tara's work with the Piney Ridge people opens a path to a life of fulfillment and serenity.

These words, including the strange name distortion, later get recycled three times: in an annotated bibliography of Kentucky fiction (see below) in the blurb on the Giles Society website, and on the back cover of the University Press of Kentucky reprint (1994). The UPK reprint inserts a sentence detailing Jory's saintly life: "Tara accompanies the young lay preacher as he goes among the hill people, ministering to the sick and helping with simple neighborly chores." So while these later blurbs indirectly commend the Brethren in Christ by virtue of their prize representative, the denomination's identity is reduced to a sect distinguished by head coverings.

Other common means of browsing for Giles's books are likewise uninformative about the Brethren in Christ. In online sales listings of *Tara's Healing*, the Brethren in Christ are not mentioned in the descriptions. The

same is true of the WorldCat summary, and following the Library of Congress, the Brethren in Christ are not even given a subject heading in most library catalogs.

Book reviews

When first published in December 1951, *Tara's Healing* was reviewed by 50 newspapers and periodicals across the country.[253] Most are generally favorable and merely tell a listtle about the setting and the story. Half of them highlight the young preacher, and of these, eight identify him as "White Cap" and seven as "Brethren in Christ." Altogether the Brethren in Christ are named nine times. Sometimes they are described as a religious group or sect, and sometimes they are designated as "Church of the Brethren in Christ." Three times they are characterized by the women's "white caps" and once they are pegged as descended from the Mennonites. More significantly, Jory and his church, when mentioned, are almost always acclaimed for their way of love and active service and are credited with Tara's recovery.

That said, these reviews were not such as to bring much attention to the Brethren in Christ, and of course, as already indicated, no reference at all is made in the reviews of the books which mention the Brethren in Christ only in passing. Two-thirds of the *Tara's Healing* reviews are brief—under 100 words, some mere notices. None ran in major periodicals, the most prominent being the *New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, the Chicago Sunday Tribune Book Review, and surprisingly, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.[254] Neither of the newspapers names the Brethren in Christ, but *JAMA* cites "the Church of the Brethren of [*sic*] Christ" and notes that woven into the novel is "a discussion of the belief and behavior of the 'White Caps.'"

Jumping ahead again, when Houghton Mifflin reissued *Tara's Healing* in

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[253] Box 24, folder 11, Giles MSS 39, WKU) contains 54 reviews and announcements of the first edition plus 14 more reviews published upon the second printing (1972). Others probably exist, but no more were found in periodical indexes, print or online.

[254] "Quietly Heroic People," *New York Herald Tribune Book Review,* January 13, 1952, 10; Betty Swords, "Soothing but Lacking a Touch of Black," *Chicago Sunday Tribune Book Review*, January 27, 1952, p. 5; *Journal of the American Medical Association* 148, no. 20, (February 16, 1952), 587. Giles did not get a *New York Times* review until *The Kentuckians* (1953), the first book in her frontier series (*Around Our House*, 42).

1972, it was again reviewed, with no references to the first edition. Of the 14 reviews found in Giles's papers at Western Kentucky University, most are longer than those of 20 years before. Most spotlight the admirable White Cap minister and make the connection to the Brethren in Christ, but only three cite the small sect for its dedication and service. Four briefly elucidate the meaning of "White Caps," and the review in the *Lexington Sunday Herald-Leader* covers at some length Brethren in Christ origins, dress, prayer veiling, and footwashing.[255] As true the first time around, not a great deal of attention from the general public could be generated by these reviews.

Besides book reviews, *Tara's Healing* also produced a little regional publicity for the church by way of two articles in the *Louisville Courier-Journal Magazine*. The first, as already mentioned, was the four-page feature by the reporter Giles had invited to the Evangel Chapel love feast in May 1950. Replete with photographs of the preparatory and footwashing services, the article covers origins, doctrines and practices, the history of the Kentucky mission, and a profile of the local churches. Here the Brethren in Christ are characterized as "a tiny band of religious zealots whose unusual customs have set them apart from their neighbors."[256]

Two weeks later, a follow-up article on Henry and Janice, by another *Courier-Journal* reporter, included a paragraph about her "incidental" writing about the White Caps in *The Enduring Hills*. In this piece, the reporter transcribes the sort of thing Giles had written herself:

> The ridge country was made more unusual for her by the "White Caps," the members of the Brethren in Christ Church who lived thereabouts. The nickname comes from the fact the women constantly wear white caps. The women never cut their hair or wear cosmetics. The men never wear ties. The church members' life is austere, indeed, as they try to live in constant readiness for the second coming of Christ.[257]

The Brethren in Christ are thus reduced to a curious matter of local color.

Letters from readers

According to Giles, fan mail about *Tara's Healing* was immediate, heavy,

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[255] Betty E. Borries, "An Outsider Becomes Part of Piney Ridge," *Lexington Sunday Herald-Leader*, October 8, 1972.

[256] Thomas V. Miller, 5.

[257] James Goble, "A Lamp Burns Late on Giles Ridge," Courier-Journal Magazine, June 18, 1950, 15-17. Reprinted (slightly abridged) in "A Collection of Janice Holt Giles Biographies," Bulletin of the Kentucky Association of School Librarians 1, no. 2 (Spring 1965), 6-9, but the paragraph on the Brethren in Christ was one of those cut out.

and glowing. Writing to the Dohners just three weeks after *Tara's Healing* was published, she happily reports that the mail "indicates that the book is going to reach and affect people in the constructive way I hoped for it."[258] By May 1955, fan mail response "more than totaled that of the first two books" of the Piney Ridge trilogy.[259] Oddly enough, Giles apparently did not preserve these letters or her replies; only one reply was found among her many papers at Western Kentucky University.[260]

Giles answered most letters herself, but she sent those asking about Brethren in Christ beliefs to Elam Dohner since she "felt inadequate to deal with the theological questions" (*A Little Better than Plumb*, 158). Typed copies of two of these (probably all she ever forwarded), along with carbon copies of her replies to the writers, are preserved among the Dohners' papers.

A Mr. Campbell of San Francisco urgently wrote that his life paralleled Tara's, that he would readily move to the hills Giles describes, and that he was seeking "the life and peace of mind of Jory": "To date, I've never heard of the Church of the Brethren in Christ but I must know more. Your understanding and warm description of them has aroused an insatiable interest to learn more. Their devotion and way of life is truly enviable."[261]

Giles kindly cautioned him about searching for a panacea for unhappiness and referred him to superintendent E. O. Dohner. Her letter to the reader reveals her sincere admiration for the Brethren in Christ at that time:

> I do not want to extend a false hope to you by assuring you that the Kentucky hills and the Church of the Brethren in Christ are exactly as I have described them in TARA'S HEALING, and yet I am compelled to do just that because it is true. There is the beauty and quiet and peace of the hills, as I have described it. And there are the "White Caps" with their beautiful faith and way of life.[262]

A letter from a second reader intent on learning more about "these good people" was from a woman in Maryland:

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[258] Giles to Elam and Helen Dohner, December 28, 1951, Dohner Family Papers.

[259] Helen M. Dohner, "The Story of 'Tara's Healing,'" *Sunday School Herald*, May 8, 1955, 4. Presumably, this information was obtained directly from Giles.

[260] Giles to J. H. Deming, Saudi Arabia, September 15, 1952, box 22, folder 15, Giles MSS 39, WKU.

[261] Vern L. Campbell, San Francisco, to Giles, January 22, 1952.

[262] Giles to Campbell, February 8, 1952. A month later Dohner wrote Campbell a warm, four-page letter, but for lack of a complete address, it was returned (Giles to Elam Dohner, March 26, 1952, Dohner Family Papers). It is not known if Dohner wrote again, using the new address Giles supplied.

> I have just finished reading your book TARA'S HEALING. Your descriptions of the peoples' beliefs and doctrines were very vivid, especially to myself. I am very interested in this group, the Church of the Brethren in Christ. . . . the beliefs of the churches near me do not appeal to me. "The White Caps" do appeal to me very much.[263]

Aside from those quoted here, no other letters from readers are extant among the Dohners' papers, except for a request from a college freshman writing a paper and a post card written directly to Elam requesting church history and California locations.[264] But when Giles forwarded Mr. Campbell's letter in February 1952, she wrote of many other positive letters from readers who also apparently found hope and solace in what they read about the Brethren in Christ:

> I wish you could read just a portion of the letters that are deluging me about TARA'S HEALING. It would make your heart sing! Never before have so many people written, or said such wonderful things! I am truly so happy that the book is finding its way into the lives of so many people. And it is taking you and Mrs. Dohner and the others of your faith into their lives also. If we can bring hope and love into hearts that are troubled, we are truly being "servants of the Lord," aren't we? In my own way, I like to think perhaps I am contributing something to *your* life and work, too.[265]

On March 26, Giles brought the Dohners up to date on the mail focusing on the Brethren in Christ:

> The volume of mail has begun to fall off somewhat within the past week or two, as it usually does when the first peak after publication is reached. There has been nothing else of quite the same character as Mr. Campbell's letter, although many express an interest in and an appreciation of the Church of the Brethren [*sic*]. If we can ever find some free time I should like to bring a sampling of the letters along and let you see them. I truly do think that you are having a wide and

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[263] Mrs. Ottie Mills, Jr., Madison, MD, to Giles, April 26, 1952, Dohner Family Papers.

[264] Elizabeth P. Alexander, Center College, Danville, KY, to Giles, February 22, 1956, Dohner Family Papers. Also among the Dohners' papers: an April 1952 postcard to "Rev. E. O. Dohner, Supt. 'White Caps,'" requesting tracts and addresses for Brethren in Christ in California.

[265] Giles to Elam and Helen Dohner, February 8, 1952, Dohner Family Papers.

appreciative audience through the book.[266]

In this same letter, Giles happily informs them of the *JAMA* review and quotes the part regarding the Brethren in Christ (but leaves out the line about the women's caps). She also relates the compliments the president of the Louisville Presbyterian Seminary had paid her which reflected to the good credit of the Brethren in Christ: "'Jory's conversation with Tara (about Ferdy Jones and Corinna, in his cabin one night) ought to be required reading for all theological students as a classic example of 'agape' love.'"

Giles sums up the *Tara's Healing* mail phenomena in a chapter of *A Little Better than Plumb* (1963) in which she talks about uninvited visitors and letters received in general:

> When this book came out there was a considerable amount of mail expressing interest in the theology of the denomination. . . . I doubt there were any converts to the denomination but it was interesting to see how many people had lost their early faith and were groping for something to take its place. (158)

So at least among its readers, *Tara's Healing* gave some very favorable press to the Brethren in Christ, and perhaps it created more interest than can be documented. One last echo can be heard in a letter from Giles to the Dohners in 1967: "It was good to hear from you again and interesting to learn that TARA'S HEALING still challenges people. The book has been out of print so long I am surprised that even a library still has a copy.[267]

Brethren in Christ and local responses

As just seen, Giles intended *Tara's Healing* to present the Brethren in Christ in a favorable light—describing, "with much sympathy" (*A Little Better than Plumb,* 158), their interesting peculiarities and also revealing their worthy character. Her sincerity in this is further evidenced in a long letter to her agent, who objected to her first version, especially the prologue, which he saw as nothing short of White Cap propaganda. Giles agreed with his assessment and was ready to revise but explained her desire to promote such a faith and how she chose to do so:

> I have said the story is Tara's, but in the broadest sense the entire book is, of course, propaganda for the White Caps (it might be any

[266] Giles to Elam and Helen Dohner, March 26, 1952, Dohner Family Papers.

[267] Giles to Elam and Helen Dohner, from Knifley, April 25, 1967, Dohner Family Papers.

> other group of people who believe as they do in love as a way of life. I chose them because they have interested me and are somewhat unique). I chose to write about a man whose whole life was influenced by a White Cap who positively and dynamically lived his faith, rather than write about the White Cap. I thought it would have more power and be more significant. I could easily have written about Jory—but I thought Jory himself stood forth stronger in contrast with Tara, and I thought Jory's influence on Tara was the best of the religious theme. Of course my own philosophy inevitably creeps into what I write. I always have a banner to wave! The White Caps have a tremendous interest in this book. They have worked with me faithfully, and while I have said nothing to them about it, I am hoping that some financial aid to the work may result from it, and I am prepared to add to it myself from the profits of the book. For one thing, we've got to have a doctor back in these hills![268]

Tara's Healing did not prove profitable enough for any such contribution, but her good intentions expressed here nevertheless show a close relation to and genuine appreciation of the Brethren in Christ at this point, and six years later, as mentioned above, she did give a handsome sum for the new Knifley Chapel.

How would the Brethren in Christ respond to this novel so intensely focused on their beloved church? This concern she expressed in her reply to the Dohners on December 28, 1951, following their receipt of a gift copy, and again she shows her heartfelt appreciation for the Brethren in Christ and, in particular, for Elam and Helen:

> I was glad to have a copy of TARA'S HEALING sent to you, for it could not have been written without your help and I was very conscious of my debt to you. I am anxious of course to know whether you like it or not. I am certain that you would have handled it

[268] Giles to Swan, October 17, 1950, Giles Correspondence, UK. With Giles's permission, Swan later destroyed the original draft (Swan to Giles, June 19, 1951, Giles Correspondence, UK.) Notwithstanding her desire to promote the Brethren in Christ, when serialization of Tara's Healing was proposed, Giles was ready to cut out theological content if so required. After Collier's declined running the story because the sections on the church were "handled too expositorily for our best use" (Warren Brown to Paul Reynolds, January 10, 1951), Giles wrote her agent that she "certainly wouldn't have any objections to omitting most of the doctrinal parts for magazine publication" (Giles to Swan, January 15, 1951, box 18, folder 1, Giles MSS 39, WKU).

> differently, had you done the writing, but each of us must move along the paths we are guided, and I do feel the book is a tribute which the reading public can understand to your faith and your people. I hoped you would feel my genuine appreciation of your way of life . . . . It would be natural for you, of course, to stress your theology more. But to me, the greatness I saw in you two people, and in several others of your faith, lies not so much in what you believe, as in the way your belief leads you to live. I think I did justice to that in the book, don't you? For the whole thesis of the book is the power of love as a way of life.[269]

This is a fair assessment of the book and a fair statement of the author's intent, and it is difficult to see how much more positive information about a denomination could have been expected. The Dohners in fact did like *Tara's Healing* and very much so, as they did almost all of her books up through *Hannah Fowler*.[270] *Tara's Healing* accurately portrayed the love and sharing of the church and mission, they said, and unconsciously echoing Giles herself, declared that she "gave a beautiful tribute to the Brethren in Christ."[271]

One would expect that every existing Brethren in Christ periodical would immediately cover any author or book that featured the church, but such was not the case with *Tara's Healing* or any of Giles's other books. Nothing appeared in the *Evangelical Visitor*, not even a letter to the editor. Finally, in February 1955, the *Sunday School Herald* ran a short review of *40 Acres and No Mule* (1952) written by Helen Dohner. In it Helen recommends the *Piney Ridge* trilogy as a way for readers "to live near our own Brethren in Christ missions." She notes Giles's appreciation of Edgar Giles and Elam Dohner, but she also comments that the author "does not give an accurate description of Kentucky Brethren in Christ meetings nor preachers."[272]

A review of *Tara's Healing*, again by Helen Dohner, appeared in the May 1955 issue of the same magazine,[273] three and a half years after the book's release!

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[269] Giles to Elam and Helen Dohner, December 28, 1951, Dohner Family Papers.

[270] Elam and Helen Dohner, interviews, May 23, 1986, and August 2, 1986. An exception to the books the Dohners liked was *The Plum Thicket,* which Giles advised them not to read because of its degenerate aspects. Two other pre-1957 novels, *Harbin's Ridge* and *Hill Man*, were no doubt likewise objectionable, but the first they attributed to Henry and the second, published pseudonymously, they were apparently not aware of.

[271] Elam Dohner, conversation, August 2, 1986.

[272] Helen M. Dohner, review of *Forty Acres and No Mule*, *Sunday School Herald*, February 13, 1955, 5.

For this longer review Helen had made notes listing a number of reservations: inaccuracies of doctrines and mission set-up; lack of spiritual comprehension regarding Rose's conversion; lack of genuine, deep motivation regarding Tara's healing; and Giles's "Spiritual ignorance, hunger & confusion."[274] As published, however, the review does not include these reservations except to note Rose's "somewhat unorthodox conversion" and church accession and Tara's "wistfully yearn[ing] for the simplicity of such a faith." Helen borrows heavily from the dust jacket blurb for the main part of her review and then appends excerpts from Giles's three letters to the Dohners about fan mail and other excerpts from the two letters from readers quoted above.

Immediately after reading *Tara's Healing*, Dortha Dohner voiced her opinions much more strongly. In a long typed letter to Helen, she wrings her hands over the novel's sad lack "of the foundation stone of faith":

> The distinctive Bible doctrines of separation as practiced by the "White Caps" are clearly, beautifully presented. But those practices are empty and meaningless without the divine miracle of regeneration, "the new birth," the inner transformation wrought by the Holy Spirit because of Calvary. The whole thing turns out humanistic, psychological. Romantic, idealistic, but utterly false to the basic foundation stones of spiritual Truth. Not purposely so . . . but because the author herself doesn't know! She writes . . . as an observer who admires, but either doesn't understand or is unwilling to recognize, that the only thing that makes possible that kind of love as a way of life, is the miracle of the indwelling Christ. There is beauty, power, persuasiveness in her presentation. But in the end she persuades to nothing more than the best man can find in himself. Nothing that points to The Truth, The Life, The Way.[275]

Dortha goes on to speculate that surely someone could indeed write a bestseller "with the right spiritual slant," that this book, "with just a little different turn here and there, just a clever suggestion of the Truth, could have been a 'miracle book.'"

As already seen, Dortha derided the notion of a Brethren in Christ member stripping tobacco. She also found Jory's involvement in the climactic gunfight

[273] Helen M. Dohner, "The Story of 'Tara's Healing,'" *Sunday School Herald*, May 8, 1955, 4-5.

[274] Helen Dohner, penciled notes, ca. 1955, Dohner Family Papers.

[275] Dortha Dohner to Helen Dohner, February 14, 1952, Dohner Family Papers.

entirely implausible. But except for these two incidents, she seems otherwise unfazed by any particular discrepancies in Giles's presentation of Brethren in Christ doctrine, ritual, or practice. Her concern is strictly spiritual, and one wonders if she expressed the sentiments of most other Brethren in Christ readers. More likely, most were more interested in simply seeing how their own special beliefs and ways were spread across the pages of a work of fiction meant for a wide public.

Although in Louisville all the Piney Ridge books were eagerly sought after,[276] down in Adair County Giles's books were seldom read by the ridge folk. Nevertheless, parts of what she wrote were gossiped about, and what was known was not appreciated. Based on conversation with Giles's neighbors, Dianne Watkins Stuart reports that those few families who read the Piney Ridge books "were offended by the 'stories' [Giles] told."[277] Said one non-Brethren in Christ woman over thirty years later, she was "a little rough on Kentucky people."[278] In a 1989 conference paper on the concept of place in Giles's works, Sandra Joiner, a Giles scholar, allowed that Giles's initial lack of insight into the hill people got her into trouble: "Often, what Giles saw as simply material for her books, was seen by others as information damaging to the family."[279]

The Kentucky Brethren in Christ themselves were pretty much on the same page. Whatever good words Giles had for them did not much matter. But like most ridge folk, church members were not always happy with her, more because of her depiction of their native culture rather than what she wrote about their church. Among a half dozen staunch members reminiscing in August 1986, a common memory of reactions to the early books was that "she said what wasn't true." "*40 Acres and No Mule* was the book that set people off," Beulah Arnold recalled. "She made light of everybody she knew."[280] Annie Giles said that everyone on the ridge was angry regarding that book and claimed she lied.[281] Some, however, including Annie, saw some truth in what Giles wrote about them. Said one woman to Helen Dohner

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[276] Lois Decker O'Neill, "Looks at Books," *Courier-Journal*, September 23, 1951.
[277] Stuart, 116.
[278] Pauline Gentry, conversation, August 2, 1986.
[279] Sandra Joiner, "Concept of 'Place' in the Fiction of Janice Holt Giles," unpublished paper, Grow Conference, Western Kentucky University, 1989, p. 3, Small Collection 2089, Manuscripts & Folklife Archives, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green.
[280] Beulah Arnold, conversation, August 2, 1986.

back in the early 1950s, "That's the way we are."[282] Regarding *Tara's Healing,* however, little was said at the 1986 gathering. There was tacit agreement with the Dohners that the book was a beautiful tribute, but one member, who admitted she had never read Giles's books, said, "She made light of our church and I never liked her from then on." [283]

Literary Standing

So much for the immediate reception of the books portraying the Brethren in Christ and the (slight) impression they made on the public's perception of the denomination. We will now see how Giles has been received since then. What range of readership does she continue to enjoy? More particularly, what has been said about the Brethren in Christ, good or indifferent, in any literary criticism of her work, especially *Tara's Healing*?

General indicators

Some pronouncements about Giles indicate that she has continued to enjoy a wide audience. Most often she is cited for her frontier series, praised as historically accurate as well as entertaining, with always a positive, hopeful outlook. In 2005, Clara L. Metzmeier, president of the Giles Society, summed up what other favorable critics have said on that score: "Giles' in-depth research [for her historical fiction], her ability to spin a story, and her belief in the goodness of people cause her writing to endure."[284]

On the other hand, Wade Hall, her most ardent critic, primarily commends her Kentucky ridge books: "[B]y the time of her death in 1979, her hugely popular books about Henry's home county and people had made them known around the world."[285] John Todd Coke, another Kentucky literature professor, also deemed the Piney Ridge trilogy Giles's best-known books.[286] But these statements about the fame of the early books—among them, those featuring the Brethren in Christ—cannot be very well supported. More judicious is Gina Herring, who states that while many of Giles's books, including the ridge

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[281] Anna Giles, interview, August 1, 1986.

[282] Fayline Ballou McGala, quoted by Helen Dohner, interview, August 1, 1986.

[283] Mattie Ellen Feese Quinn, conversation, August 2, 1986.

[284] *Celebrating Janice*, 1.

[285] Wade Hall, "Janice Holt Giles," in *The Kentucky Anthology: Two Hundred Years of Writing in the Bluegrass State*, ed. Wade Hall (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 305.

[286] John Todd Coke [English professor, Georgetown (KY) College], *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 97, no. 2 (Spring 1999), 203.

titles, are still in print, "she is not widely known or read today." "[H]er life and work [are] significant only as part of regional and popular literary history."[287]

Looking to public recognition as an indicator of fame and stature, one finds only a few modest gestures. Stuart writes that by the end of her career, Giles "had received numerous honors and awards,"[288] but none is named, except for an award from the Western Writers of America for *Six-Horse Hitch* (1968),[289] and none is listed among Giles's archived papers.

In her adopted state of Kentucky, nevertheless, long after her death, Giles has been honored in three distinct ways. In 1987 a Kentucky Historical Marker was installed near her home at Spout Springs.[290] The sign notes her historical novels set in the Green River area and western Indian territory and the more than three million copies sold, and it names *The Enduring Hills* and *The Believers* as two of "[h]er works, noted for action and imagery." In 1996, the Janice Holt Giles and Henry Giles Society was established to promote their literary legacy and preserve their log home.[291] Most recently, in 2014 Giles was inducted into the Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame as part of the second class, which included Thomas Merton, Jesse Stuart, and four other deceased Kentucky authors.[292]

Reprints

If number of copies sold is a measure of the initial reception of an author, reprints may be taken as a measure of lasting interest. Reprints offered by a commercial publisher at least indicate a belief that a critical mass of readers will buy them, and reprints published by a scholarly press indicate a belief in the intrinsic value of the original works.

During her lifetime, all nine of Giles's frontier novels were reprinted by four paperback publishers (Warner, Fawcett, Avon, and Paperback Library),[293] and six of her earliest books were reissued by Houghton Mifflin. Included

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[287] Gina Herring, "Sentimental Journey: Janice Holt Giles Finds a Career But No Immortality," *Appalachian Journal* 26, no. 3 (Spring 1999), 274.

[288] Stuart, 226.

[289] Stuart, 209.

[290] Historical Marker 1813, installed September 1987.

[291] www.gilessociety.org/ (accessed April 30, 2016).

[292] Saraya Brewer, "Carnegie Center Announces 2014 Inductees in the Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame," Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning (www.carnegiecenterlex.org). The six inductees in the first class (2013) included Harriet Simpson Arnow, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, James Still, and Robert Penn Warren.

among these latter six were her three books with the most substantial Brethren in Christ content—*The Enduring Hills, Tara's Healing*, and *40 Acres and No Mule* (2nd ed., with her prologue), plus *Harbin's Ridge*. After her death, other novels were also reissued, including several translations and seven large print editions (two for *Tara's Healing*). So far, no e-books.

More telling of serious interest in Giles's work are the quality hardcover and paperback reprints published by the University Press of Kentucky (UPK). Beginning in 1987, it has so far reissued 14 of the 24 titles published in her lifetime, plus *Act of Contrition*, a novel not accepted when written (1957) because of its censure of Catholic dogma on divorce.[294] The UPK reprints include all three of the main books featuring the Brethren in Christ, with initial press runs around 750 hardcover copies and 3,000 paperback.[295] Adding to their distribution, Crossings Book Club issued (ca. 2001) a combined edition of the UPK reprints of her first three novels—*The Piney Ridge Trilogy*.

Most of the UPK reprints are prefaced with new scholarly forewords which contribute to the assessment (and promotion) of Giles's literary significance. Of most interest to us, the forewords also afford opportunity for some nice words about the Brethren in Christ. No foreword, however, was written for *The Enduring Hills*, but even if there had been, it is unlikely any comment would have been made about the White Caps. And unfortunately for the Brethren in Christ, the *40 Acres* reprint also lacks a new foreword but carries instead Giles's second edition prologue which is so critical of missionaries in general and of one plain-dressed, white-capped denomination in particular.

The picture is brighter with the UPK *Tara's Healing* reprint (1994), which is introduced by a four-page essay by Wade Hall. The foreword mostly previews how Tara finds mental healing as he is drawn into the life of the ridge community. In the process, Hall gives much credit to the White Cap preacher and provides a concise sketch of the preacher's church:

> In Jory Clark, a preacher of a small religious group called the Brethren in Christ, he sees the pattern of a man whose faith motivates his life of good deeds. Nicknamed the White Caps because of the head coverings worn by the women, this small Mennonite-related denomination

[293] Stuart, 184.

[294] Stuart, 122-125, 223-227. Originally titled *Walk on the Water*.

[295] Delores Hiles, UPK Marketing Assistant, to author, March 4, 1994.

> practices pacifism, baptism by immersion, ritual footwashing, and faith healing. Indeed, much of Tara's recovery is due to the influence and example of Jory, "a man who wasn't afraid to be good . . . ."[296]

Hall thus at least gives the Brethren in Christ their proper name and an indirect endorsement. Unfortunately, Giles's own foreword is not retained, and lost now is her more complete sketch of Brethren in Christ faith and life, as well as her express thanks to the Revs. Dohner and Brubaker.

Reference works

Giles is included in only the most comprehensive of American literary and biographical reference sources (4 of 18 checked) and in surprisingly few guides to women and women authors (1 of 13) and Southern literature (2 of 11). She does find a place in reference works on historical fiction (8 of 9) and, as one would expect, in works limited to Kentucky and Southern Appalachian writers (10 of 10).

Of all these, including the scant five that reference *Tara's Healing,* only two mention or even allude to the Brethren in Christ. Kentucky in Fiction: an Annotated Bibliography (1981), as noted earlier, quotes the 1972 book jacket blurb, including its erroneous "Church of the Brethren of Christ." More accurately and more fully, Ish Richey includes both Janice and "Henry" among the 114 writers in his manual for college students, Kentucky Literature, 1784-1963.[297]

> *Tara's Healing* . . . is based upon a minor religious sect, which is found in certain localities, especially in the Knobs region of Kentucky. Church of the Brethren in Christ is the official name of this church. These people live a humble simple life. Both men and women dress in a modest way, and are noted for rendering service to the needy. The major character . . . has suffered a nervous breakdown, but is healed when he lives for a period of time with this religious group (176).

Aside from being tagged a minor sect largely confined to the Kentucky hills, the Brethren in Christ are here given a positive description of humility, simplicity, and service without the usual stress on peculiar dress and head

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[296] Wade Hall, foreword to *Tara's Healing* (UPK, 1994), [7].

[297] Richey's guide (Thompkinsvile, KY: Monroe County Press, 1963) is a reprint and revision of John Wilson Townsend's *Kentucky in American Letters* (Cedar Rapids, IA: Torch Press, 1913).

coverings. It is not likely, however, that many readers ever did or ever will come across this now fifty-year-old guide.

Literary criticism

Little has been published on Giles in the way of literary criticism. Our objective here is merely to indicate the range of coverage and to pull out any references made to the Brethren in Christ. Excepting some biographical pieces and inclusion in survey works, most of the critical work has been done at least fifteen years after Giles's career.

To date, two books on Giles have been published. The first, the biography by Dianne Watkins Stuart, *Janice Holt Giles: A Writer's Life* (1998) is a detailed work—a major resource for this article—but not one meant to critically address Giles's style or place in literature. Regarding the Brethren in Christ, although Stuart provides much information about Giles's early years on the ridge, the denomination goes unmentioned per se and she has only one short paragraph about *Tara's Healing.* In that paragraph is one reference to "the White Cap preacher," which appears only incidentally when she quotes Giles's letter averring the authenticity of her characters.[298] Without noting the crucial role of the preacher, Stuart attributes Tara's "emotional healing"/"salvation" to his involvement in the affairs of the ridge families in general.[299] Elsewhere, Edgar Giles is mentioned as hauling logs for the Gileses' new house, but Stuart identifies him merely as Henry's cousin, not as the White Cap preacher on whom Jory was modeled.[300]

The second book, *Celebrating Janice*, is the collection of papers presented at The Giles Symposium, Campbellsville (Ky.) University, May 17-18, 1991, and published by the Giles Society in 2005 to mark her one hundredth birthday.[301] At the symposium, six contributors read seven papers focused on her life on the ridge and her early books with that hill country setting. Three of the papers give some attention to the Brethren in Christ. Clara Metzmeier writes that the preacher "exemplifies the essence of unconditional love" and loving one's neighbor, a virtue "that is so much a part of Jory Clark and his religion—the White Caps."[302] In her paper on autobiographical elements in

[298] Stuart, 66, quoting Giles's letter to Oliver Swan, October 11, 1950.
[299] Stuart, 87.
[300] Stuart, 128.
[301] The papers were first published by Campbellsville College in 1992.

Giles's books, Edith Walker mentions the tent meeting in *The Enduring Hills* and the love feast in *Tara's Healing*, and she observes that Giles's "interest in the activities of the Brethren in Christ denomination binds this [latter] story together."[303]

In his paper on folklore in the Piney Ridge trilogy and *40 Acres*, Lynwood Montel points out a number of religious practices Giles writes about—some commonly held in the ridge country, others limited to the Brethren in Christ (once again misnamed "the Church of the Brethren" or "Brethren Church"). In particular, he describes in detail the uniform dress of the women (but not the cape), their long hair, and the "small white caps neatly positioned on the head." He also points out the emotional testimonies at services, seeking salvation at the mourner's bench, dinner on the church grounds, footwashing, and Jory Clark, "the Brethren minister," who gets his call to preach when repenting at the altar and who goes around helping his neighbors.[304]

Giles is also the subject of three master's theses, all focusing on her historical novels.[305] One is a bio-bibliography with an evaluation of her Kentucky frontier books (1969). Another explores her portrayal of women in that series (1975), and a third concerns the same topic but is limited to *Hannah Fowler* (2004). None mentions the Brethren in Christ.

Turning to scholarly journals, to date only five articles entirely devoted to Giles have been published, all of them in regional journals of the South. Of these, only two mention the Brethren in Christ. One, written fairly early (1957), "Folklore in Janice Holt Giles," by Hensley C. Woodbridge, has only this much on the subject: ". . . *Tara's Healing* is a sympathetic fictional treatment of the White Caps with carefully interwoven discussions of the theology, beliefs, and customs of this religious group. In *Tara's Healing* there is a description of a love feast . . . ."[306]

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302 Clara L. Metzmeier, "The Seekers," in *Celebrating Janice,* 34, 35.

303 Edith C. Walker, "Janice Holt Giles: The Autobiographical Focus of Her Work," in *Celebrating Janice,* 75-77.

304 William Lynwood Montell, "Folklore in the Works of Janice Holt Giles," in Celebrating Janice, 57-59, 61-62.

305 Florence Williams Plemmons, "Janice Holt Giles: A Bio-Bibliography with Evaluations of Kentucky Frontier Books as Historical Fiction," Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee, 1969; Tana Cox Dickens, "The Emergence of the Frontier Lady in the Historical Novels of Janice Holt Giles," M.A. thesis, Murray (KY) State University, 1975; Dortea Rikard, "Hannah Fowler: A Culturally Significant Re-visioning of Women on the Frontier," Thesis (M.A.), University of Alabama, 2004.

The second, Clara Metzmeier's "Piney Ridge Trilogy: Janice Holt Giles's Essay of Place" (1995), characterizes Jory Clark as "a spiritually beautiful person" who "lives out the doctrines of the White Caps." It also identifies the denomination by its proper name (almost) and notes one of its relevant virtues: ". . . the Church of the Brethren in Christ or White Caps, as they are locally called, are a small congregation of worshippers on Piney Ridge who approach life though active service rather than fatalistic acceptance."[307]

Of the three articles that do not mention the Brethren in Christ, all published in the 1990s, one discusses Giles as a writer about women and one focuses on *The Enduring Hills.* Gina Herring's lengthy review of Stuart's biography, the longest and most critical article on Giles's place in literature, comments only briefly on the ridge books.[308]

In addition to those five articles on herself alone, Giles is also included in several journal articles and studies more widely focused on literature of the region, but as could be expected, even those that touch on *Tara's Healing* rarely mention the Brethren in Christ. Cratis D. Williams devotes 10 pages to Giles's early Kentucky novels in his monumental dissertation, "The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction." Comparing her work to *Harbin's Ridge*, and not knowing her to be the author, Williams adjudges her "an honest writer" but in obvious "debt to her husband, whose literary power is greater than her own"! In the four pages about *Tara's Healing*, he writes of "the simple but all-inclusive faith of the White Caps, a Mennonite-group from Pennsylvania which has been in the community for only a generation." He characterizes Jory as "a minister of the White Cap faith, which is laughed at by people of old mountain stock. But Jory is doing much good in the neighborhood . . . [and] Tara himself marvels at the efficacy of the faith of the White Caps."[309] An abridgment of the dissertation was published in four consecutive issues of *Appalachian Journal* (1975-76), but there, aside from one sentence pegging Tara as a psychiatric patient, the only thing included about *Tara's*

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[306] Hensley C. Woodbridge, "Folklore in Janice Holt Giles," 333-34.

[307] Clara L. Metzmeier, "Piney Ridge Trilogy: Janice Holt Giles's Essay of Place," *Border States On-Line*, no. 10 (1995), www. spider.georgetowncollege.edu/htallant/border/bs10,fr-metz.htm.

[308] Veronica Makowsky, "Janice Holt Giles Reconsidered," *Southern Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (Summer 1994), 97-105; John Mohon, "Janice Holt Giles—*The Enduring Hills*—"'Hod Pierce's Epic Journey and the Return Home," *Kentucky English Bulletin* 46, no. 1(Fall 1996), 46-56; Herring, "Sentimental Journey," 278.

[309] Cratis D. Williams, "The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction," Ph.D. dissertation., New York University, 1961, 1543-1545.

Healing is Williams's opinion that it is "the weakest of the three" Piney Ridge books and that in it "mountain fiction slips backward toward melodrama and sensationalism."[310] In the dissertation, then, the Brethren in Christ go unnamed and unidentified, and in the journal adaptation, the White Caps go entirely unmentioned.

With a much narrower focus, Woodbridge surveys "The Kentucky Novel: 1951-5" in the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* (1956) and makes these nice remarks about *Tara's Healing* and the Brethren in Christ:

> [The book] centers around the Church of the Brethren in Christ, the beliefs of which are noted briefly in the foreword. The novel . . . deals with the experiences of Tara Cochrane . . . and Jory, a minister of the Church of the Brethren in Christ, who gradually by practicing his faith and living it changes Tara's pessimistic and cynical outlook about life. The data presented about the Church is interwoven into the narrative in such a way that it does not intrude but is an integral part of the story.[311]

Judith Schaefer includes a chapter on Giles in her eclectic assemblage of critiques on a variety of twentieth-century authors (2005).[312] She faults *Tara's Healing* for its "chunk-like" character explanations, for its lack of "any overall idea," and for other unspecified problems. She "wishes that Giles had written only a pair instead of a trilogy of novels based on Piney Ridge." Nevertheless, she notes that like the first two, *Tara's Healing*

> also has the theme of each man serving his brother, but in this novel, Giles comes closer to saying that this is best done through an organized religion such as Christianity. The Church of the Brethren in Christ is shown as a benevolent sect which serves humanity, and it is through watching Jory Clark, an almost saint and a member of this sect that Tara learns to serve his way to mental tranquility (118).

Without any Brethren in Christ references at all, Giles is also included in a journal article on twelve Kentucky women writers (1991), a review essay

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[310] Cratis D. Williams, "The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction," abridged and edited by Martha H. Pipes, *Appalachian Journal* 3, no. 4 (Spring 1976), 382-83, www.jstor.org/stable/40932113; in his dissertation, 1545.

[311] Hensley C. Woodbridge, "The Kentucky Novel: 1951-5," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 54, no. 1, (April 1956), 137.

[312] Judith Callaway Schaefer, *Amy Tan and Others: Twentieth Century Authors: Techniques and Themes* (Texhoma, Okla.: Ross Publishing, 2005)

on seven books about the Shakers (1990), and a publication of the work of a university class studying fifty-nine Kentucky writers (1994).[313]

Thus there have been both favorable and negative critical assessments of Giles's early work, and in them a few positive comments about the Brethren in Christ. The few comments usually include something about faithful lives of love and service, without an overbearing emphasis on odd dress or practice. But like the book reviews and publisher blurbs, when they refer to the Brethren in Christ at all, the reference books, journals, and academic papers seldom attribute much credit to the church. Instead, Tara's recovery is always chalked up to something less than a spiritual experience wrought through its ministry. And in the end, none of this literary criticism is apt to provoke much interest in the denomination.

In downplaying the role of the Brethren in Christ, the critics are true to Giles's overarching intention in writing *Tara's Healing*. She indeed desired to favorably picture this quaintly colorful and admirably devoted church, but her greater purpose is broader. As she stated in several places, her theme is "love as a way of life;"[314] she intended the book to explore "the therapy of love, its power to renew confidence, to heal and to give meaning to life."[315] Wade Hall correctly summarizes the impact of the novel, devoid of any reference to religion, let alone to the Brethren in Christ: "Thus *Tara's Healing* is a hallmark affirmation of Janice Holt Giles's belief in the ultimate triumph of decency and goodness among hardworking, sincere men and women of good will."[316]

Summation

Portrayal of the Brethren in Christ

Overall, Giles's presentation of the Brethren in Christ in the five works where they explicitly appear is very favorable. Her understanding of them

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[313] Bonnie Cox, "Kentucky Women Writers…Lost, Forgotten, Overlooked and Acclaimed," *Belles Lettres* 6, no. 4, (Summer 1991), search.proquest.com; Priscilla J. Brewer, "Shaker Voices: The New Scholarship," *Utopian Studies* 1, no. 2 (1990), 144-150; George Brosi, instructor, "Kentucky Authors—Chronologically Arranged," *Kentucky Literature* (English Dept., Eastern Kentucky University, 1994), plus an article by Anne Caudill, "Janice Holt Giles," 33-35.

[314] Giles, "Hill Writer," *Writer's Digest*, February 1951, 21. Repeated in quote in "About the Author," [Doubleday] *Family Reading Club News*, January 1952, [7]. Also stated in her letters to Swan (October 17, 1950, box 1, folder 2, Giles Correspondence, UK) and to Elam and Helen Dohner (December 28, 1951, Dohner Family Papers).

[315] Giles, "The Scarlet Thread," *The Peoples Choice* [Sears Peoples Book Club], Fall? 1950, [13].

[316] Foreword to *Tara's Healing*, 8.

was imperfect and her portrayal is selective, choosing the more colorful and unusual details that would interest her readers. Although a full portrait of the church was never her intent, not even in *Tara's Healing*, that novel's concentration of doctrines, rituals, prescribed practices, dedicated service, and earnest testimony surely pushes the limits of how much denominational information a work of fiction can tolerably contain.

Regarding outward practices, Giles is observant and accurate, and by and large, very positive. At worst, the Brethren in Christ may come off as overly sectarian, separated from their neighbors by strange restraints and peculiar appearance. But thanks to Jory Clark, the church is presented as faithful and sincere in living out its beliefs, especially its love for all men as expressed in selfless service to those in need.

Regarding doctrine, Giles probably did not grasp all the underlying meaning of Brethren in Christ theology. Certainly she did not attempt to express it all. Nevertheless, she recites directly all its distinctive beliefs as found in the Creed, and in one way or another she presents most of the Articles of Faith and Doctrine. Mostly, however, religious and spiritual matters are conveyed unobtrusively by action as the stories unfold, her works aiming to be entertaining novels, not gospel tracts or doctrinal treatises.

It was a happy circumstance for Giles that the White Caps were at hand for her to seize on for subject material. How could she could have written *Tara's Healing* if such a small, different, and unfamiliar sect had not been available as background and context? It is unlikely that she could have created a credible religious figure like Jory or a redemption story like Tara's in the context of some mainstream denomination or even one of the more familiar fundamentalist denominations, no matter how estimable. And it was a very happy circumstance for the Brethren in Christ that Edgar Giles and Elam and Helen Dohner were present for Janice to know and appreciate and take as model representatives of the entire church.

Ironies

There are four ironies about the only novels or popular books ever written that feature the Brethren in Christ to any appreciable extent.

First, the books that carry the most Brethren in Christ content are not among Giles's best, *Tara's Healing* especially. These are her early efforts, written under financial and personal pressure when she wrote as fast as she could and, as noted above, breezily and easily and without much effort.

Giles herself suffered no illusions about the literary value of her work, especially her early novels. Submitting a required revision of *Tara's Healing* to her agent—a major revision that cut out a prologue and the first two chapters and abruptly transformed her lead character from a writer to a doctor[317]—she recognized that the book had needed improvement, and she humbly acknowledged that she had a lot to learn:

> Please don't worry about whether I wanted to do the revision or not. I'm no genius as a writer, and no one knows it better than I. I have a certain knack for writing, and have been unusually fortunate. But I don't feel, by any means, that every word I write is sacred. If I ever do write a book about which I have strong convictions that it must stand as I have written it, I shall fight for it. But I'm still in the process of learning.[318]

Not until working hard on her ninth book, *Hannah Fowler,* did she judge herself as having become, contrary to her initial intentions, "a dedicated writer" (*Around Our House,* 93) and could truthfully say, with emphasis: "But [now] I am writing a good book. And now I know what it costs to write a good book. I know that I cannot ever again write anything less than my best and it may always cost me this division of body and soul and mind" (*Around Our House*, 95).[319] Even after producing *Hannah Fowler*, she could name only *Harbin's Ridge* and *The Plum Thicket* as books she herself would have found good and interesting enough to read.[320] Nine years and eight books later, she could still name only two she "was very proud of," neither from the early years.[321] Without doubt, then, *Tara's Healing* was not on her own list of favorites.

Giles's disinclination toward her early works had to do partly with her (soon dropped) penchant for "'pretty' writing" with "lots of lyrical adjectives and metaphors . . . strewn thickly over the pages" (*A Little Better than Plumb*,

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[317] Swan to Giles, May 18, 1951, box 1, folder 2, Giles Correspondence, UK; Giles to Swan, May 31, 1951, ibid.

[318] Giles to Swan, May 31, 1951, box 1, folder 2, Giles Correspondence, UK.

[319] From an entry in her writer's notebook, ca. February 1955. Much of part 1 of *Around Our House* (1971) is taken from this notebook (not found among Giles's papers at either University of Kentucky or Western Kentucky University; see also Stuart, 213).

[320] Giles to Paul Reynolds, Fall 1955 (Stuart, 110).

[321] *Johnny Osage* and *Run Me a River* were the two she listed in a May 1964 letter to her son-in-law, Nash Hancock (Stuart, 170).

169). It also had something to do with the editorial policy of Westminster Press, a Presbyterian house requiring clean, wholesome material suitable for church-going families. Westminster, she complained, had whittled The *Enduring Hills* down "to pure sweetness and light."[322] She felt constrained to restrict herself likewise in her next two books, especially, it seems, in *Tara's Healing,* which caused one review to be titled "Soothing, but Lacking a Touch of Black."[323] It was, she told her agent, "a great joy to turn with freedom and a sense of integrity" to *Harbin's Ridge* and *Hill Man*,[324] novels decidedly darker than her first three and her first books not contracted to Westminster.

Tara's Healing lacks the unity and sureness of story line of her other four early novels set in the ridge country. It juggles several disparate interests and plots, cuts short the spinning out of various strands, and ends rather improbably. Jory's outlaw father gets neatly killed in a shoot-out, with little impact on Jory (246-47); Tara sets up Jory as the future ridge doctor (249-50); and Tara takes Hod's teenage sister away to educate and to wed (251-53)! Also, this last novel of the Piney Ridge trilogy is 20 percent shorter than the other two—taking into account number of pages, lines per page, and size of fonts. *Harbin's Ridge* and *Hill Man* are shorter yet, but they proceed tightly to their climaxes with credibility, unity, and satisfying closure that *Tara's Healing* lacks.

A second irony is minor but curious enough to note: the novels featuring the Brethren in Christ are not set in any Brethren in Christ heartland—not Pennsylvania, Kansas, or Ontario. Instead, the denomination is introduced to readers as it presented itself in a relatively new locale—a small mission outpost, a geographic and cultural setting unlike that of any other Brethren in Christ settlement. A credible portrait of the entire church emerges, nevertheless, because of the denomination's strong cohesiveness and uniformity at that time.

The third and greatest irony by far has to do with that time, for Giles wrote about the Brethren in Christ at the precise historical moment they were about to make a major transition away from the very things about which she was impelled to write. Exactly at the high tide of an official, legalized dress

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[322] Giles to Swan, June 5, 1951, box 1, folder 2, Giles Correspondence, UK; also quoted, without date, in Stuart, 71.

[323] Betty Swords, *Chicago Sunday Tribune Book Review*, January 27, 1952, 5.

[324] Stuart, 71.

code, the denomination decided to give it all up. Or as Carlton O. Wittlinger more sagaciously states in his meticulous history, in 1950 the Brethren in Christ "stood on the threshold of an unprecedented period of change. By the close of that decade, they had officially abandoned or modified many aspect of their historic attitudes and practices."[325]

In the 1941 *Constitution-Doctrine,* a new doctrinal article on Christian apparel had "prescribed the first specific church uniforms"[326]—the code mandating Giles's fiction-worthy White Caps. But just as she began working on *Tara's Healing* in the spring of 1950, there took place that famous late-night discussion of Brethren in Christ leaders in an Indianapolis hotel room at the convention of the National Association of Evangelicals, April 18-21. This was the catalyst for the following decade of study, review, and "sweeping changes in attitudes and life-style."[327]

Given the long, slow history of the Brethren in Christ, the changes came fast.[328] In 1951, although still encouraging the cape and suits with erect collars, General Conference "deleted the description of church uniforms from its doctrinal literature."[329] Major changes were also made in the church's distinctive rituals, so that footwashing, the holy kiss, and the prayer veiling, were no longer ordinances but "scriptural practices." "[The] official position," writes Wittlinger, "had shifted significantly toward the image of the typical evangelical-holiness denomination."[330] What interest could that colorless blandness have sparked in readers? But by the time the changes had taken effect, the books were written, and there stood the Brethren in Christ in all their old fascinating ways, with never another word to say that such was no longer an accurate depiction.

The fourth irony casts something of a pall over Giles's glowing presentations of the Brethren in Christ. As discussed above, her last words about the church are negative, reflecting a major shift in her understanding of the ridge and a development of her religious philosophy.

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[325] Wittlinger, 481.
[326] Ibid., 354.
[327] Ibid., 483.
[328] For the standard account of the transition, see Wittlinger, and for a "more nuanced" account, see Devin C. Manzullo-Thomas, "Beyond 'Indianapolis '50': The Brethren in Christ Church in an Age of Evangelicalism," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 36, no. 3 (December 2013), 433-63.
[329] Wittlinger, 486.
[330] Ibid., 496.

Giles's understanding of the people of the ridge country and their religious outlook grew as she lived in their midst. Notwithstanding her reclusiveness to facilitate her writing, she came to understand their dislike of outside interference and any new practices that went against established custom—general objections which back then unavoidably applied to the Brethren in Christ as much as to any other denomination. More particularly, she came to understand the people's deep religious convictions, based on certain Pauline scriptures, that abhorred established denominations and certain practices common to all (e.g., salaried clergy, sermon notes, printed orders of service). As Sandra Joiner notes, "Giles had written all her early books of place [*Tara's Healing* included] before she had much more than a superficial knowledge of the people there."[331] Over the years she came to realize that by some of their common violations of Bible Christian tenets, and, in addition, by some of their very peculiar outside ways, the Brethren in Christ had gravely offended the native population.

Besides her acculturation to the ridge, Giles's own religious bent toward acceptance of everyone's sincere beliefs intensified to the point of not only respecting all religions but also disliking those that claim an exclusive possession of the truth. Well into her career she wrote, "I believe in all faiths for those who find themselves at home in them, and I wish to give in such a way that any man's search for truth, his own truth, may be furthered."[332] Only in the early years of her career could Giles have written a book like *Tara's Healing*, which acclaimed such an exacting faith as that of the Brethren in Christ.

No great lasting influence

Janice Holt Giles did not secure a place for herself in great literature of any sort, and early on she regretfully came to terms with that disappointing fact. Even with her good work on *Hannah Fowler,* she realized that she would not be well regarded by critics or history but would instead be categorized as a mere storyteller for a popular audience. "I shall never be recognized as a literary writer. I shan't last in literature," she wrote in her writer's notebook

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[331] Sandra Joiner, "Janice Holt Giles: Woman of Contradictions," unpublished paper, Women's Studies Conference, Western Kentucky University?, September 1988, p. 2, Small Collection 2089, Manuscripts & Folklife Archives, WKU.

[332] Ibid., 6.

(*Around Our House*, 95). And shortly after, "I realize I shall become known, with some contempt perhaps, as a writer of historical novels and dismissed. . . . I am no Willa Cather, or William Faulkner, or Ernest Hemingway" (*Around Our House*, 146). [333]

Although she wrote in the midst of the Southern Renaissance, she was not a part of it. Always a wide and serious reader (*A Little Better than Plumb,* 165-67), Giles was surely aware of her famous Southern contemporaries—Walker Percy, Eudora Welty, Robert Penn Warren, Thomas Wolfe, Flannery O'Connor—but aside from two mentions of Faulkner, she makes no reference to any of them. Nor did she see herself in league with the well-known Appalachian writers then mining veins of place and subject similar to her own—Jesse Stuart, Harriette Simpson Arnow, James Still, Elizabeth Madox Roberts).[334] "I've got no place in American literature. I won't live beyond my time. . . . I had to realize that I'm no Jesse Stuart or Harriet [*sic*] Arnow."[335]

Regarding promotion of the Brethren in Christ, Giles has made only a miniscule impression on the general public. Her work, and her portrayal of the Brethren in Christ with it, quickly became lost in the vast forests of general fiction. Although now, thanks to the Internet, some of it can at least again be found, bought, and easily accessed, it isn't much searched out or read.

This is the case even among the Brethren in Christ themselves. By a trick of history, before 10 years had passed, *Tara's Healing*, which once could have served as a sort of fictional catechism, was forgotten or ignored. Although most of Giles's works are held in the main library of the denomination's college, at the time of this writing none are held by the Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives. Even among Brethren in Christ church libraries, it is doubtful *Tara's Healing* can often be found; a query to church librarians in three Pennsylvania conferences elicited no positive responses.[336]

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[333] From entries in her writer's notebook, ca. February 1955 and October 12, 1955, respectively.

[334] Except for three conference-related notes to Jesse Stuart, no correspondence with any of these or other authors was found among Giles's papers at either Western Kentucky University or University of Kentucky.

[335] Shirley Williams, "Bookends," *Courier-Journal*, June 17, 1979, apparently quoting from an earlier interview.

[336] Based on Edie Asbury's e-mail query in September 2015 to the Brethren in Christ Church Librarians of Allegheny, Atlantic, and Susquehanna Conferences. Of the 21 libraries contacted, six responded, all negative (e-mails to author, September 2015). Lack of Giles holdings is presumed for non-respondents as well.

Nevertheless, for all her mediocrity and obscurity, Giles should have her rightful place. Even her early books, if not great literature, are better than most of the stuff out there. "Being second best is hard," she wrote to her daughter.[337] "But I haven't written trash," she said.[338] Many of her books rightfully remain in print, and someone must be buying and reading them.

Over the years a handful of short works of fiction, mostly missionary tales, have been written within Brethren in Christ contexts.[339] Recently Glenn A. Robitaille, a former Brethren in Christ pastor, published two theologically didactic novels with a minimum of veiled references to the denomination.[340] But in all of these works, only insiders can discern the connections. Only Janice Holt Giles has put the Brethren in Christ squarely (and fairly) into popular fiction.

If nothing else, Giles remains important to the Brethren in Christ for historical reasons. In her early books their own small denomination makes its few rare appearances to the general public, and in *Tara's Healing* in particular, there is captured a unique picture of their own selves just before one of their major transitions. The Brethren in Christ should at least know what Janice Holt Giles says about them. They should at least know that *Tara's Healing* exists. And maybe some of the general public would also be intrigued by her now historic presentation and be impelled to discover how the Brethren in Christ flourish in the present.

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[337] Stuart, 184, quoting a letter of August 9, 1966.

[338] Undocumented quote in Joiner, "Janice Holt Giles: Woman of Contradictions," 8.

[339] See PS (American literature) section in the Brethren in Christ Historical Library. *Mennonite Bibliography*, 1631-1961, lists Luella Creighton's *High Bright Buggy Wheels* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1951) as "Brethren in Christ—Fiction" but the church involved is definitely not Brethren in Christ—perhaps Mennonite Brethren in Christ (now the United Missionary Church).

[340] Novels by Glenn Robitaille: *In Praise of Uncertainty* (Evangel Pub. House, 2012; reissued by Borealis Press, 2015) and *Bending Light* (Borealis Press, 2015).

Appendix

The Books of Janice Holt Giles with Brethren in Christ Content

The Enduring Hills **(Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950)**

Editions: 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), a reprint with a new foreword added before the original; reprint of 2nd ed. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988).

Synopsis: Hod Pierce longs for something more than farming on the hard-scrabble ridge and finds escape in the Army. On furlough, he meets Mary Hogan on a Greyhound bus; they pursue a war-time romance by letter and marry the day he returns. Apartment and corporate life in Louisville proves intolerable, so they move back to Piney Ridge to farm, with peace and fulfillment.

Brethren in Christ content: pp. 19, 24-35, 41-47, 68. A White Cap tent meeting. Origins of the denomination.

Tara's Healing **(Philadelphia: Westminster Press, [December] 1951)**

Editions: 2nd printing (Houghton Mifflin, 1972); reprinted (UPK, 1994) but with a foreword by Wade Hall replacing the author's.

Synopsis: Hod invites his old Army captain, Dr. Tara Cochrane, to come to Piney Ridge to convalesce from a nervous breakdown. During his nine-month stay, Tara is gradually drawn into the joys and troubles of the Pierce family and their neighbors. As he experiences their close community and as he works with Jory Clark, a White Cap preacher, he finds healing for his nerves and soul.

Brethren in Christ content: pp. 7-8, 47-59, 75-76, 82, 218-21, 223-24, 227-28, 230-31, 240-41 plus more about Jory. Doctrine and practice, including dress, prayer veilings, the Creed, a love feast, selfless service, divine healing, and more briefly, other doctrines and rituals.

Harbin's Ridge **(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, [September] 1951)**

Editions: 1st ed. published under the name of Henry Giles; 212 pages. Second printing of 1951 ed. contains 233 pages. 2nd ed. (Houghton Mifflin, 1977) by Henry and Janice Holt Giles, with a one-paragraph preface explaining (in part) the authorship. Pages cited are to 2nd ed. and to second printing of 1951 ed.

Synopsis: Set in the same hill country but 50 years earlier, the story of steady-going Jeff Harbin and his willful friend Faleecy John Squires, from bitter-sweet childhood, through family entanglements, to tragic denouement.

Brethren in Christ content: pp. 183-85 in 1st ed.; pp. 201-3 in 2nd ed. and second printing of 1951 ed. One-paragraph sketch of the history and distinctive practices of the White Caps, plus a scene at a White Cap tent meeting.

40 Acres and No Mule **(Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952)**

Editions: 2nd ed. (Houghton Mifflin, 1967), with Giles's 30-page prologue; reprint of 2nd ed. (UPK, 1992). Pages cited are to 2nd ed.; for 1st ed., subtract 24.

Synopsis: Non-fiction. A breezy, not completely candid account of the first year Giles and her husband lived on his native ridge in Adair County. She tells of settling into a dilapidated house, tobacco farming, family and neighbors, hill culture, and some of her reactions.

Brethren in Christ content: pp. 14, 41-43, 167-70, 183, 226. A White Cap tent meeting and a brief sketch of beliefs, dress, and mission. The prologue to the second edition, written fifteen years later, presents Giles's matured understanding of ridge country society and religion, including a critical allusion to the Brethren in Christ.

A Little Better than Plumb: the Biography of a House / Henry and Janice Holt Giles **(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963)**

Editions: Reprint ed. (UPK, 1995).

Synopsis: The construction of Janice and Henry's log home, from scouting for logs of abandoned structures to laying the first fire in the massive stone fireplace, with diversions into marriage, family, friends, writing, illness, and country living.

Brethren in Christ content: pp. 68, *101-33*, 139-49, 158, 216-19, 264. One paragraph about *Tara's Healing* and a sentence on Eisenhower. Much about cousin Edgar Giles working on the house, although nothing about him as a Brethren in Christ minister. Page numbers in italic cover chapters 7-9 and 13, written by Henry.

Shady Grove: A Novel (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968)

Editions: Reprint ed. (UPK, 2002), with a foreword by Wade Hall.

Synopsis: Sudley Fowler and his Broke Neck relations happily carry on their lives of love, religion, welfare, politics, and moonshine according to their own best lights, much to the mortification of the inept mission preacher.

Brethren in Christ content: Little or much. A composite of several preachers connected with several missions in southern Appalachia; mission and preacher remain unnamed.

Around Our House / Henry and Janice Holt Giles **(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971)**

Editions: No others.

Synopsis: Part 1, 1954-1957: columns by Janice and Henry from the Campbellsville *News-Journal* and entries from Janice's notebooks. Part 2, 1957-1967: Janice on family, research, and writing. Part 3, 1967-1970: Henry on moving their log house; Janice on writing and on moving back into the house.

Brethren in Christ content: pp. 204, 297-99. Edgar Giles named as a neighbor, but no mention of his being a White Cap preacher. Without referencing any particular denomination, severe criticism is leveled at the missionaries represented in *Shady Grove*.

A History of Sikalongo Mission
Part I: Beginning A New Work, 1912-1931

By Dwight Thomas*

Introduction

In August 2016, the Zambian Brethren in Christ Church celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of Sikalongo Mission. *There is No Difference* included a brief history of the mission in 1950, but little else has been written since.[1] This history is intended to amplify the 1950 history and serve to commemorate the work of those who worked to build the Mission.

The challenges of opening Sikalongo Mission made it somewhat difficult for the church to choose a date to celebrate the "beginning." However, in light of the significant efforts of Myron and Adda Taylor in 1916-1918, the church decided on 1916. This article describes the early years of the Sikalongo Mission history, beginning with the initial search for a site in 1910 and ending with the death of Myron Taylor in 1931.

Brethren in Christ missionaries first went to Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) in 1906. Colonial British rule was well established by that time. Northern Rhodesia was administered by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and had administrative offices in Livingstone and Kalomo.

The Brethren in Christ established a mission in the Matopo Hills in 1899 which included a church, a school, and a health ministry. Frances Davidson, Adda Engle, David Moyo and Gomo Sibanda settled in Macha in 1906 and

[1] Anna R. Engle, John A. Climenhaga, and Leoda A. Buckwalter, *There Is No Difference: God Works in Africa and India* (Nappanee, IN: E.V. Publishing, 1950).

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pursued a similar strategy. Myron Taylor joined them at Macha in 1907. Two years later, in November 1909, Myron Taylor and Adda Engle married at Macha Mission.[2] On February 14, 1911, the Taylors' first daughter, Ruth Elizabeth, was born in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia.[3]

Frances Davidson and Adda Engle (Taylor).

David Moyo and Gomo Sibanda.

From the beginning, it seems Myron preferred pioneering work over the routine of the mission station and was often out doing evangelistic work.[4] That spirit may well have contributed to his desire to begin a new work. Apparently, some tensions also existed between the Taylors and Frances Davidson.[5] Taylor's evangelistic instincts and the uneasy situation at Macha may account for his quest for a new mission location. In any event, by 1910, Taylor was scouting for locations.[6] He was evidently interested in more remote areas like the Ila territory to the north of Macha:

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[2] For a firsthand account of the early years at Macha Mission, see: H. Frances Davidson, *South and South Central Africa: A Record of Fifteen Years' Missionary Labors among Primitive Peoples* (Elgin, IL.: Printed for the Author by Brethren Publishing House, 1915).

[3] Eugene Wingert, "Email Regarding Birth of Ruth Taylor," September 30, 2016.

[4] H Frances Davidson, "Macha Mission.," *Evangelical Visitor,* November 11, 1908, 5.

[5] H. Frances Davidson, personal diaries, March 7, 1910. The complete collection of Davidson's diaries is housed in the Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives, Mechanicsburg, PA, and also available in searchable PDF in the Archives online digital collection.

[6] Engle, Climenhaga, and Buckwalter, *There Is No Difference*, 130-134.

Myron and Adda Taylor, about 1910.

> The burden of the evangelistic work has always rested upon brother Taylor since he is in the field and he has been anxious to devote his time to it. At present he and two of our Christian natives are up among the Baila tribe north of us giving the message of salvation where Christ has not been named.[7]

There Is No Difference noted that Taylor also explored a location near Kalomo in a district called Karenga.[8] Ultimate, Taylor continued active evangelistic work with the secondary intention of finding another location to begin a new work.[9]

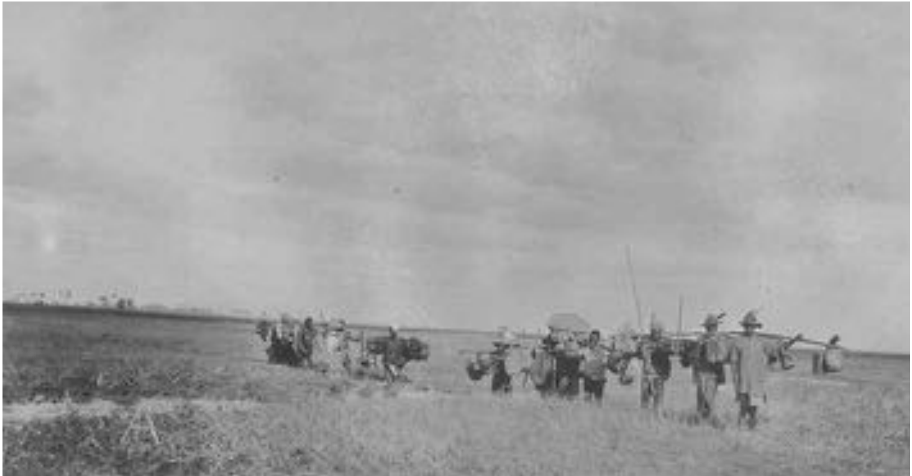
Beginning A New Work: 1912-1920

Preparing to go to Sikalongo (1912-1916)

That Myron Taylor was searching for a new mission location was clear from an entry in Frances Davidson's diary on June 27, 1912:

> Bro. & Sister Taylor have been away about ten days and will not

[7] Davidson, "Macha Mission," *Evangelical Visitor*, November 11, 1908.
[8] Engle, Climenhaga, and Buckwalter, *There Is No Difference*, 130.
[9] Davidson, "Macha Mission," *Evangelical Visitor,* August 25, 1912, 5-6.



Myron Taylor trekking in Ila-land.

> likely return until next week. They went over beyond Choma, about sixty miles from here to look at a place which Bro. Taylor thinks would make a nice mission station and he wanted Sister Taylor to see the place.[10]

Although the place is not mentioned by name, this diary entry undoubtedly refers to Sikalongo. Details about negotiations for the site are sketchy, but by sometime in 1912 Taylor decided on Sikalongo as the place for a new work.

Oral reports from Sikalongo indicate there was some local debate about whether to allow Taylor to settle there.[11] The family of the current chief and one local headman claim that Chief Singani objected to Taylor establishing a mission station in his chieftancy. However, the local Sikalongo headman reportedly gave permission in defiance of the chief. This site was also reputed to be troubled by evil spirits because of the death of a number of villagers. Oral accounts suggest that the current mission site was the original location

[10] Davidson, personal diaries, June 27, 1912.

[11] Isaiah Muleya, "Zambian Brethren in Christ Church History - Sikalongo, Myron Taylor and the Peter Munsaka Family," interview with the author, June 25, 2008; Isaiah Muleya, "Zambian Brethren in Christ Church History - Sikalongo, Myron Taylor and the Peter Munsaka Family," interview with the author, 2009; William Siayula (Father of current Singani Chief), "Zambian BIC Church History - Sikalongo, Myron Taylor and the Peter Munsaka Family," interview with the author, 2012.

of Sikalongo Village, but that people shifted to another location because of unexplained deaths. Evidence exists to support these claims. Workers discovered human remains while digging foundations for buildings, and a government archeologist reportedly visited to check them out.[12] Some oral reports suggest that the local headman agreed to have missionaries settle there because he thought either they would die or their presence might control or eliminate the evil spirits. In any event, the headman granted Taylor permission to begin a mission at the current site.

The Taylors returned to Michigan sometime in February or March of 1913.[13] Foreign Mission funds were so low at the time that they had to remain at Mooretown.[14] While they were on furlough, their second daughter, Anna, was born in Abilene, Kansas. Not surprisingly, little appears to have happened at Sikalongo between 1913 and 1915 during the Taylors' absence. Davidson also returned to the United States on furlough and the absence of all three of the original missionaries undoubtedly put a strain on the work at Macha. Moreover, World War I added other complications to mission work in Africa. Davidson, for example, had to return to Africa via an alternate route to avoid potential harm. The lack of financial support forced Taylors to remain in Mooretown, Michigan. Only after Myron Taylor's brother and sister-in-law, Walter and Malinda Taylor, pledged to support their mission work were Myron and Adda able to return to Africa.[15]

Several accounts indicate some activity at Sikalongo before the Taylors returned. Jesse [Chikaile] Muchimba, one of the early Africans who helped open the Mission claimed:

> In 1915, God's Word began to be preached in the Sikalongo District. This was like a farmer plowing new land. Later services were held in the old shop. In 1920 the old church was built. Here we saw the Word of God go forward. It was like a spark which has been fanned

[12] Charles Nseemani, "Zambian Brethren in Christ Church History," interview with the author, July 10, 2005; Dennis Mweetwa, "Zambian Brethren in Christ Church History," interview with the author, July 8, 2005. Dennis Mweetwa, "Sikalongo Village Oral History and the Establishment of the Mission." Interview with the author, November 5, 2016.

[13] Davidson, personal diaries, March 23, 1913.

[14] Davidson, *South and South Central Africa*, 433.

[15] Eugene Wingert, email message to author, October 2, 2016; Mary Fretz and Kristine Westbeld, Two Brothers, One Mission (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Pub. House, 2000). See also: Jan Engle Lewis, "Through the Eyes of a Child." *Brethren in Christ History and Life*, 39, no. 1 (April 2016), 3-11.

Myron and Adda Taylor and family in Michigan ca. 1914.

> into a flame. There is no one who began with me: some have gone; others have returned to sin; but God has chosen more workers to push forward His work.[16]

Muchimba's claim that work began in 1915 might refer to David Moyo, who is known to have done work in the Sikalongo area. It might also refer to Harvey Frey, who came to Macha in 1916 and baptized 16 converts. While in Northern Rhodesia, Frey visited Sikalongo with David Moyo and also consulted local white farmers regarding the suitability of Sikalongo as a site for a new mission station.[17]

A difficult beginning (1916-1920)

The Taylors faced a variety of challenges during the early years at Sikalongo Mission. They returned to Zambia in 1916, reaching Choma on October 7.[18] After only a week at Macha, Myron headed to Sikalongo in

[16] Anna M. Eyster, *Evangelical Visitor,* August 8, 1938, 13.
[17] Davidson, personal diaries, June 26, 1916.
[18] Adda E. Taylor, "Macha Mission. Oct. 21, 1916," *Evangelical Visitor*, December 12, 1916, 11.

order to begin before the rains. Adda and the girls stayed at Macha through the rainy season.

Taylor's first challenge was getting his supplies to Sikalongo from Choma. With help from trusted workers (probably from Macha), Taylor moved over 8000 pounds of supplies 24 miles through the bush. Because of an animal quarantine, supplies had to be carried or pushed by hand much of the way. Bishop Steigerwald described the endeavor in detail in a letter published in the *Evangelical Visitor* in 1917:

> Sikalongo is not much of a place yet. Bro. Taylor came here [in 1916] at the beginning of the rainy season, carrying, carting, and in every way possible, moving, by native carriers, his more than four tons of goods from Choma, a distance of twenty-four miles. He got an ox team to bring a part of his goods six miles of this distance. The balance of the distance it had all to be moved by human force, a tall order. However, after three weeks of such strenuous work he succeeded in landing everything on the spot, without a break or a loss, Most was carried by the boys, either on their heads or shoulders, whichever way was most convenient. Some was loaded on a two wheeled cart of 3000 lbs., capacity and drawn by the boys, transported on a wheel barrow, some on a two-wheeled binder truck.
>
> Some will smile, and I have no doubt it was an amusing sight, but I dare say the amusing part wore off soon enough we can be quite sure. At the end of the third week they were all ready to change occupation. The strain was made heavier because of the threatening nature of the weather: each day looked like a pour down. Much of the goods being perishable and of much value, all scattered along the road for miles and had to be covered each night. After all this trouble and worry, when at last he reached the place where he feels the lord wants him and had been there only two hours, rain came down in torrents, but everything was kept dry and no harm done.
>
> He at once started erecting a small house of Kimberley brick, the walls were about seven feet high, when orders came from the Government asking him to stop all building at once and make application for the piece of land he wanted, This he did by putting a roof of iron over these low walls to store the goods in. This was

the way it was when I went there. I make mention of these things to show how our prayers are needed for this work. The site has been refused so the position is a difficult one.[19]

We do not know who helped Taylor move his supplies to Sikalongo, but it seems likely it might have included David Moyo and Jesse Chikaile since both of these men were among the stalwart helpers at Macha in 1916.[20] Many of the boys who came to Macha Mission in 1908 became important leaders and helped establish Brethren in Christ churches and schools during the first quarter of the twentieth century. An early photograph of the Macha Mission students no doubt includes some of those who helped Myron Taylor in 1916.[21]

Macha students in 1908.

Before the rains, Taylor and his helpers built a small building of "Kimberly brick" to house his things and to provide protection.[22] Clearly,

[19] Henry P. Steigerwald, "From Africa - Sikalongo Mission," *Evangelical Visitor,* August 27, 1917, 28-29.
[20] Sallie K. Doner, "Macha Mission Africa," *Evangelical Visitor*, July 27, 1914, 22.
[21] In his autobiography, Daniel Munkombwe claims that members of his family were at Sikalongo by 1916. If his account is true, it could be that they were involved with the transport of supplies. Mafulo was one of those pictured in the 1908 photograph and an ancestor of Munkombwe. He could also have helped Taylor during 1916. See: Daniel C. Munkombwe, *The Politics of Influence: An Autobiography by Daniel C. Munkombwe* (Lusaka: Fleetwood Publishing Company, 2014), 10.
[22] Steigerwald, "From Africa - Sikalongo Mission," *Evangelical Visitor,* August 27, 1917, 29.

Northern Rhodesia missionaries ca. 1917.

he had expected that immediately upon their return to Africa, they would begin establishing Sikalongo Mission. The government order to stop building and leave the location must have come as quite a blow. He discontinued building, but pled with officials to allow them to remain at Sikalongo. The government agreed for him to stay until May 1917. Taylor traveled to Macha for the Christmas holiday and then returned to Sikalongo in March 1917.[23]

The order to vacate the location notwithstanding, Adda and the two girls joined Myron at Sikalongo after the rains.[24] During 1917, the Taylors built a 14x14 dwelling, planted a two-acre garden and raised sheep and goats. Unfortunately, lions killed all of the sheep and goats, but Taylor successfully killed the lions and sold their pelts to make up for the loss. In October 1917, they established a school and took in four boarding students. They also began health work: "A number that are diseased have been treated. One especially bad case; a man who had fallen into the fire; came for treatment, suddenly died after being here for two weeks."[25] Sallie Doner, who was at Macha in 1917, visited the

[23] H Frances Davidson, "From Africa - Macha Mission," *Evangelical Visitor,* April 4, 1917, 14.

[24] H. Francis Davidson, "From Africa - Macha Mission, *Evangelical Visitor*, December 17-31, 1917, 27-28.

[25] Myron Taylor, "Bro. & Sr. Taylor's Report," *Handbook of Missions Home and Foreign of the Brethren in Christ Church*, 1918, 20-21. Hereafter referred to as *Handbook of Missions*.

Taylors at Sikalongo "during vacation."[26] The two Taylor girls were six and four at the time. The photograph on the previous page shows the missionaries in Northern Rhodesia in about 1917.

In November 1917, the government gave Taylors permission to remain until May 1918, and eventually allowed them to take their livestock to Sikalongo (eight oxen, two cows with calves, and two heifers)[27] In December 1917, Adda and the girls went to Macha for the holiday. Myron stayed at Sikalongo to improve their dwelling:

> While Adda was at Macha I improved the rainy time by building and plastering the gables to the roof, put the windows on hinges and screened them and put a roof on our porch. We set posts out 12 ft. the full size of the house put timber on top and laid on iron, which made us a good place to work rainy days. When we finished with the other work inside we set holes around the East and South sides and plastered for a kitchen. We left a few feet for a veranda, to the West.[28]

Myron also noted that they built a large hut for storing things. Taylor wrote that he was sure that they were supposed to be at Sikalongo, but that they could move to Mr Whitbread's farm temporarily if necessary (three miles out of Choma).

The Taylors continued to develop the mission, purchasing 17 donkeys with harness and trek chain in March 1918. They took them to Sikalongo to help with the work.[29] During 1918, the British passed a law prohibiting the establishment of any new station, and the Taylors' previous permission notwithstanding, they were told they must leave by June. However, due to circumstances, they remained until September 1918.[30] Adda Taylor noted in a letter that lions regularly hunted for prey in the Sikalongo area at that time, often killing livestock and sometimes people.[31]

In early September, the Taylors left Sikalongo. They received several

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[26] Davidson, "From Africa - Macha Mission," *Evangelical Visitor,* December 17-31, 1917, 28.

[27] Myron Taylor and Adda Taylor, "Brother Taylor's Mission," *Handbook of Missions,* 1918, 16-18.

[28] Myron Taylor, "From Africa. Sikalongo, S. Africa, April 2, 1918," *Evangelical Visitor*, July 29, 1918, 26-28.

[29] Taylor, "Bro. & Sr. Taylor's Report," *Handbook of Missions*, 1918, 20-24.

[30] Adda E. Taylor, "From Africa," *Evangelical Visitor,* March 11, 1918, 17, 24-26.

[31] Ibid.

invitations from white farmers to settle temporarily, but ultimately moved to a corner of the Hugh Walker farm (present-day Bruce-Miller farm).[32] Taylors remained on the Walker farm until July 1919. Myron Taylor wrote:

> Here [at the Walker farm] we spent about one year, evangelizing the natives about us, and holding services in the homes of our white neighbors. Many hearty invitations were given us to hold services, both among the white people and natives, and we trust the seed sown will yet bear fruit. The white people would gladly build a church if someone would minister to their spiritual needs, and give them a service, if only once a month.[33]

Despite residing on the Walker farm, mission reports continued to show Taylors at Sikalongo with a budget of $250 per month for their work.[34]

After the missionary conference of July 1919, the Taylors moved to Macha in order to allow the Steckleys to transfer to Mtshabezi.[35] The Taylors remained at Macha for the duration of 1919 and the first half of 1920 until they received final approval to return to Sikalongo and renew their efforts there. It appears that the Brethren in Christ bishop, Henry Steigerwald, played a role in getting the approval:

> During July, in response to an earnest request from us, our Bishop attended a conference of missionaries of North Rhodesia at Livingstone, and was granted an interview with the officials of the Governor in regard to a mission at Sikalongo. He was given encouragement to make application, and our Secretary took up correspondence with the Governor with very satisfactory results thus far. We have been promised a site for a mission somewhere east of Choma, but the site has as yet not been decided.[36]

Writing in her diary, Davidson said: "In Oct of 1920 Bro. Taylor finally obtained permission to reopen the station at Sikalongo and went

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[32] Taylor, "From Africa. Sikalongo, S. Africa, April 2, 1918," *Evangelical Visitor,* July 29, 1918, 26ff.; Taylor, "Bro. & Sr. Taylor's Report," *Handbook of Missions*, 1920, 15-16.

[33] "Bro. & Sr. Taylor's Report," *Handbook of Missions*, 1920, 15-16.

[34] Lewis B. Steckley and Elizabeth Steckley, "From North Rhodesia," *Evangelical Visitor,* July 14, 1919, 12.

[35] "Bro. & Sr. Taylor's Report," *Handbook of Missions,* 1920, 15.

[36] Ibid., 16.

immediately to that place while Sisters Taylor & Musser remained a while longer at Macha."[37]

Also during November 1919, Taylor's daughter, Ruth, sailed to the U.S. with Sadie Book and Cora Alvis in order to continue her education in an American setting.

> While our two little girls were being given regular instruction in the home and were making fair progress in their studies, yet we felt the time had come that there should be other arrangements for the older one. Our Sister, Elizabeth Zook, of Abilene, had kindly offered to take her into her home as her child and send her to school, and after much prayer and waiting upon God, we felt this to be his will. Sisters Book and Alvis kindly offered to take her under their care on the way to America, and we have just received news of her safe arrival.[38]

Ruth Taylor was only eight years old at the time. It must have been a difficult thing for her and for her parents to have her leave.

Laying a Firm Foundation: 1920-1931

Building the mission station (1920-1931)

During the latter months of 1920, the Taylors endured significant challenges. As noted above, they obtained formal permission to begin work at Sikalongo in October 1920. In late October, Myron Taylor went back to Sikalongo to re-establish the mission they had begun four years earlier.[39]

Speaking at the 1938 dedication of the new Sikalongo church, Jesse [Chikaile] Muchimba, recounted the early history of Sikalongo Mission. He noted that Taylor and others built Sikalongo's first church building sometime in 1920.[40] Chikaile's statement seems to indicate that Taylor had constructed a number of simple buildings by the end of 1920.

Brethren in Christ mission strategy in Africa had always included several dimensions: 1) establish schools, 2) build church membership

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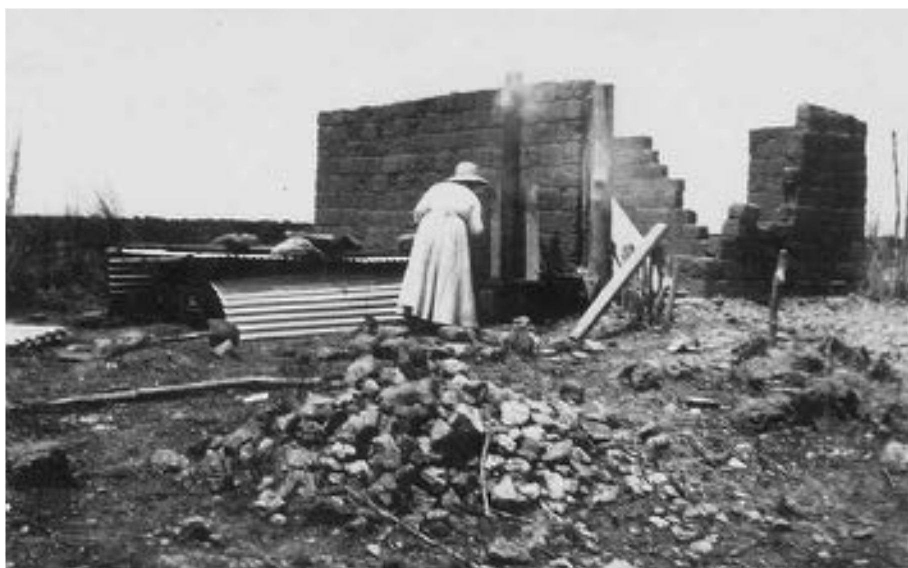
[37] Davidson, personal diaries, March 16, 1924.

[38] "Bro. & Sr. Taylor's Report," *Handbook of Missions*, 1920, 16.

[39] Davidson, "Macha Mission, South Africa," *Handbook of Missions*, 1920, 17.

[40] Anna M. Eyster, "Dedication of New Sikalongo Church," *Evangelical Visitor*, August 1, 1938, 13.



Adda Taylor standing in front of the remains of the earlier work at Sikalongo.

through schools, 3) offer health services in the form of small clinics, and (4) build a physical presence through buildings and farming efforts. Taylor's work at Sikalongo followed a similar strategy. However, in the early years, it was difficult to accomplish all four of these goals in equal degrees. The need for safe and comfortable physical surroundings occupied a great deal of time and energy.

Changes in Brethren in Christ foreign missions in the early 1920s complicated mission work in Africa. Shifts in Brethren in Christ leadership in North America have always had consequences for mission work. C. N. Hostetter, Sr. became chair of Mission Board, and this had important implications for the work in Zambia.[41] Hostetter was not only chairman of the Mission Board, but also served as the president of Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home. His role at Messiah and his first-hand relationships with promising young missionaries-in-training undoubtedly had some influence on his thinking about African missions and his decisions regarding personnel.

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[41] "Foreign Mission Board," *Handbook of Missions*, 1920, 2.

Sikalongo Mission as it probably appeared in the early 1920s.

Adda and Anna Taylor join Myron, followed by Beulah Musser

After the rains subsided in 1921, Adda Taylor and their daughter, Anna, joined Myron at Sikalongo and the work began in earnest. Beulah Musser came in July and contributed in a number of ways. The addition of another worker helped move things forward at the Mission. Myron Taylor always preferred to be out doing evangelistic work, but the pressure of constructing buildings left little time for village visitation.

Soon after Musser's arrival, the missionaries opened an evening school. It seems Beulah and Adda were the driving forces in that effort. In October, their school expanded to include 22 boarding students.[42] Beulah and Adda also gave medical care to people at Sikalongo. Both women apparently had some medical training before coming to Africa. A 1921 article in the *Evangelical Visitor* includes a photograph of Musser with some of her patients at Macha. The photograph title indicates an essential missiological outlook of the Brethren in Christ: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these." The caption describes her work:

> These are some of Sister Musser's patients. She is doing what she can to relieve the physical suffering among the natives and teach

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[42] Davidson, personal diaries, March 16, 1924; Beulah Musser, "From Africa. Sikalongo Mission. July 12, 1921," *Evangelical Visitor*, September 12, 1921, 5;. Engle, Climenhaga, and Buckwalter, *There Is No Difference*, 134.

Beulah Musser in the middle of the back.

> them how to take care of their bodies as well as giving them the gospel. It is estimated she has an average of twelve patients a day.
>
> Don't ever imagine that missionaries haven't anything to do.

Beulah Musser was also more inclined to write than either Myron or Adda. Consequently, she left a written record of some of the early activities at Sikalongo.

A 1922 *Evangelical Visitor* article noted that they were holding services under a tree, but that they had started a church. Describing their living conditions, Musser wrote: "We are still living in our native like huts, but the roof of a house is now being put on, so as far as building is concerned you would find a great change from a year ago."[43] This statement coincides with a series of photographs in the Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives, which show simple mud huts with thatched roofs.

In November 1921, C. N. Hostetter, Sr. and D. W. Heise, along with

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[43] Beulah Musser, "Sikalonga Mission. Sikalongo Mission, July 1, 1922," *Evangelical Visitor*, September 4, 1922, 14.

Myron Taylor's bedroom, showing just the edge of the roof of sister Musser and Anna Taylor.

Bishop Steigerwald and Bishop S. B. Stoner, visited Sikalongo as part of a larger deputation trip.[44] The 1922 *Handbook of Missions* report noted that by that time, Sikalongo had a church and a shop of "pice brick" with both evening and day schools. The term "pice brick," or more correctly, "pise brick" was used to describe buildings constructed from bricks of rammed earth, mud or clay which were not burned. This construction was common in early twentieth-century Africa, but buildings did not last as long and were eventually replaced with buildings made from burned brick. The 1922 report also stated that church attendance had grown to 60 people and that the missionaries handed out food tickets.[45] These increases must surely have been an encouragement to everyone. Hostetter's report also stated that the Brethren in Christ had secured a lease of 21 years, presumably beginning in 1920, which would have

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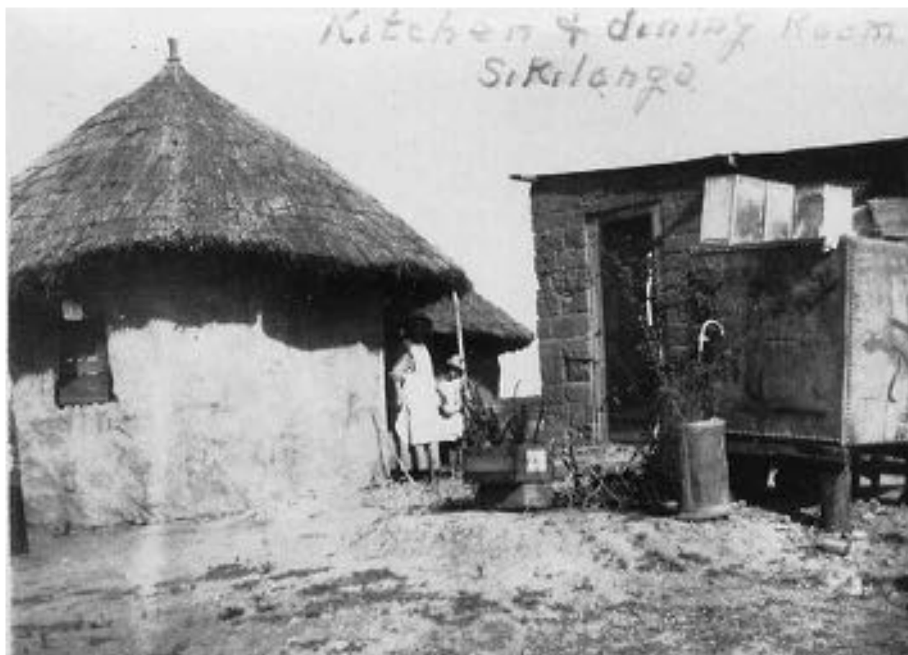
[44] C. N. Hostetter Sr., "Notes by the Way [Letter Written Dec. 15, 1921]," *Evangelical Visitor*, January 30, 1922, 12-13.

[45] Myron and Adda Taylor and Beulah Musser, "Sikalongo Mission, South Africa," *Handbook of Missions*, 1920, 20-21.



Same buildings as preceding photograph, but the original caption indicated that these building were being used as a kitchen and dining room.

lasted until 1941.[46] Sikalongo Mission was advancing both physically and spiritually, it seems.

1922 was a year of some turmoil in Brethren in Christ missions in Zambia. Frances Davidson returned to the U.S. under less than desirable circumstances, with some discussion that the Taylors should move back to Macha.[47] It was evidently a very dry year, which meant missionaries had to buy maize at a high price. And church attendance had dropped to 44, while school attendance stayed basically the same.[48] Beulah Musser noted: "The church is built though not quite finished" and "At the close of a nine months school, … 41 are enrolled and living at the mission."[49]

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[46] C. N. Hostetter, "Notes by the Way," *Evangelical Visitor*, January 30, 1922, 12-13.

[47] Davidson, personal diaries, March 16, 1924.

[48] Myron and Adda Taylor and Beulah E. Musser, "Sikalongo Mission, Choma," *Handbook of Missions,* 1923, 24-25.

[49] Musser, "Sikalongo Mission," *Evangelical Visitor,* September 4, 1922.

Important changes occurred at Macha, too. Roy and Grace Mann arrived in October 1922. Their arrival coincided with turmoil over who should be in charge at Macha. The African executive board and the Foreign Mission Board decided a man should replace Frances Davidson despite her 16 years of diligent labor. One of Davidson's diary entries indicates how deeply this decision cut:

> It has been a bitter, bitter, struggle a real death and I have not always been as victorious as I should. The farewell day was prayer day and I can never forget it. Big men got up to tell what our coming meant to them and they broke down and wept like children. They said I never made them feel that I was white and they were black, and that they wanted me to come back and be buried among them. That was what I always wanted to do, but the Lord sees that it is not best or He would not have allowed this to take place.[50]

Davidson left Macha in December 1922. Evidence exists to suggest that David Moyo (Frances Davidson's longtime helper), Lila Coon (who had only recently arrived at Macha), and Jesse Chikaile (one of the earliest Macha converts) were all very upset by Davidson's departure. These developments unnerved people at Macha, but also undoubtedly had an impact on the work at Sikalongo.[51] It is altogether possible that Jesse Chikaile's decision to move to Sikalongo (discussed below) may have been the result of dissatisfaction with the new leadership at Macha.

Jesse Chikaile Muchimba and wife come to Sikalongo

Jesse Chikaile Muchimba and his wife, Bina Beulah, came to Sikalongo in 1923 to help the Taylors. The *Mission Handbook* gives a few biographical details about Chikaile and his wife:

> In October our native brother [Jesse] Chikaile Muchimba came as a helper in the work. We had been praying for a helper and we thank the Lord for answered prayer. He also felt the call and obeyed. He helps in the school and frequently goes out holding

[50] Davidson, personal diaries, March 16, 1924.

[51] Dwight W. Thomas, "A Biographical Sketch of David (Ndhlalambi) Moyo," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 33, no. 3 (December 2010), 271-321.

> services in the villages. He is one of the number of boys who were the first pupils at Macha Mission and later helped to teach there. His wife also attended school there.[52]

As Taylor noted above, Chikaile was among the first students at Macha. He is probably pictured in the earliest photograph of Macha students, a photograph from sometime in 1908 (below). If this is Chikaile, judging from his appearance he was probably born in the 1890s. Various reports indicate he was born in Muyanda, a village near Macha Mission. Toward the end of his life, he moved back to Muyanda and is said to be buried there.[53] Chikaile continued to serve at Sikalongo Mission for nearly 20 years, filling a number of roles. It appears that he was the first African teacher at Sikalongo Mission school. He also played an important role in establishing the school and church at Mboole.[54] That Chikaile was able to assume some of the educational responsibilities at Sikalongo undoubtedly gave some relief to the Taylors and Beulah Musser, freeing them for other work.

Chikaile is likely the young man in the back wearing a woolen cap.

Apparently, Chikaile was also a skilled craftsman and helped construct a number of Sikalongo's buildings. Because of his carpentry skills, he was later sent to Mazabuka to study industrial arts at the Jeannes School[55] Chikaile was also appointed as

[52] Myron and Adda Taylor and Beulah E. Musser, "Sikalongo Mission, Choma, N. Rhodesia, South Africa," *Handbook of Missions*, 1924, 24-26.

[53] Phiri, Lazarus. *The Brethren in Christ Mission in Zambia, 1906-1978: A Historical Study of Western Missionary Leadership Patterns and the Emergence of Tonga Church Leaders.* University of Edinburgh, 2003. Phiri's study focused on missionary and Zambian leadership in the Brethren in Christ Church.

[54] Cecil I. Cullen, "A Sunday at Sikalongo," *Evangelical Visitor*, July 18, 1932, 237.

[55] Myron and Adda Taylor and Beulah E. Musser, "Sikalongo Outschools," *Handbook of Missions*, 1935, 58.

Sikalongo's first deacon. A later photograph of Chikaile shows him with two other Sikalongo workers, Steleki Mudenda and Tound. Elizabeth Steckley noted that Chikaile was especially helpful at Sikalongo during the late 1920s.[56] All indications are that Jesse Chikaile Muchimba was one of the key African workers in the early stages of Sikalongo Mission.

Sikalongo workers: Chikaile, Steleki Mudenda, and Tound.

In 1924, Harvey Frey came north and Sikalongo celebrated its first three baptisms.[57] The *Handbook of Missions* noted: "There were four applicants for baptism, three were accepted and baptized, January 13th, 1924. One was a married man from the nearest village, one young married man living on the Mission station, and a grown girl."[58] These baptisms signaled the beginning of significant gains at Sikalongo.

Peter Munsaka and his role at Sikalongo Mission

The three believers baptized by Frey probably included Peter Musaka. Family oral tradition suggests that Peter Munsaka came to Sikalongo in 1921 or 1922 looking for work.[59] I have discovered no written verification of that date, but Munsaka's own account noted that he was "converted" in 1924.[60] The description above of a "young married man living on the mission" matches the details of Munsaka's life and testimony. He was born about 1895 in Mudukula, a village just over the first mountain range south of Sikalongo. He married a woman named Maria, who also came from Mudukula. They had nine children. The

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[56] Elizabeth Steckley, "Extracts from Personal Letters," *Evangelical Visitor*, November 21, 1927, 10..

[57] Taylor and Musser, "Sikalongo Mission, Choma, N. Rhodesia, South Africa," *Handbook of Missions,* 1924, 24.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Isaiah Muleya, interview with the author, June 25, 2008.

[60] Annie E. Winger, "Praise and Prayer," *Evangelical Visitor*, May 22, 1939, 14-15.

first one, Hamaila, was reportedly born in 1921 and came to Sikalongo with his parents as a baby. [61] He grew up at Sikalongo Mission and later became one of its teachers. Peter Munsaka died August 18, 1977 and is buried in the graveyard at Sikalongo.

Like Jesse Chikaile, Munsaka played a pivotal role in establishing Sikalongo Mission. Whether he came as early as 1921 or not, he was undoubtedly there by 1924. He spent the rest of his life helping build Sikalongo Mission and the Brethren in Christ Church. Family members believe that an early photograph of Myron Taylor includes a young Peter Munsaka. Numerous accounts describe lions in the Sikalongo area. Myron Taylor's skill as a hunter was well known and he apparently killed quite a few. One photograph from 1924 includes Taylor kneeling beside a dead lion, which he presumably shot at Sikalongo. According to the family, the young man on Taylor's right is Peter Munsaka.[62]

Almost every missionary mentions Peter Munsaka as one of the key workers in the Zambian Brethren in Christ Church. For many years, he served as the farm manager at Sikalongo. But like Chikaile, he undoubtedly helped with the building program during the 1920s. He is also known to have done evangelistic work in the surrounding area during the 1930s and afterwards. And he was one of those who went to the Zambezi Valley with Myron Taylor in 1931, the year Taylor was killed. Munsaka eventually replaced

Myron Taylor kneeling beside a dead lion, which he presumably shot at Sikalongo. To his right is Peter Munsaka.

[61] Derrano Muleya Choonga, "Peter Munsaka and His Son, Hamaila (David) Muleya," interview with the author, October 25, 2016.

[62] Sarah Muleya and Ruth Muleya, "Zambian BIC Church History - Sikalongo (Part 1)," interview with the author, June 25, 2008.

Chikaile as deacon of the Sikalongo Church.[63] In 1952, he was chosen as one of the two first overseers of the Zambian Brethren in Christ Church.[64] Ultimately, Peter Munsaka, his wife Maria, and their children gave decades of service to the work at Sikalongo Mission Station.

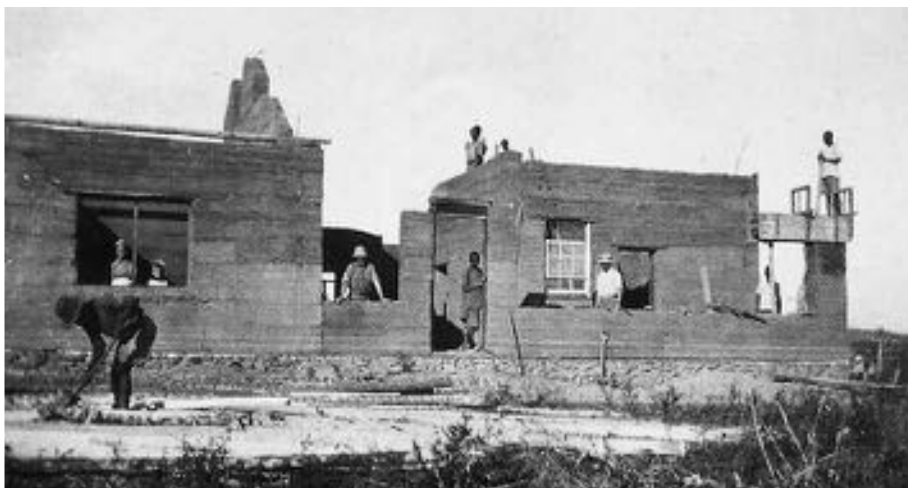
Munsaka family, ca. 1940.

In 1924, the core Sikalongo staff included Jesse Chikaile and his wife, Bina Beulah (their daughter undoubtedly named after Beulah Musser), Peter Munsaka and his wife, Bina David, the three adult missionaries (Myron Taylor, Adda Taylor and Beulah Musser), and Anna Taylor.

Sikalongo missionaries standing in front of their vehicles with several buildings in the background, 1924.

Creating a safe and comfortable environment

[63] Anna Esyter, "April Echoes from Sikalongo Mission," *Evangelical Visitor*, June 30, 1941, 12-13.
[64] "Our African Conference," *Evangelical Visitor*, July 21, 1952, 11.



Construction of the first Sikalongo Mission house. The woman and girl in the left window are believed to be Adda and Anna Taylor.

was a high priority during the early 1920s. Myron Taylor, with help from Jesse Chikaile, Peter Munsaka and others, added a number of new buildings to Sikalongo Mission. Three buildings were added in 1924 alone: a house for the Chikaile family, a girls' dormitory, and a laundry-dairy.[65] The completion of a brick house for the missionaries in 1922 also marked a milestone at Sikalongo. Beulah Musser wrote in July that "the roof of a house is now being put on."[66]

Another change occurred in 1924 that had an impact on Brethren in Christ missions. The British government assumed administrative control of both Rhodesias, replacing the British South Africa Company as the driving force in civil affairs. Northern Rhodesia's first governor was appointed on April 1, 1924.[67] Subsequently, the British government began to take a more direct role in the supervision of native schools, including the mission schools. A significant aim of the government was a desire to improve the quality of education in all native schools. They

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[65] Myron and Adda Taylor and Beulah E. Musser, "Sikalongo Mission Report," *Handbook of Missions,* 1924, 25-27.

[66] Musser, "Sikalongo Mission," *Evangelical Visitor*, September 4, 1922, 14.

[67] *Colonial Reports—Annual. Northern Rhodesia. Report for 1924-25*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1926), 4.

were especially eager to see mission schools improve the quality of their educators and expand beyond religious education to include so-called secular education.[68]

The result of these various efforts was that by 1924, Sikalongo Mission station was beginning to take shape. Progress could be seen in all four dimensions: church and evangelism, education and schools, health services, and physical surroundings. These photographs, along with the written accounts, give a clear picture of steady development at Sikalongo Mission between 1920 and 1924.

Taylors remained at Sikalongo through the 1925 missionary conference, which was held there. The previously-built laundry-dairy buildings, located behind the main house, were used for dining at the conference. Myron, Adda, and Anna returned to the United States in November 1925, intending to stay for a short furlough. However, Myron's poor health led them to stay until June 1928.[69] Beulah Musser was transferred from Sikalongo to Southern Rhodesia after the 1925 missionary conference.

Lewis B. and Elizabeth Steckley at Sikalongo

At the end of 1924, Lewis and Elizabeth Steckley took a three-month furlough to Cape Town with the intention of relieving Taylors for furlough after the 1925 missionary conference.[70] Steckleys had been in Africa for some time, serving in both Southern and Northern Rhodesia. Undoubtedly, their earlier stint at Macha helped to prepare them for their three years at Sikalongo among the Tonga people.

With help from Jesse Chikaile and Peter Munsaka, the Steckleys continued the work Taylors and Beulah Musser had begun. During their three years, they worked to grow the church, improve the schools, serve the health needs of the community, and enhance the Mission. According to *There Is No Difference*, the Steckleys "laid out the beautiful

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[68] *Colonial Reports—Annual. Northern Rhodesia. Report for 1924-25*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1926), 4.

[69] "Secretary's Report," Handbook of Missions, 1929 , 7.

[70] Lewis B. Steckley and Elizabeth Steckley, "From Africa," *Evangelical Visitor,* February 16, 1925, 12.

surroundings of the mission house."[71] Presumably, this included planting the eucalyptus trees, some of which are still standing in 2016. In addition to planting trees around the main house, Steckleys also added new buildings. In 1926, they constructed a two-room building, an office and dispensary; a 36 x 12 girls' dining room and kitchen built of pise brick; and a 25 x 3 fowl house.[72]

The Sikalongo Mission house as it appeared when the Steckleys began work there in 1925.

Beulah Musser's transfer to Southern Rhodesia created a vacuum, but Steckleys were helped by the addition of another African. Qedabukwabo Moyo, an Ndebele member from Mtshabezi, decided to come to Sikalongo. This was not the first time that a Brethren in Christ convert became a missionary among a different group, but it is a strikingly-early example of this sort of organic growth. Writing in the 1926 *Handbook of Missions*, Lewis Steckley reported:

> One of the native sisters from Mtshabezi Mission, Qedabukwabo Moyo, felt a call to the work in Northern Rhodesia, so according to the arrangement of our South African conference she was sent to help at Sikalongo. We are glad to see that God is calling some of the native people to be missionaries, who are willing to leave their people and go amongst other tribes. Qedabukwabo was given charge of the girls and women in the new school building

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[71] Engle, Climenhaga, and Buckwalter, *There Is No Difference,* 135.
[72] Lewis B. Steckley, "Sikalongo Mission," *Handbook of Missions,* 1927, 28-29.

just erected. She had to have help until she was a little acquainted with the language. She was getting along quite well towards the end of the year.[73]

Lewis and Elizabeth Steckley in front of Old Main at Messiah College.

Steckleys reported that, while Qedabukwabo Moyo took charge of the girls, Jesse Chikaile continued to be in charge of the school boys. That educational efforts at Sikalongo Mission at this early stage were run largely by native believers is interesting. Steckleys clearly had a great deal of confidence in both of these individuals.

The scope of the work in the late 1920s was limited largely to the immediate area. There were no out schools; mission staff had its hands full managing affairs at Sikalongo. Nevertheless, 1926 saw an increase in school enrollment to 70 students with Jesse Chikaile as the primary teacher at the school. Sikalongo schools at this point in time were co-educational. These included 40 male boarding students and 15 female boarding students. The remaining 15 were evidently day scholars. Lewis Steckley noted in his 1927 report that Qedabukwabo Moyo returned to Mtshabezi in order to marry and so he had to take over her teaching responsibilities. His report also noted that in addition to learning reading, writing, and arithmetic, students were taught practical skills. The boys studied brick-making, tile-making, carpentry, and agriculture; and the girls studied housework, laundering, dairying, pot-making, and mat-making.[74] Elizabeth Steckley wrote in the *Evangelical Visitor* that David Moyo's wife, Mankunku, helped teach the girls basket-making during one of her visits to Sikalongo.[75]

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[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Steckley, "Personal Letters. 21 November 1927," *Evangelical Visitor*, November 21, 1927, 10.

Steckleys continued to push forward, but their 1927 report struck a chord of discouragement: "The work has continued on about the same as the previous year without much change."[76] School and church attendance did not increase and Steckley noted that a member had to be dismissed for taking a second wife. Apparently, building was also at a minimum. The only building mentioned was a garage they built for a Ford which had been purchased.[77] The most positive comment was his observation that "quite a number…came for medical attention."[78]

The Foreign Mission Board had not intended for Steckleys to remain at Sikalongo three years. Taylors were supposed to have returned after a year's furlough, but Myron Taylor's poor health delayed them. Steckleys deferred their own furlough in order to keep things going at Sikalongo. This might have contributed to the melancholy tone of his report. Other factors might also have played a role. After the unhappy removal of Frances Davidson, things at Macha had not been stable. Brethren in Christ converts pled with the Foreign Mission Board to reinstate Davidson, but nothing came of it; Lila Coon, an ardent Davidson supporter, had a falling out with the church and ultimately returned to the U.S. with Taylors in 1925; and David Moyo, Davidson's primary helper in establishing Macha Mission, was dismissed from his duties for an unknown reason—one which Davidson claimed was unwarranted.[79]

The Taylors return to Sikalongo

By 1928, Steckleys were eager to leave Sikalongo. They returned to the U.S. in December. Steckleys' impending departure forced the Taylors to make a decision:

> As will be noted from last year's report, Brother Taylor's outgoing was delayed on account of his physical condition, and it is only within the last two months that they and Sister Doner have decided to return to the field. While Brother Taylor's health has gradually been improving, he is not as strong as would have

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[76] Lewis B. Steckley, "Sikalongo Mission," *Handbook of Missions,* 1928, 23-24.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] See my interpretation of these events in "A Biographical Sketch of David (Ndhlalambi) Moyo," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 33, no. 3 (December 2010), 271-321.

> been desired to go to the field, but in face of the fact that there seemed to be no other way than to close the Sikalongo Mission, if they could not go at this time, the Board has consented to their going, appreciating the spirit of self-denial on the part of Brother Taylors' in offering to go, though not physically strong.[80]

The Taylors sailed from New York in June 1928. They attended the missionary conference at Mtshabezi and sometime afterwards went with Anna Engle to Sikalongo. Engle's assignment was to help with the schools, a task she undertook with great energy.[81]

Another event of 1928 deserves mention. For over 25 years, Bishop Henry Steigerwald was the patriarch of Brethren in Christ missions in Africa. But, he had not been well for some time, suffering from varying degrees of heart attacks. He died on Dec 6, 1928, and his passing marks an important moment in Brethren in Christ missions. He and Frances Davidson had been two of the strongest forces on the African mission field. Their absence necessarily led to a certain vacuum. Steigerwald's death set the stage for the next period of Brethren in Christ missions in Africa. Into the vacuum came a new set of characters, many of them younger. People like Henry H. Brubaker, Roy Mann, Anna Engle, Cecil Cullen, and Anna Eyster were soon to become the driving forces of Brethren in mission work in Northern Rhodesia.

Anna Engle arrived at Sikalongo in 1928, and threw herself into her new situation immediately. She had learned Sindebele in Southern Rhodesia, but worked diligently to master Chitonga.[82] Engle proved to be a talented linguist and later wrote educational materials in Chitonga. She also had strong ideas about education and, like the newly-installed British authorities, she wanted to improve the quality of the schools at Sikalongo.[83] The desire to improve the schools eventually led to the separation of boys from girls in Zambia's Brethren in Christ mission

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80 "Sikalongo Mission," *Handbook of Missions*, 1928, 6.

81 Anna R. Engle, "Report of Missionary Conference," *Evangelical Visitor,* October 1, 1928, 12-13.

82 Anna R. Engle, "Extracts from Private Letters," *Evangelical Visitor*, March 18, 1929, 12.

83 Engle, Climenhaga, and Buckwalter, *There Is No Difference*, 135.

84 Ibid.

schools: boys at Sikalongo and girls at Macha.[84]

The Taylors also resumed their work. Adda noted that she was involved with the medical needs. However, Myron Taylor was hampered by his health during the late 1920s. Adda wrote that he managed to keep up with daily chores but that he "suffered much."[85] The untimely death of a Primitive Methodist missionary at Jembo eased the Sikalongo situation somewhat. The Primitive Methodist Church would not allow women to run a mission station, so the two remaining single women at Jembo, Ethel Jordan and Mary Loew, moved to Sikalongo sometime in early 1931. They, along with Adda, began to make outreach visits to nearby villages.[86]

The Sikalongo staff was enhanced by a number of other African workers. For some time, Brethren in Christ missionaries had used African evangelists to help establish schools and do village evangelism. In 1930, Sikalongo apparently had two such men, Musa and Joshua, who were instrumental in bringing an orphan to the Mission.[87] Another new worker arrived in 1930. Born in eastern Zimbabwe, Arthur Kutywayo was evidently recruited by missionaries in the South to join the Brethren in Christ. He first went to Macha, but soon transferred to Sikalongo, arriving May 16, 1930.[88] Like Peter Munsaka, Arthur Kutywayo spent the remainder of his life working at Sikalongo Mission. Because of his educational background, he was given a primary role working with the students.

In 1931, three more workers came to Sikalongo. Anna Eyster came to Sikalongo to take over the school, and Anna Engle transferred to Macha to assume similar responsibilities there. Because Myron Taylor's health was not strong and because he wanted to be doing more evangelistic

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[85] Adda E. Taylor, "Sikalongo Mission," *Evangelical Visitor*, May 13, 1929, 13.

[86] For an account of Ethel Jordan and the mission work of the Pilgrim Holiness in Northern Rhodesia, see: Alberta R. Metz, Ethel Jordan: Zambia, Wesleyan Missionary Hero Series (Marion, IN: The Wesleyan Publishing House, 1982); and Paul Westphal Thomas, Regions Beyond: A Brief Survey of the Foreign Missionary Enterprise of the Pilgrim Holiness Church (Indianapolis, Ind.: Foreign Missionary Office of the Pilgrim Holiness Church, 1935).

[87] Adda E. Taylor, "Sikalongo Mission," *Evangelical Visitor,* June 30, 1930, 12.

[88] A. Graybill Brubaker, "Knight in Armour: Arthur of Sikalongo Mission," *Evangelical Visitor*, May 21, 1956, 7.

work, the Foreign Mission Board agreed to post Cecil and Janie Cullen at Sikalongo. The hope was that Cecil would carry the burden of managing the mission station, thus freeing Myron to do more evangelistic work. It seemed as if the stage was set for Taylor to extend Sikalongo Mission's influence geographically just as workers had done at Macha.

Events leading up to Myron Taylor's death

The Cullens and Anna Eyster went to Sikalongo immediately after the missionary conference in July, and Myron Taylor lost no time in beginning to expand beyond Sikalongo. During 1930 and 1931, the Sikalongo workers had made visits to several neighboring communities, notably Mboole, Siazwela, and Mudukula. But Myron was eager to do evangelistic work in the Zambezi Valley, one of the most remote regions of central Africa at that time.

On August 1, 1931, Myron Taylor, along with Arthur Kutywayo and others, went to the Valley to do evangelism. It had been an especially bad year for rain and there was famine in the valley, so Taylor also planned to help with relief efforts while there. He returned to Sikalongo twice in August, once to get the mission grinder to grind maize. At various times during August, Joshua, Musa, Peter (Munsaka), and Arthur (Kutwayo) accompanied Taylor in the valley.

On August 26, Taylor wrote a letter from the Famine Relief Camp

Arthur Kutywayo and Myron Taylor headed to the valley. Photo courtesy of Cecil Cullen.

describing his movements and his desires. I include the entire letter here in order for readers to hear Taylor's passion in his own words:

Famine Relief Camp. Zambezi Valley. Aug. 26, 1931

Greetings in Jesus' precious name:

I left for the Valley immediately on returning from taking Sr. Taylor and Ruth to Choma to go South and have been here since except at home a few hours Saturday evening and Sunday morning.

I have long wanted to visit the Valley and reach a large district which had never been touched by a missionary or native teacher, and the two weeks before the opening of school seemed the opportune time as there were not many boys at the Mission after Conference.

A native had just come (to work his two months to go into school) from a day's journey beyond the river in Southern Rhodesia, and told me that the people are all Batonga from the river to the mountains and that they are having hard famine. So I loaded as lightly as possible except food for my two carriers and started out. But on reaching the Relief Camp they told me that it would be practically impossible to do any Gospel work as the people were all coming up to the Camp for food or were out in the mountains in search of what roots and seeds they might be able to find.

The Government is cutting a new road down to the valley through the mountains (with some difficulty) and is transporting mealies by trolley (motor) to the end of the road, and the camp moves on into the valley as fast as the road advances and is thus getting nearer to the people.

The gangs are now finished through the mountains and from now on the Camp will advance rapidly. Then there are branch roads up and down the valley after the river is reached. They estimate that five thousand bags are need here and like number at Mazabuka. Then the Southern Rhodesian Government is planning to use this road to reach their Batonga in the district beyond the river; perhaps as great a need is there.

There are about two hundred labourers on the road. Mr.

Walker has charge of them and the cutting of the road. Two white officials are here at present with all their messengers and other help. Hundreds of natives are staying overnight by the fires and camps of the road boys on their way up and again on their way down.

So I sent back for more help and now have Musa, Joshua, and Peter as helpers. We have already reached over three thousand with the Word of God. The famine and the very liberal attitude of the Government seem to have humbled the people's hearts and they are very attentive.

I made a short trip down near the river and found a large district where they could not get to Camp as many were lying too weak to travel to the Relief Camp. I came back and reported and immediate arrangements are being made to take mealies to them, sufficient to help them to reach the Camp; also one official will stay there a short time to shoot game that they may have dried meat. They plan to start as soon as carriers sent for arrive, which may be this afternoon or tomorrow morning.

My purpose in going back to the Mission was to get a Colonist Grinder of which we have two, to grind meal for the road boys as a trolley had broken down and they could not get meal. The road boys were about at the point of going on strike because of being fed whole mealies only, as the road work is very heavy. We had the machine going a few hours after my return and now all is going along all right again. They ground a two-hundred pound bag yesterday.

I do not know how long we may be able to stay but I do admire the spirit in which the all new workers at Sikalongo are co-operating in giving me this privilege of reaching the people. May we have the earnest prayers of all the workers in Southern Rhodesia that God may have His way; the people have the Gospel; and that souls may be saved.

Your most unworthy co-labourer,
Myron Taylor

Myron Taylor hunts the Lion

In early September, Taylor got word that a lion had been trapped, escaped, and was threatening villagers in the area around present-day Sinazeze.[89] He was an accomplished hunter known for his keen marksmanship. Local people referred to Taylor as "Sikayasa Muliso," which means "He who shoots in the eye." Taylor offered to hunt and kill the lion.

Unfortunately, he did not have his own gun, so he borrowed one from the relief captain, Mackie Walker. With help from several Sinazeze trappers, Taylor hunted and found the wounded lion with the trap still dangling from its leg. Adda Taylor recounted the ensuing events in a letter written at the time of Myron's death:

> He shot twice and missed probably because he did not have his own rifle. Meantime the natives climbed up trees. The third time, he had difficulty in replacing the cartridge and the lion was upon him. The natives say he kicked at the lion, and the beast caught Myron's right leg just at the ankle and above, breaking the bone. He demolished the rifle in trying to protect himself and crushed his right hand. Then he struck with the left hand and the lion bit his arm badly. The lion sat by his side awhile, (Myron thought it was about 20 minutes, maybe not so long) then walked away, leaving Myron helpless of course.[90]

Needless to say, Taylor was badly wounded.

The Sinazeze hunters immediately notified Walker about the incident, and took Taylor to his camp. They did what they could for him and carried him back to Sikalongo by stretcher, arriving at 4:20 a.m. on Tuesday, September 15. At the time of the attack, Adda was in Siazwela Village with Jordan and Loew doing evangelistic work. Walker sent a runner to notify Adda and she headed back to Sikalongo.

Cecil Cullen went to Choma for a doctor as soon as he heard the news. Taylor's condition was critical and even simple efforts to make him comfortable failed. When the doctor arrived, he administered a

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[89] I have written about Sinazeze and Myron Taylor's death in an upcoming essay to be published by the Historical Society in 2017.

[90] Adda E. Taylor, "A Letter from Sr. Taylor [Dated Sept. 16th, 1931]," *Evangelical Visitor,* November 9, 1931, 369-370.

shot of anesthesia, but things did not look good. Adda wrote:

> [His hand] was in a terribly mangled condition; littler finger gone; next one just hanging by a bit of skin; the third one looked a little better, while the index and thumb looked as though it might be saved, but the mauled condition of the hand made that even hopeless.[91]

The doctor from Choma did not want to proceed without more expert advice and sent for a doctor from Livingstone.

The Livingstone doctor arrived Tuesday evening. The two doctors agreed that they would need to use chloroform to put Taylor asleep and amputate his hand. They did so, but unfortunately Taylor died while under anesthesia at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, September 16. The burial was postponed to await the arrival of missionaries from Macha, who came Wednesday evening.

Funeral of Myron Taylor

Myron Taylor was buried Thursday, September 17, 1931 at around 9:00. Taylor's trusted African helpers (including Jesse Chikaile and Peter Munsaka) carried the coffin. Ten Europeans attended the funeral. Taylor was buried behind the Sikalongo Brethren in Christ church in the church cemetery.

Adda Taylor wrote:

[91] Ibid.

> I wish you could have been here to witness the ceremony. As we proceeded from the house to the place of burial all the boys were lined up in three ranks, standing at 'attention' by the road at the church. Dr. Robinson acted as undertaker, and the Europeans all took a shovel and helped to bury him, while the native brethren also helped. There were many natives here also, and they all tried to express their sorrow to me.[92]

Anna Taylor was in school in Bulawayo at the time of her father's death and could not attend the funeral. She came as soon as she could and joined her mother at Sikalongo. They stayed until June 1932. Anna Taylor's account of events suggests that Adda felt displaced to a certain degree, and so she and Anna returned to America.[93]

Sikalongo after Myron and Adda Taylor

Myron Taylor's death ushered in a new phase in Sikalongo Mission history and a new period in mission work in Northern Rhodesia. Frances Davidson left Northern Rhodesia in 1923, David Moyo was dismissed in 1928, Myron Taylor died in 1931, and Adda Taylor returned to the U.S. in July 1932. With Taylor's passing and Adda's return to the United States, the old guard was completely gone.

However, those who remained carried on the effort that Myron and Adda Taylor started. Cecil and Janie Cullen and Anna Eyster continued to work with Jesse Chikaile and Bina Beulah, Peter Munsaka and Bina David, and Arthur Kutywayo to build on the foundation laid by the Taylors and to expand the work of Sikalongo Mission.

Note: Part 2 of this history will focus on the colonial years from 1931-1964, and Part 3 will cover post-independence years (1964 to the present).

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[92] Ibid.

[93] Lewis, Jan Engle. "Through the Eyes of a Child." *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 39, no. 1 (April 2016), 3-11.

Book Reviews

D. ROSE ELDER. *Why the Amish Sing: Songs of Solidarity & Identity.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. Pp. 193. $39.95 (US).

Reviewed by Heidi B. King*

Why the Amish Sing: Songs of Solidarity & Identity, is a case study of the Amish in Wayne County, Ohio. The book demonstrates both how they use singing for the main purpose of praising God as well as many other purposes throughout their daily lives—throughout childhood and adolescence, in worship, and for special occasions. Elder's personal interactions with the Wayne County Amish shape this book and, together with her research, insights, and song case studies, create a comprehensive explanation of the role of singing in Amish life.

Before delving into the topic of the role of singing in the Amish community, Elder begins by describing general Amish life, faith, and practice. The first chapter "Who are the Amish?" is an overview of many basics of Amish life including the history of the Amish in Ohio, family life, language and lifestyle, spirituality, and more. This chapter contains valuable prerequisite information to allow readers with all levels of familiarity with Amish culture to gain a basic knowledge in order to more fully engage in the rest of the book.

Elder uses stories of her visits to Amish homes, schools, and churches to illustrate the ways singing is used throughout their community. The reader has the opportunity to hear directly from many Amish from a variety of age groups. Interviewee Jacob "reminisces about the many hours of singing his favorite song, 'Es sind zween Weg,' 20-plus years ago to his own children" (49). Elder also introduces the reader to David and his mother Naomi, who work together on the first verse of a familiar song that they sing in the worship service every Sunday (108). We also are able to imagine the festivities of Laura's September wedding as Elder describes the preparations and events of the day as well as how music is woven throughout the service (121-125). These vignettes and personal

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conversations are the soul of the book, giving a glimpse into the daily lives of the Amish and allowing the reader to be a part of the experience.

Throughout the book, Elder provides many musical examples to illustrate the functions of each facet of Amish singing. These excerpts of the music notation also allow readers with music literacy skills to grasp the basic melody of each song. In Elder's description of a New Order singing she attended in Berlin, Ohio, she uses the musical example to illustrate the difference between the way the hymn was printed and the way that the hymn was actually sung. Elder uses specific musical terms to describe the nuances between the two versions noting, "This group disregards most accidental markings—sharps, flats, and naturals that raise or lower a note—and instead sings diatonically or within the key" (80). More specific historical context as well as further explanation of the lack of accidentals is provided. This attention to detail helps the musically-educated reader gain insight into the way singing can evolve in the Amish community, but it leaves me wondering if the detailed explanation would be overwhelming to a reader who has little musical training.

In addition to the musical examples throughout the chapters, Elder devotes an entire chapter each to the case study of the popular Amish song Es sind zween Weg as well as the Loblied or Lobsang. These song dissections include a translation and analysis of the words as well as historical context and significance. In both case studies, Elder explores how the melody of each song varies from person to person or between geographic regions. In the Loblied case study, Elder provides examples of what this song might sound like in various Amish groups in Ohio, Iowa, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. Elder's detailed analysis and explanation highlights the differences and similarities between the versions of the song. Once again, this musical research is thorough and well-presented, but may be difficult for all readers of varying musical knowledge to fully appreciate.

Any lover of singing in the church can relate to the stories, interviews and comments on the way singing permeates and shapes Amish culture. Elder's case studies and musical analysis give an intimate look into the history and evolution of singing in the Amish church. The more dense sections of analysis may be fascinating to those with musical training and cumbersome to those who have less musical knowledge. Through

her extensive research and stories of Amish singing, Elder helps us all appreciate the value and power of singing in our churches throughout history, today, and as we continue into the future.

GEORDAN HAMMOND. *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. 238. $29.95 (U.S.)

Reviewed by Paul A. Chilcote*

In this book based on his doctoral dissertation, Hammond focuses attention on the brief but formative period of Wesley's missionary service in the nascent colony of Georgia (1735-1737). His thesis revolves around two primary concerns related to Wesley's experience: 1) the Anglican priest's efforts to recreate a primitive form of Christianity (in his view) in an unevangelized frontier setting, and 2) the continuity of this period—prior to Wesley's famous Aldersgate experience—with his subsequent life and vision of Christian discipleship. While this "experiment" and the issue of Wesley's primitivism have been examined previously by scholars, the author's extraordinary attention to detail and his incorporation of underutilized documents into his analysis makes his assessment of the period unique. His nuanced examination of Wesley's diary, as well as published and manuscript journal material, adds texture to the portrait. While Wesley clearly abandoned some of the Georgia practices that were an effort to imitate primitive Christianity, Hammond argues that he never abandoned his essential primitivistic commitments. Moreover, his vision of primitive Christianity—including Wesley's Eucharistic spirituality, ascetic and penitential practices, and elevation of women—continued to shape the Methodist movement to the end of his life. Hammond's conclusions, in other words, seriously challenge the stereotypes of Wesley—the evangelical revivalist who abandoned his "high church" proclivities after Aldersgate—promulgated, in particular, through nineteenth-century portraits of the Methodist founder.

Chapter 1 establishes the basic premise of Hammond's interpretation of this period in Wesley's life as an effort to reconstitute apostolic

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Christianity in a primitive setting and explores the origins of this vision. As a young student at Christ Church, Oxford, Wesley had experienced the Patristic renaissance in the University and became enamored of theologians and church leaders of the primitive church. His friendly attachment to important Non-Juring churchmen who elevated the practices and traditions of primitive Christianity fueled Wesley's passion in these directions. Hammond demonstrates what Wesley scholars like Richard Heitzenrater had observed earlier, that in the context of the Holy Club, Wesley put early Christian tradition into practice, praying the hours, fasting twice weekly, and observing the more ancient practices associated with the Eucharist. Hammond demonstrates how these practices and Wesley's vision of a restored primitive Christianity continue with increased vigor as he journeys to the colony of Georgia (chapter 2), engages with the Lutheran Pietists (chapter 3), and establishes a pattern of habituated primitive practice in the frontier setting (chapter 4). By documenting the interface and Wesley's reading of Patristic sources (particularly the Apostolic Constitutions, which he believed to be authentic), Hammond ties each practice directly to these primary sources. Chapter 5 examines the opposition Wesley experienced in Georgia vis-à-vis this vision of Christian primitivism. His entanglement with Sophia Hopkey figures prominently in these discussions, as one who knows the basic narrative of this period might well expect. Wesley's excommunication of Hopkey after her marriage to William Williamson and his fastidious attention of church law more than ruffled feathers. Within that turmoil, however, Wesley, as Hammond demonstrates, continued to advocate women's leadership—modeled after the early church—beyond his close relationship with Hopkey. His concern for the poor and marginalized reflected his primitivism as well.

Hammond identifies five sub-themes that challenge many of the negative stereotypes of this period perpetrated by previous biographers. He takes particular aim at those who have portrayed the Georgia period as a painful episode of spiritual apprehension, relational calamity, and missional failure for Wesley, correcting these shibboleths and affording a more highly nuanced portrait of an Anglican-in-earnest in search of a vital experience of primitive Christianity. Rigorous scholarship, an engaging narrative, and a focus on pastoral practices characterize this volume worthy of close attention and study.

STEVICK, RICHARD A.. *Growing Up Amish: The Rumspringa Years*. 2nd edition. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. Pp. ix-371. $24.95 (U.S)

Reviewed by Vi Dutcher*

According to Richard A. Stevick, rapidly-growing technology use among Amish young people compelled him to write and publish a revision to the first edition only seven years later. While the first edition focuses on Amish schooling, adolescent years, work, independence from home, courtship, and, ultimately, keeping the faith, the second edition adds a final chapter titled "The Future: Keeping Faith in a World of Change." Those who consider themselves more modern Anabaptists will find themselves at home since they share the concern of holding on to faith while adapting to their changing worlds.

Stevick is well-qualified to add his voice to what we know about Amish communities. He has worked over 25 years teaching and researching Amish community members, particularly adolescents. He is a keen observer of cultures and has a deep understanding of the culture from within.

In the second edition, Stevick continues the assertion that Amish young people are living with many, if not most, of the same communal rules as did their parents and their grandparents. The world that they explore in their adolescent years, however, is much different than in times past. This difference is due primarily to the arrival of the Internet and social media. According to Stevick, thousands of Amish young people are apt users of Facebook, for example. Their expertise and social adherence to social media do not melt away after church membership as might their more traditional rumspringa experiences. In many communities, church leadership engage in careful discussions about how to guide their young people through the shoals of social media waters.

In addition, Stevick changed a few of the first edition chapter titles. More often, however, he changed heading titles within the chapters. In some cases, what were headings for complete sections are now sub-

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headings under section headings. The more difficult task of revising for this edition came about while attempting to collect data about Amish young people's use of social media. First, Stevick needed to become a user of social media himself. As a user, then, he was able, after some time, to "friend" a young man on Facebook. This led to many more Facebook friends who are Amish, providing Stevick with rich data about social media habits among Amish young people. In addition, Stevick conducted interviews and spent hours in conversation with many Amish friends. He was invited to many social occasions which were fruitful spaces for observing Amish young people together, often making use of social media at the same time.

Thus, the strength of this new edition is, not surprisingly, his focus on including an "electronic rumspringa" (194). The technology of choice appears to be the cell phone or smartphone to access Facebook and other services that the Internet provides. Stevick mentions algebra lessons, chess, Scrabble, and sports (288) that give the current Amish young people an advantage over earlier generations. Often rumspringa activities take place out of sight of the elders; however, according to Stevick, using the Internet in front of one's elders often takes place, even among the family around the dinner table. Here Stevick brings to bear his years of careful observation of and writing about this group to the use of social media among Amish young men.

While Stevick does mention Amish young women a few times, a weakness of the book is the nearly singular focus on the Amish male adolescent. I see little to no reference to Amish young women's use of the smartphone. It seems highly unlikely that only a few women are using it. The chapter epigrams also are focused primarily on men's accounts of an adolescent's life—an adolescent male life.

Readers may want to see more of the social media research included in the context of larger practices. For example, the 28-page courtship chapter, "Courtship: Looking for Love," does not include how social media might be impinging upon dating practices. Has cell phone usage changed the way dating is done? In other words, do the young men still rely on friends to make initial contacts for a date? Or do they use their smartphones to contact either a friend to set up a date with a young woman? Or do they use their smartphones to contact the young woman directly? Do they "friend" their girlfriends? If so, how does this break down, if it does, the secrecy around courtship alliances? Are any of the

more troubling uses of cell phones among American adolescents in general at all evidenced among Amish youth?

In his "Preface," Stevick acknowledges that "[t]o date, no formal studies have been conducted on the impact of the Internet on Amish youth" (p. xiv). Ultimately, however, Stevick has contributed a generously useful beginning to explorations of Amish young people and their social media usage. His observation of this serves as a call to future researchers compelled to participate in Amish studies. Scholars and lay persons alike will find this book adhering to sound methodological practice and engaging to read on topics that are of high interest to American Christians across the theological spectrum.

HAROLD HEIE. *A Future for American Evangelicalism: Commitment, Openness, and Conversation.* Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015. Xvii + 156 pp.

Reviewed by Ted Grimsrud*

Harold Heie, a retired college administrator (Gordon College, Messiah College, Northwestern College), has embarked on a second career as the coordinator of a series of impressive conversations among evangelical Christian thinkers on important and often conflicted issues.

Heie has created a website (www.respectfulconversation.net) that hosts these conversations. The archives are a fascinating record of conversations on issues such as biblical authority, same-sex relationships, political philosophies, human origins, and numerous others. Remarkably, these conversations are respectful—but also honest and in-depth, revealing differences and agreements in insightful ways.

In A Future for American Evangelicalism, Heie provides an account of a number of these conversations. The chapters are each titled "Evangelicalism and …" and cover topics such as the exclusivity of Christianity, the modern study of scripture, morality, politics, human origins, and higher education. Each conversation included several invited participants, selected in large part to provide a fair amount of diversity in perspective.

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To Heie's immense credit, he has chosen topics that genuinely matter, and he has chosen participants who do differ from one another. The book is Heie's report on the conversations, not a transcript of the conversations (though those are available on the website). As such, it is a good summary on current thinking on these various issues.

Perhaps more importantly to Heie, though, the book is a report on a process. Clearly, at the heart of this work is a desire to help evangelical Christians not only examine particular issues but even more, to learn how to talk together respectfully and honestly. This is an excellent challenge, and Heie's book gives us a good sense that such conversations are possible and when engaged in with good will, thought provoking and insightful.

So, for example, in the chapter, "Evangelicalism and the Modern Study of Scripture," we learn from a spectrum of thinkers about what's at stake in current debates about how biblical authority does and should work. Heie emphasizes that all the participants affirm the centrality of "biblical authority," but they disagree on the meaning of that commitment.

A big issue is the use of historical criticism in the study of the Bible. Peter Enns, a prominent "progressive evangelical" Old Testament scholar outlines his rationale for the reverent use of critical methods, with a clear sense of appreciation for the "human dimension" of scripture (pp. 43-44). Heie rightly notes that how this "human dimension" is understood is a key sticking point for evangelicals. He cites several participants who vary in their response to Enns's proposal, from strong agreement to serious questioning.

Heie not only summarizes the discussion, he also adds his own thoughts. While the discussion is brief and Heie's own thoughts barely more than hints, I appreciate that he is personally engaged in the discussion. That engagement heightens the reader's sense that this is not simply a sociological exercise, but a theological investigation in which the author has a direct personal stake.

The irenic tone of this book is its great strength. Heie truly believes that respectful conversations about even deeply divisive issues are possible—more so, necessary. The future viability of the evangelical Christian coalition demands the ability to engage in such conversations since the differences are not going away.

On the other hand, I wonder a bit about the use of the term

"American Evangelicalism" for the focus of this project (not only this book but the broader "Respectful Conversation" effort). I am impressed, and I am grateful for what Heie is doing. However, I find his notion of "evangelicalism" a bit problematic. For one thing, clearly there are many voices within what is understood as the evangelical world that are not present—especially voices more to the "right." Isn't there a kind of selectivity to the exercise of having a "respectful conversation" that will screen out significant numbers of more conservative evangelicals who are not interested in such an open-ended and tolerance-emphasizing exercise?

Also, as one who does not self-identify as an evangelical, I felt myself kind of left out of a conversation I would very much like to be part of. Why limit this to evangelicals? Don't we need other kinds of Christians to be part of such conversations? And those who are not Christians?

This is an excellent and encouraging book, though. It is interesting and helpful in the information it provides on the thinking of these various participants on crucial issues. And it is extraordinarily hopeful in its portrayal of what are necessary and fruitful conversations. Little is resolved here, but a way toward fruitful resolutions is presented. For that, we should be grateful.

CHRISTOPHER GEHRZ, ed. *The Pietist Vision of Christian Higher Education: Forming Whole and Holy Persons.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015, Pp. 236. $26.00 (U.S.)

Reviewed by Cynthia A. Wells*

Is there something distinctive about an approach to Christian higher education rooted in Pietist movement and ethos? This is the central query for Christopher Gehrz and his 14 authors, each of whom has Bethel University connections. This text answers the question with a resolute "yes," and readers of *The Pietist Vision of Christian Higher Education* will surely gain greater appreciation for how Pietism enriches the Christian academy.

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Following an introduction by Gehrz, *The Pietist Vision* is organized into four sections. "Part One: Teaching, Scholarship, and Community" explores how "distinctive emphases and practices might be recovered from the history of Pietism and applied to Christian higher education today" (29). David Williams identifies pietism's emphasis on "new birth" (*Wiedergeburt*) as a more Pietist conception of faith-learning than the prominent faith-integration model. Katherine Nevins conceptualizes a distinctively Pietist ideal of calling that draws on "*common priesthood, loving God and neighbor in attitude and practice, and the irenic spirit characterized by humility of character and openness to correction*" (55, italics in original). Jenell Paris explores "love as a lens" for viewing Christian scholarship (67). Phyllis Alsdurf draws on prototypical Pietist figures to ascertain educational ideals, considering Carl Henry's emphasis on reason and Carl Lundquist's commitment to "conversional piety and lived experience" (86). Finally, Roger Olson argues that a Pietist approach moves beyond knowledge and skill to include character formation.

"Part Two: Changed People Changing the World" investigates how Pietist scholars engage the world beyond the college. Dale Durie lifts up a "grand vision" of Pietism that bringing glory to God is inextricably linked with influencing the neighbors' good (109). Christian Collins Winn lifts up four Pietist-inspired dispositions that support civil discourse: a spirit of good faith, humility, love for one's neighbor, and hopeful commitment to God's peace. Marion Larson and Sara Shady advocate interfaith engagement on the premise that a full understanding of loving one's neighbor includes the "religious other" (135).

"Part Three: Responses" aims to balance a "heavy roster of scholars from the humanities and social sciences" (30). Richard Peterson frames scientific disciplines as "hands-on" service in their engagement with human struggles and care of God's creation (155). Nancy Olen suggests Pietism's ideal of whole person transformation is pedagogically embodied in nursing education; clinical rotations are experiential learning and nursing students are "present" with broken people.

"Part Four: Problems and Proposals" responds to challenges facing Christian colleges aiming to embody a Pietist identity. Raymond VanArragon effectively troubles the seeming simplicity of a pedagogical emphasis on active faith; intellectual virtues, such as a concern for truth

and open-mindedness, can make students susceptible to "corresponding vices," such as relativism or insufficient attention to truth (168). Joel Ward advocates theological heritage as a more appropriate "missional coordinate for rearticulating organizational identity" than the prevailing orientation toward economic outcomes (180). Kent Gerber, drawing on Anabaptism's narrative of renewal, lays out a parallel "curation proposal" to collect, communicate, sustain, and extend a Pietist vision (201). Samuel Zalanga raises concern that three specific Pietist convictions are threatened by the market orientation of higher education, specifically commitments to transforming the social order, conversion and spiritual regeneration, and holistic transformation through community.

In his conclusion, Gehrz envisages a theologically-informed approach to institutional innovation. Applying Spener's classic statement of Pietism, *Pia Desideria*, which means "Heartfelt Desire for God-pleasing Reform," Gehrz suggests asking whether particular educational reforms advance the conversion and regeneration of the whole person, help the college bring about the new church, or advance the new world. He raises these questions in a gracious and balanced manner; as one example, he reflects that online education both potentially embraces the Pietist ethos by increasing access to higher education but also may counter Pietist ideals in that the learner is isolated from an "embodied community" (228).

This text is rich with educational implications of Pietism's theological heritage. In addition to ideas inspired by *Pia Desideria*, the book reorients education to align both with August Hermann Franke's motto "For God's Glory and the Neighbor's Good" and the concept of *imago dei.* Specific pedagogies are also framed from a Pietist perspective, including characterizing group laboratory projects as "conventicle-like endeavors" (155) and whole-person education as a "convertative" pedagogy (45). Distinctively pietistic "organizational regeneration" is also envisioned, lifting up practices of small reading groups focused on institutional identity and "visible faculty piety" or faculty modeling (191). *The Pietist Vision* also effectively responds to the prominent critique that Pietism is "world-denying" (29) and persuasively counters the stereotype many have of Pietism's anti-intellectualism.

Readers should consider the text as a conversation in progress rather than a coherent culmination of a Pietist vision for Christian

higher education. Gehrz identifies gaps in the text up front, naming the absence of the arts, student affairs, and campus ministries. Another hole is general education, which is briefly mentioned but deserves greater attention given its connection to institutional distinctiveness.

Beyond the message that Pietism offers distinct gifts, this text calls Christian higher education to do more than "disseminate information" but also to "transform students—into people who love God with heart, soul, mind and strength and who love their neighbors as themselves" (161). The book is apropos in tone and spirit, not positioned as the "final word" but rather the "beginning of a conversation that is both specific to one institution and widely resonant with sisters and brothers in Christ serving at an array of other colleges and universities" (32). This text is a gracious invitation to join the conversation, embodying an irenic spirit in its vivid and enthusiastic descriptions of Pietism combined with charitable respect for differing ideas.

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BRETHREN IN CHRIST HISTORY & LIFE DECEMBER 2016

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