

Very interesting articles &  
letters written by Willard  
J. Francis.

In boxes of genealogy, etc.  
in Alexander Mack Library,  
Bridgewater College,  
VA, 7/21/2000.

### The Brethren

A long time ago a group of youngsters of whom I was one were wont to chant:

I was Dunkard born  
And Dunkard bred  
And when I die  
I'll be Dunkard dead.

In a life whose duration has already surpassed the expectancy of insurance actuaries as well as the projections of Holy writ there have been more departures from the path of constancy than I like to recall. It is now more than sixty years since I could with truthful expectation recite the last line of that verse. Yet the tie that existed between us, forged and extended by six generations of my forebears, has not been completely undone. I find that I get neither pleasure nor satisfaction from noting that my apostasy has been rivaled to some degree by departures of the Church of the Brethren itself from the Faith that was handed down by the Fathers.

The members of that church are no longer referred to by themselves or by others as Dunkers, that term being reserved for a separate body known also as Old Order Brethren. I get a fairly comprehensive, if not detailed, knowledge of the doings of the church by reading its official publication to which my wife as a member subscribes. In it frequent references are made to the "Old Brethren" for whom current leaders and publicists seem to have a genuine affection and some esteem, the admiration though being tempered by a sophisticated, intellectual superiority. There is an inescapable aura of condescension that the Enlightened often show for the Benighted. As for the Old Brethren it should not be overlooked that they were smart enough to foresee and to foretell that the higher education would destroy the faith of their children.

The Old Brethren were a narrow, sectarian, puritanical lot who exhibited little toleration for dissidents. It should be kept in mind, however, that they directed their disciplines solely to themselves. They didn't expect much from the outside world in the way of righteousness and they made no demands on it. They minded their own business. The New Brethren are broad-minded and ecumenical and are quite comfortable in the company of their associates in the Mainline/Liberal group of churches.

The Old Brethren wore outlandish clothes whose drabness was not relieved by so much as a necktie or jeweled trinket. The New Brethren dress as dictated by fashion designers or by their own tastes. The women have discarded the demeaning prayer-coverings and the ban on jewelry is no longer observed.

The Old Brethren were accustomed to drop to their knees to ask their Father in Heaven to forgive their sins. The New Brethren take part in boycotts and march in parades to press demands on the Great Father in Washington for social reforms.

The Old Brethren were wary of politicians with whom there was a tacit understanding that they wouldn't bother government and government wouldn't bother them. Few exercised the right to vote. They were not to be seduced even when one of the more progressive of their own number ran for and was elected governor of the state with the largest Dunker population. But only fourteen years later many did let themselves be stampeded to the polls to foil a Papal attempt to take over the Republic. The New Brethren encourage political activity, take official positions on the issues and maintain their own lobby in the nation's capital.

The Old Brethren were forbidden to initiate lawsuits and were instructed to grant all possible concessions in order to avoid suits against themselves. Now that litigation has become a popular and very profitable national sport the New Brethren still discourage it but have so far not used their newly acquired militancy to combat its growth publicly.

Refusal to bear arms has been a traditional position of the Church of the Brethren. It was observed by the Old Brethren whenever the occasion required. They insisted quietly on exemption from military service and if denied quietly accepted the legal penalties. It is ironical that, at a time when the New Brethren cry "Peace, Peace" and agitate loudly for disarmament, a survey published in the March 1936 Messenger reported that 51% of the members subject to draft would be willing to accept military service.

In the time of the Old Brethren people had little cause for concern about the safety of life, limb and property. Crime was no big deal, being dealt with, satisfactorily as a rule, by a comparatively small police force. In the time of the New Brethren an uneasy people find it difficult to "not be afraid of the terror by night nor for the arrow that flyeth by day." Murders, rapes, robberies, bombings, hijackings, perversions, violations of trust and even treasons - all are commonplace in our era when the churches of the Mainline/Liberal coalition by-pass the strait and narrow way to a distant Paradise in order to travel the stream-lined short cut to Utopia. At the same time they downgrade the Eternal Verities that earlier churches insisted on drumming into the minds of their members. Some observers suspect that the Old Brethren contributed more to the peaceful existence and moral uplift of the community than do the New Brethren by scolding the President of the United States. →

Perhaps some of the changes noted here seem to be superficial but none is entirely lacking in substance. A fundamental and far-reaching difference between the Old and New Brethren lies in the contrasting views of individual responsibility. The Old Brethren believed in original sin and they recognized a sin when they saw one. They believed that each person was endowed with free will, competent to make decisions and personally responsible for his or her deeds. The New Brethren have superseded the Ten Commandments with the tenets of Moral Relativism. They hesitate to brand any specific act as sinful and they have freed themselves of the fear of hell fire. Sin, such as it is, is committed not by people but by Society against people. It is to the equivocal nature of our moral leadership that we owe the frantic efforts of government agencies to find standards to govern the conduct of the people who work for them. For the past generation our lawmakers and administrators have been enacting laws and issuing orders to set up codes of ethics, to define conflicts of interest and to discourage actions subversive to the public interest. In an earlier era a simpler and fairly effective course of action had been followed. Parents, teachers and ministers taught their youthful charges the difference between right and wrong before they graduated to the world of adult responsibilities.

My parents, resting for more than a quarter century in the family burying lot at Midway, were thought of by their own Old Brethren as being pretty liberal, although that word was not used. It was said that they were ahead of their time. They would be far behind the New Brethren for whom their sentiments, expressed a bit differently perhaps, would echo the rhetorical question asked a few years ago by William Buckley about his own church: "What in the name of God" he exclaimed "is going on in the Roman Catholic Church?"

I opened this homily with a quatrain stanza and will close with another that seems fitting and timely:

Although not of the Faith  
When my last trump shall sound  
I'll take my last, long rest  
In Dunker hallowed ground.

This by Willard Z. Francis.

He wrote as a guest editorialist and also had his own byline under "Between the Lines." These were in Press and Journal in the 1980s.

This one was (is) unsigned and no newspaper clipping was found for this story.

This and many other articles are in box #1 of "Francis" papers and letters in the Alexander Mack Library in Bridgewater, VA. 7/19/2000

Lorraine  
(Frantz)  
Edwards

Willard Z. (Zug) Francis was living at  
326 E. Willow St.  
Elizabethtown, PA

March 30, 1983

Mr. Sam Donaldson  
ABC  
New York, N. Y. 10019

Dear Sir:

I was startled last evening while listening, as is my custom, to ABC News by the mention of "sin". That word has been deleted from the lexicon of The Pulpit, except among lowly Fundamentalists, and has not been heard in polite society for many years. Hearing it on your program set me to musing throughout prime time and again this morning.

The Bible Belt Believers who regard the disease called AIDS as a visitation of divine displeasure have been getting pained and pitying looks from mainline church people whose theologians have devised a humanitarian dogma that diminishes the authority of Heaven's pronouncements and casts doubt on its once vaunted powers. My own meager knowledge of the ways and the doings of the Gods has been picked up solely from hearsay. The older Gods, reputed to be jealous of Their prerogatives, are dispensers of justice who reward the virtuous and punish evil doers. The retribution exacted for human misdeeds appears at times to be of the blunderbuss variety, bringing grief not only to the guilty but to the innocent as well. This deviation from the fairness doctrine was noted long ago and comments on it are to be found in both Testaments of the Bible. The writer of the Book of Exodus recorded his observation of Their "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation." (Ex. 34:7) Jesus is quoted as having asked rhetorically "those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?" (Luke 13:4)

The controversy over the involvement of the Gods in the AIDS affliction is not likely to be resolved with a consensus either pro or con but there is considerable evidence that They do administer disciplinary action when Their handiwork is abused or misused. The penalties imposed for choking lungs with smoke and for pickling livers in alcohol are well known. The medical profession has not yet fully assessed the dire consequences that befall drug addicts. Prophets of Ecology sound constant warnings of the wrath to come if we persist in our mistreatment of other species and our poisoning of Earth's atmosphere and waters. The Gods are surely not entranced by the sight of grown men, long since weaned from breast feeding, taking in body fluids by mouth from other organs. Nor do They view with equanimity the acts of those who, spurning the pleasant and utilitarian niche provided in the female body for the accomodation of the membrum virile, choose to make use of the foul, dungy channel designed for the passage of fecal excrement. The older Gods, with the notable exception of the permissive Olympians, simply refused to countenance such practices.

It may be that They wondered as They watched the burning of Sodom whether the lesson would be takem seriously. Perhaps it was decided then that if the fire that time failed to get the message across They would resort the next time to A(n) I(nfectious) D(isease) S(anction).

It is just possible that a truth, hidden from the wise and prudent, has been revealed to the babes of the BBB.

Heretically yours

Willard Z. Francis  
326 E. Willow St.  
Elizabethtown, Pa. 17022

138 Cumberland St., Lebanon, Pa.  
Mar. 29, 1934

Mr. Wm. Royer  
Panora, Iowa  
Dear Bro. Royer:

Your letter of Mar. 23 to Donald S. Harpel in regard to the Royer History was sent this afternoon by Mr. Harpel to me.

Mr. Harpel did have the Royer History for sale. My printer after having finished the printing, died in 1928 without delivering to me any books, and owing the bank of which Mr. Harpel's father-in-law is president, whose mother was a Royer daughter. This complication caused my books to be seized and sold without my getting back a dollar of the thousands I had put into the book. After two years by paying \$500 I got my property back. But we were in depression and I had to give a note in order to get additional books bound.

Now pages 573 and 574, Section 6, has to do with VI William Royer m. at Lanark, Ill., Dec. 21, 1880 to Alma C. Brantner. They had five children and the families of VII Emery N., Charles C. & Lulu B. are given, Edna F. being yet single; and a child died in infancy. Section 6 was received from William Royer and wife in 1916.

Father V Jacob's family in Chapter VI from pages 572 to 574; IV Christian's descendants from page 559 to 577; great-grandfather III Christian's descendants from 505 to 577, in which you have the settling in Franklin Co. and the development of the Brethren church there, including the Stover ancestors; then back through II George to the immigrant ancestor I Sebastian.

The book is a large octavo volume of 750 pages in all, with upwards of 60 full page illustrations, (one party says alone worth the price of the book), good wove paper, substantially bound in cloth. The book stood me \$6.00 per volume when Harpel got it for a song, and sold it at \$5.00. The History has caused me to be listed in "Whos Who in American Genealogy", a book published in Chicago where it was listed at cost price. A new edition of "Whos Who" is being issued this year in which the price is given as \$7.00, marketing costing more than anticipated. For a few months I shall continue to sell yet at the old price of \$6.00. If you order three books or more, the price will be \$5.00 per volume, you really doing salesmanship work. As Eld. J. G. Royer says in the Introduction, getting these books is honoring father and mother; and Heaven smiles on such doings. Christ's genealogy is given twice in the New Testament. 8 pages of special paper is inserted to continue records as in a Family Bible. No more worthy gift could be made to children and to grandchildren than such a family history. As hinted I am still struggling under the weight of a note of more than a years standing in order to have books bound. The note, still \$30.00, is due Apr. 6 and payment is being urged. If I could cancel the note on that date, I would feel like a new man.

If payment accompanies the order, I have been prepaying transportation charges; otherwise books are sent C. O. D., involving additional cost. Hoping for your liberal order before Apr. 6, I am

Sincerely yours  
J. G. Francis

From the collection in the  
Bridgewater College  
Alexander Mack Library

Collection of J. G. Francis  
which is in 5+ boxes  
and I'm first to read  
through.

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Remember on pp 49-54, in a  
black 3-hole note book, very  
interesting article on Peter  
Becker.

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Remember in a "light" notebook,  
there is an index to Kreider Family  
History w/ "females entering family"  
w/ Frantz on pg 25 + 34  
w/ Wenger 22, 26(2), 41, 53, 58, 75  
w/ Wengert 69, 83(2), 103  
w/ Wengert 38  
w/ Peffly 91