

# Christian Telescope

ISSUE 1

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITED BRETHREN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2009

## THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH

By Benjamin R. Hanby

The full article originally appeared in the *Christian Repository*, November & December 1858.

[An Address delivered before the Missionary Society of Otterbein University.]

IT is about time we were asking ourselves the question, "What do we, as a people, propose to do for the salvation of the world?" Somebody has said, "There is a *Divinity* that shapes our ends." That is true. God has directed the labors of his servants in the United Brethren Church to the promotion of great good. Indeed He governs and controls everything. He makes even "the wrath of man" to praise Him. But somebody else has said, "Every man is the architect of his own fortune;" and this is just as true as the other.

It is every man's duty, upon entering the field of the great Future before him, to settle a purpose in his heart, lay his plans accordingly, and then work up to them. And while he is conscious that the results of his labors will, after all, be subject to the decision of the Great Arbiter, he must be equally conscious of the fact that God has placed Life and Death before him and has given him the power to choose or refuse.

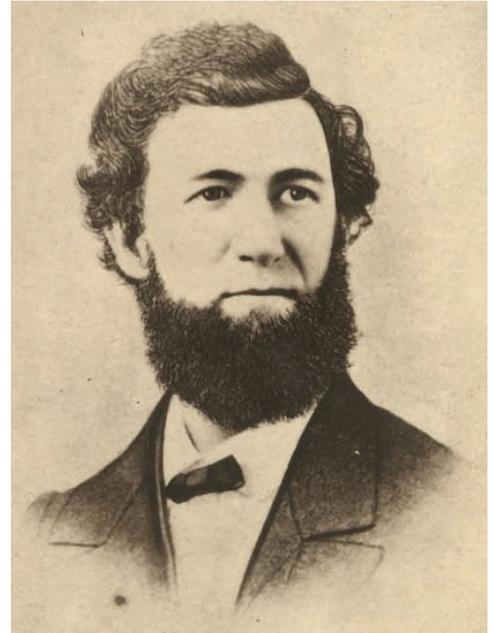
Such a period is a crisis in the life of every enlightened individual. He may at that point make a misstep which will affect his existence not only here, but hereafter. As with individuals, so with nations; so with organizations and compacts of every kind—civil, social, and religious. They all have an end in view, and are laboring more or less for its accomplishment.

The United Brethren Church now occupies the position of an individual just starting out into the business of life. Hence the present must be the great crisis in her history. She must either look out upon the great battle field before her and take her position in the ranks—or she must retire in shame and confusion and wither under God's curse? Have not our people been negligent in this department of church policy?

...  
Now all this has come about without any body looking very far ahead into the future, I grant. The present has always had enough for our people to do, and having faithfully performed the duties of "the living present," God has managed the rest, and we see the results.

"Why, then, need we trouble ourselves about the Future? Let us take care of the present and the future will take care of itself." This has been the sentiment of our people heretofore, as it seems to me. I admit that no one is so likely to accomplish just nothing at all—as he who passively folds his hands in the present and dreams of future usefulness. And yet it must be acknowledged, on the other hand, that no one is likely to accomplish so much as he who labors systematically and with a definite end in view.

It is right, therefore, that we should ascertain, if we can, what particular part of the great Harvest God has designed that we should gather, and then lay out our



Benjamin Russell Hanby

strength accordingly.

...  
But what is that destiny! This, we think, we are now prepared to answer. We have already remarked that there is a portion of the work at which we will labor in common with other churches. This is evidently upon territory where, as yet, the Gospel has made no inroads. It is a large field indeed, embracing two-thirds of the ten hundred millions of inhabitants of the globe. How well we are qualified for such a

(Continued on page 2)

### WHO WAS BENJAMIN RUSSEL HANBY?

Songwriter, teacher, and pastor, Benjamin Hanby, was probably best known for his pre-Civil War abolitionist anthem *Darling Nellie Grey* as well as two Christmas tunes, *Up On the Housetop* and *Who is He in Yonder Stall*, but his roles as pastor and teacher were equally important to this forward-thinking individual.

Born in 1833 near Rushville, Ohio, to United Brethren Bishop William Hanby he grew up in a progressive household that encouraged education and music. After graduation from Otterbein University in 1858, Hanby served as a college agent and received his ministerial license at the Pennsylvania Conference of 1859. In 1860 upon returning to Ohio, Rev. Hanby worked as an itinerant minister as well as teaching at an Academy in Seven Mile.

After a couple of years of teaching, Rev. Hanby joined Miami Conference and took charge of the church at Lewisburg, Ohio. His youthful vigor, easy-going style, and musical abilities made him especially attractive to young people who flocked to the church. His next assignment was in New Paris, Ohio. Throughout his ministry Rev. Hanby was at odds with the pietistic elements of the church because of his jovial style and his use of musical instruments. While at New Paris, this element, although a minority, expressed its will and Rev. Hanby, not being obliged to suppress his style and love of music, resigned from the ministry in 1866.

Hanby returned to songwriting and worked first for John Church Co. in Cincinnati and then for Root and Cady in Chicago. Hanby's ministry to children continued as well, through the composition of Sunday School music and presentations at children's concerts around the Upper Mid-West. It was on one of those trips where he contracted tuberculosis. Benjamin Hanby lingered for several months before finally succumbing in March of 1867.

(Continued from page 1)

task will appear evident from what we have already been accustomed to. Our preachers have not been nurtured in the lap of luxury on high salaries, and in easy berths. Their labors and hardships have been numerous and severe. Their sacrifices have been great and their salaries small. They are inured to toil as well as to poverty, and withal, have a large amount of energy and go-aheadativeness about them. Every real United Brethren preacher in fact has to be as familiar with the duties of self-sacrifice and self-denial, as a foreign missionary, and there is not a position in the whole church into which a preacher, at least, can get, which may said to be comfortable. We are just exactly fitted for that sort of Work, then, are we not? Surely in the great Future that lies before the United Brethren Church, the cause of missions stands preeminent, and this is why I have chosen a subject that may have at first seemed not befitting the occasion. The cause of missions and that of the United Brethren Church are evidently identical. But there is a work for her to do in Christendom as well as out of it, and that, as, I conceive, is a work which no other church can do for her. This work consists in looking after those who have, as yet, not been cared for; and of these the number is great, even where Christianity has made her most brilliant achievements.

At present, at least, we see too much of a disposition on the part of some of the

older churches to acquire wealth and influence merely for the sake of popularity; and this unholy lust is preventing them from taking much notice of the poorer classes. Their aim seems to be to make religion attractive and agreeable to the lovers of pleasure and the votaries of fashion; and accordingly she is arrayed in purple and fine linen, and her feet are slippared in golden slippers, and the wealthy worldlings are pleased, but the poor, alas! do not "have the Gospel preached unto them."

...

Now, have we not reached a crisis? To go back is death; but how are we to go forward? The enterprises of the church are now being pushed forward with great zeal, but those who are laboring so faithfully can not live here forever. Who are to take their places when they fall? The work that now lies before the young men of the United Brethren Church is many times greater than that which our Fathers had to do. And yet, where are the Otterbeins, the Boehms, the Newcomers, that are to go to work and perform it? Surely if ever the church needed clear-headed, well balanced, energetic men and women—it is now! Every man, woman and child in the United Brethren Church ought to be a missionary! There are hundreds of ways of going about the work which I cannot stop here to mention. Upon the young men of the church hangs the greatest responsibility, for by them, chiefly, must the sacred desk be filled. And what are the young

men doing? Are they not seeking gain rather than godliness—profit rather than piety, usury than usefulness? When they leave their studies to seek employment, do they go where they can do the most good, or make the most money? And are they not shutting their eyes to the necessities of the church, and turning deaf ears to her cries for help? And even those who have yielded to the call, and have resolved to devote their lives to the ministry, are they not laboring under the impression that our Fathers, kind souls! have done up pretty much all the rough work for us, and that now things will go on with much less toil? Are any of them calculating on respectable congregations and large salaries, or forsooth, imagining themselves seated in the Bishop's chair, or wielding the Editor's tripod? Surely this is not the time to think of self or self-promotion, and I am satisfied that if we, as young men, expect to be useful in the sphere that God has assigned to us, there must be a general cutting off of right hands and plucking out of right eyes. I cannot forbear speaking plainly and explicitly on this point. Had our Fathers consulted flesh and blood, as some of us are doing, where would we be tonight? We have no more right to be selfish than they had.

But suppose that we give up all, and are willing to come out fairly on the Lord's side, what next? we need some preparation don't we?

Verily we do. But is it necessary in order to obtain that preparation that we spend half our lifetime in a narrow cell, bending over our studies and secluding ourselves from the world around us, and then, and not till then, go and offer ourselves to the Lord for active service? Sorry instruments, I fear, we would be for active service. What could we offer? A stuffed head, a hollow heart, a feeble voice, a hacking cough and a broken constitution! Can God make such instruments available?

I admit that we need an education but that is not all we need. We must, it is true, have minds that are capable of "rightly dividing the word of truth, giving saint and sinner their portion in due season;" but we must also have hearts so warm that we would be willing to compass sea and land to save a soul;—and hands so well taught that they can be made of practical value in case of an emergency.

There is no doubt but that we can keep our minds burnished and brightened; but how are we to keep our hearts right, if we do not try to do something for our fellow beings, while we are preparing ourselves for more extended usefulness? There are at least one dozen points within two hours' travel from Westerville, where summer Sabbath schools might be established and

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## WHO IS HE, IN YONDER STALL?

B. R. HANBY.

(LOWLINESS.)

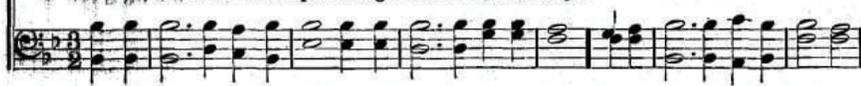
B. R. HANBY.

REFRAIN.



1. Who is He, in yonder stall, At whose feet the shepherds fall?  
 2. Who is He, in yonder cot, Bend - ing to His toilsome lot!  
 3. Who is He, in deep distress, Fast - ing in the wil-der-ness?  
 4. Who is He, that stands and weeps At the grave where Lazarus sleeps?

} 'Tis the Lord! O wondrous sto-ry!



'Tis the Lord, the King of glo - ry! At His feet we hum-bly fall; Crown Him, crown Him Lord of all.



5. Lo! at midnight, who is He  
Prays in dark Gethsemane?  
 6. Who is He, in Calvary's throes,  
Asks for blessings on His foes?

7. Who is He that from the grave  
Comes to heal, and help, and save?  
 8. Who is He that on yon throne  
Rules the world of light alone?

Benjamin Hanby's most famous hymn.

Source: I. H. Meredith and Grant Colfax Tullar, eds., *The Bible School Hymnal*. New York: Tullar-Meredith Co., 1907, p. 186.

successfully maintained, and yet, of those twelve fields—only two have been occupied by students of this school; at the same time from twelve to forty young men might have been found at this institution, who would have been very happy to read an essay on the subject of missions had they been called upon to do so! Surely we cannot keep our hearts right, and yet be sluggish Christians!

As to the cultivation of our hands, I mean that we must learn to use them. A United Brethren preacher has, like some foreign missionaries, to adapt himself to all sorts of circumstances, not unfrequently being compelled to be his own carpenter and cabinet-maker, gardener and wood-chopper, and we must not be ashamed of the ax, the saw, the hammer and the hoe.

Paul worked with his own hands, and so ought everybody. He who is ashamed to work is not a Christian, and—I had almost said, he who does not work is not a Christian!

While we are students we need exercise, and a great deal of it, else we can never hope to develop our physical, natures as they must be developed if we endure the hardships and labors that lie before us.

In conclusion, we have seen, (judging

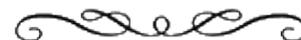
from the past and the present), that our labors are to be confined or rather directed, mainly, to the salvation of the heathen, and of those, who, in the midst of the blaze of Gospel day are still as "sheep without a shepherd."

To do this, we need make no change in our mode of fighting, and if we but use the same tactics that our Fathers used, and be willing to content ourselves with reaching the "common mind," there is no doubt in my mind as to the success of our future; but we must not fail to study well the example of our sires. They regarded the warfare as a continual one; and hence they neglected no opportunity of making an onslaught on the enemy. They preached wherever they could get a hearing in private houses, in public rooms, in school houses, in barns, in the open air, on the camp ground—any where, every where, that God's name might be glorified, and souls be saved. Nay more; they went out into the highways and hedges, and invited the poor and the maimed, and the halt and the blind to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Like Christ and his apostles, they were thoroughgoing itinerants. "They hunted up the people." They visited from house to house, and talked to the mothers, the little children and the invalids who

could not turn out to hear them preach. They prayed with them, conversed with them, exhorted, encouraged and admonished them. And oh! thou dear recording angel, who but God and thyself can tell how many sinners those faithful pioneers thus converted from the error of their ways! How many wandering, perishing lambs they thus restored to the bosom of the Gentle Shepherd. Who shall tell how many desolate and aching hearts they gladdened! How many dying pillows they soothed! How many bitter trials and afflictions they sweetened! How many tears they wiped from the cheek of despair! How many souls, burdened with sin—groping in darkness, were led by these faithful men of God, to the marvelous light of the Gospel!

Oh Eternity! Thou alone canst't reveal the wondrous record!

May the Great Head of the church thoroughly sanctify those whom he is setting apart as his chosen vessels for the future work of the church, and may they not only be zealous, active laborers in the pulpit, but faithful and affectionate out of it; "so shall the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."



## Monroe United Brethren Church:

1866—The Monroe United Brethren in Christ Church traces its beginnings to Smith's Chapel also known as The Twelve-Cornered Church that was located south of Monroe, Indiana on 000 Road near the Smith Cemetery. History books record the following:

"During the few years previous to 1871, while Monroe as a village was very dormant, most of the church-going people in the neighborhood attended the Twelve-Cornered meeting house of the United Brethren, a mile and a half south of the settlement. The Methodists and the United Brethren had erected it jointly, in 1866, and it stood on the farm of Robert E. Smith, in Section 9, Monroe Township. This quaint old house of worship is still standing and, although it may not be as picturesque as Hawthorn's "House of Seven Gables." It is far more interesting to the average man and woman of Adams County. *From Standard History of Adams & Wells Counties, Indiana, 1918*

"It was built in the shape of a cross and had twelve corners. This went by the name of the Twelve-Cornered Church and was built by the church-going people of several denominations." *Snow's History of Adams County, Indiana*

1903—S. P. Overholtz was pastor of the Berne Circuit which consisted of Apple Grove and Smith Chapel.

1904—The United Brethren people at Smith Chapel agreed to locate to the Winchester Church site. The Winchester community had a school, general store, dance hall and a saloon with a few homes close by. The United Brethren moved in. The school was known as the Hardscrapple School. It was a one-room school and had the toughest reputation in Adams County. The Winchester Community was located on the old Fort Wayne-Winchester Stage Coach Line. The coach lines changed horses

*A Chronological History ... compiled in honor of its 100th anniversary (1904-2004), by Robert McBride and Wes Kuntzman.*



*Monroe United Brethren in Christ Church, Monroe, Indiana*

here. Winchester United Brethren in Christ Church was the new name chosen by this new congregation.

The first church service was held September 18, with Rev. A. M. Johnson, in the school across the road from the church site that was donated by Henry Bollinger. There was an abandoned church building on 000 south of the Smith Chapel on the farm formerly owned by Clifton Striker. Mathias Striker had established and helped build the Sharon Lutheran Church on his farm sometime after 1868. The building was no longer used so our church fathers secured it and carefully tore it down and used the materials to build the Winchester United Brethren Church. This building was completed in the fall.

The church had no piano. It was lit by kerosene lamps on the sides of each window and the sides of the pulpit. Two coal stoves provided heat. Later, gas lamps replaced the oil lamps, and then a Delco light system was used and finally electric lights were available. The first



Winchester United Brethren in Christ Church  
is on the right

building was remodeled and repaired in 1904 making it more convenient and improving its outward appearance. In the histories of Adams and Wells counties, it is stated that the building was still standing in 1918. The report in the 1979 county history states that the lumber from the Twelve-Cornered Church was used to build the school at the Winchester Community. That history was probably written from the memory of handed-down information.

"The Winchester U. B. church, located a mile south and two miles west of Monroe, will be dedicated Sunday, December 4th. The services will be conducted by Rev. Street of Ohio, at ten o'clock a.m., and the public is cordially invited to attend. The church is a frame one, well built, convenient, beautiful and will be dedicated to God's service with appropriate services." *THE DAILY DEMOCRAT, Friday Evening, November 25, 1904*

1905—In the spring, the first revival in the new church building was held. It lasted six weeks and sixty-four people found the Lord. Attendance was so good that on two different occasions Rev. A. M. Johnson had to be pulled through a window to get to the pulpit. Children were seated on the pulpit to give more room for the adults to be seated. Many of the children slept on the platform while Rev. Johnson preached.

"During this early Winchester revival, the entire neighborhood was being stirred by the Holy Spirit. One evening Pastor Johnson was warned that outside the church, there were several angry, young toughs waiting for him. Instead of not going out of the church or attempting to leave by another route, Johnson met them, the potential adversaries became congenial and they parted without incident." *UNITED BROTHERS BISHOPS from 1889-1997 Volume One, Page 198. Edited by Dr. Paul R. Fetters. Biography of Rev. A. M. Johnson written by Robert Kaehr. Foot note: Funk, Mary Lou. "A Great Friend,"*

The Winchester and Apple Grove churches were with the Berne circuit until 1916.

1914—The Auglaize Annual conference was held at the Winchester Church August 26-29 with Bishop F. L. Hoskins presiding.

1917—The Winchester Church was a "Station" (single church not on a circuit) until 1926.

1926—The Winchester Church became part of the Decatur Circuit (Mt. Victory, Mt. Zion, Pleasant Mills and Winchester) until 1929.

1930—The Winchester Church became part of the Willshire Circuit (St. Paul, Winchester, and Willshire) until 1947.

1941—Winchester Church was remodeled with a new hardwood floor, colored windows and an added vestibule. A basement was dug and a new furnace was also installed. (The basement and new furnace may have been installed prior to this remodel.)

1948—The Winchester Church became part of the St. Paul Circuit which included St. Paul and Winchester churches until 1951.

officers were Ira Wagoner, Sunday School Superintendent; Flossie Laisure, secretary; Roy Carter, chorister; and Billy Hendricks, janitor.

Note: Some people must have stayed at Smith Chapel because J. F. Snow in his history of the county in 1907 reported that the

1951—The Winchester Church again became a part of the Berne circuit with Apple Grove just as it was in 1904.

1954—A 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service was held on October 10. Bishop A. M. Johnson, the church's first pastor, spoke at the 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. services.

1958—Amanda Liby gave two lots in the Monroe provided that the church would build on them.

1959—The Winchester Church became a Station until 1964.

1962—On September 14, the Winchester Church body voted to build a new church in Monroe. Groundbreaking was for new church was held on October 21. Those participating were: Rev. R. W. Rash, Bishop; Rev. Carey Knittle, Pastor; Mrs. Amanda Liby, donor of land; and trustees: Noah Hirschy, Don Harvey, Roy Hirschy, Harry Bollinger, and Sylvan Hirschy.

1963—The new church was constructed and the name The Monroe Church of the United Brethren in Christ was chosen.

1964—The first service was held on February 23. A dedication service was held on April 5, with Bishop C. E. Carlson as speaker.

The Winchester Church building remained empty for several years because of stipulations in the original deed. Eventually, an Amish family purchased and remodeled it into a residence. 1976 On October 6, the church mortgage was burned.

1979—The house across the street at 202 South Adams Street was purchased for a church parsonage.

1980—The fellowship hall was added to the east side of the church. 1989 The entrance to the sanctuary was enlarged.

1995—New Baby Grand Piano was purchased.

1999—New church sign erected.

2004—Air conditioning installed in the church.

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#### DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

Is your church celebrating an anniversary? Have been researching your United Brethren family? Do you have stories of a UB campground? The *Christian Telescope* would like to publish your articles related to the history of individual churches, biographies of United Brethren pastors or lay persons, or histories of events related to the United Brethren Church. Please send your submissions to [rneuman@huntington.edu](mailto:rneuman@huntington.edu) or:

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