



Recovering African American Voice and Experience in Brethren History: A Biographical Essay on Mattie Cunningham Dolby, 1878–1956¹

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THE family story says that Richard Cunningham was born into bondage on a Kentucky plantation after the plantation overseer raped his mother Ellen. As a child, he suffered the trauma of being torn from his mother and siblings, who were “sold down the river.” Some years later, after getting wind that the Union Army was recruiting black soldiers, Richard fled the plantation and tried to enlist but was turned down for service because of flatfeet. Working various jobs to survive, he met and married a young woman in Louisville, who died during childbirth. Leaving his infant daughter with her maternal grandparents, a distraught Richard traveled to Indiana in search of opportunity where “he went to school and set beside small children until he learned the 3 R’s.”²

In 1877, as Reconstruction began to crumble, Richard married Mary Finley Reed. The family story maintains that Mary’s “fair-skinned” father, who is remembered as being tormented by “restrictions placed on Negroes,” had left the family when she was a child by passing into the white world and marrying a white woman, causing severe hardship for the family until Mary’s mother eventually remarried. Richard and Mary settled in Cottage Grove, Indiana, located in the far eastern part of the state not far from the Ohio border, where Richard found work with his half-brother George at a local tile and brick factory. A year after they married, the couple had a daughter, Martha Elizabeth Cun-

ningham, who they called Mattie, followed by two sons, Joseph Alexander and George Finley, and later by nine more children.³

In 1884, when Mattie was six years old, Richard moved his family west near the township of New London, Indiana, just southwest of Kokomo. Like so many other places in Indiana, New London had been a noted center of Underground Railroad activity that was reputed to be one of the most “active and intelligently conducted” centers in Central Indiana. Sometime after settling into their new home, the Cunningham family began attending New London Friends Meeting, where they were welcomed in life and death. While the family would be there for only a few years, eventually joining a nearby Brethren church, they maintained a deep connection to New London Quakers, establishing a family burial plot at the church where, years later, Richard and Mary, along with two of their children, would be laid to rest in an integrated cemetery.⁴

After a few years with New London Friends, the Cunninghams found a new church family, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say an expanded church family, at the Brethren church in Howard County not far from their home. As they planted their roots in the Church of the Brethren, which was then known as the German Baptist Brethren, they would also maintain an intimate bond not only with the local Quakers but also black churches, particularly

with the Wayman Chapel A.M.E. Church in Kokomo. The Brethren had opposed slavery since their founding, and the Quakers and A.M.E. had provided support networks for African Americans in the antebellum period, with congregants sometimes working in unity to assist runaways as well as combining resources to establish and prosper free black communities. The connection between these three freedom churches (and later with the Church of God) would become characteristic of the Cunningham family well into the twentieth century where family members and their descendants would branch off into these churches and associated institutions, usually maintaining connections with two or more of the others.⁵

As their father built his brick-making business near New London, Mattie, Joe, and their cousin, Charlie Reed Jr., attended a nearby school “where all eight grades were taught in one room.” According to the family history, the snow would sometimes get so deep that the fence around the home property disappeared with not so much as the top of a post showing. On these days, Richard would shovel a path to school as the children followed closely behind. Another family memory is of an endearing cow that in the spring would follow the children at least part of the way to school and then wait for them to

come back at the end of the day to follow them home. The oldest of the siblings, with more coming along, Mattie took charge of watching over them and even helped raise the youngest ones. Before she was in her teens, she was helping take care of the chickens, farming the garden, and tending to an



Mattie Cunningham Dolby

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orchard of berry bushes. She also drove in these early-days—a horse and buggy. When she was twelve years old, she hopped in the buggy with her little sister Lulu Belle to run an errand in New London. Realizing too late that the strap was not secured as the horse picked up speed, the sisters held on

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for life with no way to slow down. As they approached a sharp turn, the horse broke loose, and the buggy tipped over, breaking Mattie's arm, after which her father held her as she winced from pain while a doctor placed a cast on her arm. As a teenager, Mattie began to develop eye problems, which got so severe that she missed a year of school. This setback, likely due to complications from glaucoma, meant that she would have to wait to graduate with her younger brother Joe a year later. Walking the stage together at New London High School in 1900, the two would soon arrive on the Manchester College campus where Mattie would "begin her course of study in the Bible School" and where "Joe would attend the Manchester Academy," which was a college preparatory program prior to his matriculation in the college.⁶

Integrating Manchester College

As a child and teenager, Dolby dreamt of going to college and made it clear to those around her that this was exactly what she intended to do. While her father resisted,

claiming for her the traditional role of the late nineteenth-century woman to "wash and cook and have babies," Dolby refused to conform and after high school graduation—an impressive accomplishment for a black woman of the time—enrolled at Manchester College. She seems to have developed a fierce sense of independence from having such adult responsibilities as a young girl—from helping to raise her younger siblings to her multiple chores to keep the household going to her determination to complete high school, which was still mostly a white male privilege. Without her father's financial support to attend college, who wholeheartedly supported her brother Joe, a determined Dolby would spend "long hours working in the college kitchen and doing other odd jobs" to pay for her education.⁷

Having pushed the boundaries with her father (and society) who opposed higher education for women, Dolby and her brother Joe expanded the boundaries at Manchester by becoming the first African American students to attend the college in 1900. This attendance was particularly impressive for an African American woman at the turn of the century since, at that time, there were only 252 black female college graduates in the U.S.⁸ Dolby was also part of a small but growing number of African American women making inroads into white colleges, thus helping to bring about early integration in these environments. Anytime a black woman transgressed boundaries in the white patriarchal world of this time, she had usually done so by overcoming the three structural impediments of race, gender, and class. Moreover, entering a traditionally exclusive-white space challenged black women's enforced invisibility, and whites were forced to take notice of their presence and talents. Mattie Cunningham Dolby would be no exception.⁹

Manchester had only recently been taken over by Brethren and was struggling to create a foundation and stability.¹⁰ While Dolby

had grown up Brethren, it says something that Manchester was willing to admit black students so early after its precarious inception, and at a time when most other stable and well-funded white institutions had either a racially exclusive policy or were only accommodating a few black students. It was around this time, for example, that Woodrow Wilson, as president of Princeton, told a black applicant that “it is altogether inadvisable for a colored man to enter Princeton,” following here the pattern of southern colleges which excluded African Americans universally.¹¹ Other colleges like Harvard, Brown, and Dartmouth, while admitting a few black students, still restricted access to most. To their credit, midwestern colleges such as Indiana State University and Indiana University did begin admitting black students as early as the latter 1870s and mid-1880s, respectively, but no more than a handful in the decades that followed.¹²

There is not much accessible information about the people involved in the admissions process at Manchester when Mattie and Joe were admitted. Serving then as interim president and “chairman of the faculty” was Levi Ikenberry, who had just received his master’s degree from Ohio State University. He was described as a “quiet, kindly person” who cared deeply about the suffering of humanity.¹³ With racism reaching its disturbing zenith in America and black lynching becoming a daily occurrence, Ikenberry may have felt a sense of obligation to open the doors of Manchester to Mattie and Joe in such a hostile racial climate.

Brethren had been grappling with race ever since African Americans, drawn to the church because of its opposition to slavery, began to knock at its doors in the early mid-nineteenth century. “How is it viewed to receive colored people into our church?” asked a query presented to the Annual Meeting in 1835, which was answered that they “should make no difference on account of color.” This decision was one of the first of many

more to come over the next three decades. Unlike most other denominations, including ones that gradually evolved an anti-slavery position, “Brethren...never officially allowed slavery,” and would boldly stress their opposition to slavery in resolutions and declarations up through the Civil War.¹⁴ Brethren

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always maintained that “slavery is a great evil, and contrary to the spirit of Christ,” rooting its opposition in “its teachings and biblical passages.”¹⁵ Yet there were always those few Brethren that still owned enslaved persons or hired them from non-Brethren slaveowners to work their farms.¹⁶ Importantly, just because the majority adamantly opposed slavery did not mean they were free from racial prejudice, which would rear its ugly head as the small number of African Americans began to enter the church. The former slave Samuel Weir, for example, experienced this prejudice firsthand. While it says something that the Brethren ordained him as a minister in 1849 and announced that same year that black members should receive the Holy Kiss, Weir was nevertheless denied this ritual and “compelled to meet mostly with his own race.”¹⁷ Congre-

gations may have admitted African Americans as members, along with calls for equal treatment, but the expectation seems to have been that congregations would be segregated, most notably with the core black Brethren congregation at Frankfort.¹⁸

Although Manchester College had admitted Mattie and Joe as its first black students in 1900, it appears that they may have experienced racism at the hands of some of their fellow Brethren students. Mattie's daughter shared that she "never heard" her "mother mention anything about prejudice at school," but it appears that Mattie and Joe were "not welcomed wholeheartedly" and made to feel uncomfortable. Whatever the details, they did not eat in the college dining room for at least part of their first year, cooking their meals off campus instead.¹⁹

During Mattie and Joe's second year a transformation occurred regarding their inclusion at Manchester. Fellow student Otho Winger, who would go on to become a young president of Manchester, organized a student support group to surround Mattie and Joe "with love and congeniality" and invited them to eat at his table in the dining room.²⁰ This support must have been encouraging to the siblings, possibly giving them the confidence to step into college life with both feet. Sometime after Otho's intervention, Mattie and Joe become deeply involved in activities at Manchester, making inroads into areas that had only known white faces.

In addition to working and taking a heavy course load where she made mostly As and Bs, Mattie was active in Chorus, the Bible Society, and served as secretary of the Manchester College alumni group (Otho Winger was president). While Joe was not quite as diligent a student as his sister, he appears to have been just as involved in college life. He was a member of the Lincoln Society, which was a literary group and where he was noted for his skills at debating. He was also the manager of the baseball team and

played center on the basketball team.²¹

Joe's basketball team photograph, along with one of him taken with the Lincoln Society, are particularly interesting and may reveal something both about his ability to assuage prejudice and the willingness of white Brethren students at Manchester to adapt and transcend the rampant racism of their day. In a 1903–04 basketball photograph, one of the white players has his hand on Joe's shoulder. According to a historian at the University of Wisconsin researching early African American athletes, "while it was common for teammates to touch each other...as a sign of cohesiveness," they would generally not touch a black teammate. He believes this photograph is rare and significant for the times, revealing something about the acceptance of Joe by his white teammates. Interestingly, this historian also believes that Joe "is one of the first African Americans to play on a college basketball team" and may have been the first to have played on an integrated team.²² This level of acceptance was significant because segregation was fast taking root in sports, with independent "Negro" leagues and sports clubs forming all over the country.

The second photograph shows Joe in a large group picture with the Lincoln Society and may be more revealing than the first. Here he is sitting in the front center of about thirty white students, which is unusual enough since it seems to show that rather than sheepishly tucking away the one black student in the group photograph, Joe's prominently visible placement may reveal a source of pride. But what also makes this photograph exceptionally rare is that Joe is also sitting in between two white female students, an intimate proximity that was considered taboo in much of early twentieth-century white America. During this time, black men were often depicted in literature and political rhetoric as lurking sexual predators, desiring either in thought or action to contaminate the racial purity of helpless white

women.²³ This image seems to reveal that the Brethren at Manchester were not susceptible to the swirl of this racist propaganda, as were many white Americans of the time.

Whatever happened to make Mattie and Joe feel uncomfortable during their first year at Manchester, these photographs, the intimacy, and proximity of black and white, male and female, reveals racial attitudes at Manchester that appear to be remarkably progressive compared to most other institutions of higher learning of the day. Mattie and Joe had some role in this change by crossing boundaries into this white world, persuading that world to accommodate them and perhaps revising some of its assumptions regarding African Americans. Despite some of the challenges she and Joe experienced during their first year, Dolby would go on to cherish her days in college, writing a few years after graduation that “Manchester College holds a place in my affections next to my own home...many are the spiritual uplifts that I received while there.”²⁴

“What we most need is money”: The Struggle for Home Missions to African Americans

Shortly after graduation from Manchester in 1903, the General Mission Board sent Dolby to establish a German Baptist Brethren church among the black community in Palestine, Arkansas. Located in the northeastern part of the state, Palestine was near the county seat of Forrest City, which was named after the Confederate general, Nathan Bedford Forrest, the founder of the Ku Klux Klan. It was part of a terribly impoverished region where most African Americans worked as sharecroppers and lived in dirt-floor shacks while surviving harsh winters in substandard structures. A rigidly segregated community, African Americans in Palestine had to tread carefully not to trigger white verbal and physical violence. Only nine years earlier, an African American man

named William Brooks was lynched in Palestine for simply asking his white employer for permission to marry his daughter.²⁵

Dolby relished the opportunity to bring the Brethren tradition and biblical teaching to African Americans in Palestine and do all she could to improve the lives of impover-

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ished black families. Though she grew up in Indiana, her family roots had inspired her interest in the south, particularly her father's time in slavery in Kentucky. She also had deep missionary roots that reached backed generations. Her maternal great grandparents, the Reverend Joseph Gomer and Mary Wiley-Gomer had served for many years as missionaries in Sierre Leone with the United Brethren Church. They wrote letters and journal articles, later published in a book that detailed their “phenomenal work.” In addition to her family foundation, Dolby was also equipped by her education at Manchester, where she was recognized for manifesting “a true spirit of devotion to her work.” She had diligently studied the Bible in college, excelling in the courses she took with biblical scholars, such as Emmanuel Hoff, who would go on to become one of the founders of Bethany Bible School. At Manchester, she grasped even more deeply the importance

of serving others in the spirit of Christ, particularly African Americans. Dolby's college training gave her the confidence to leave the relatively safe and prosperous Midwest and start a Sunday school in an impoverished Palestine, Arkansas.²⁶

The General Mission Board also charged

While Dolby did not shy away from taking over the reins in Arkansas, she realized the magnitude of her task, which was hampered by intense poverty and local racism, and the always pressing need for funding from Brethren to support her efforts.

Elder James May and his wife Susan with helping Mattie to start the church in Arkansas. James May had his own impressive Brethren credentials. He had been baptized by Samuel Weir, the patriarch of black Brethren in the nineteenth century and founder of the Frankfort congregation—perhaps the largest of black Brethren. May went on to become a minister at the black Circleville (OH) Brethren church and preached there for decades. He also served as an itinerant preacher in Ohio and possibly Indiana.²⁷

During their first weeks in Arkansas, Dolby published a letter in *The Missionary Visitor* that described how May preached with stamina, baptizing large numbers of local African Americans, and how he helped her organize the church. Shortly

after arriving there, she could hardly hold back her enthusiasm at what she felt was a positive start to their ministry. "I come with a heart full of praise," wrote Dolby, who went on to express her "great pleasure... concerning our work here."²⁸

Her optimism would be dampened when May returned to Ohio two weeks later, following his wife's death. Only twenty-six years old, Dolby was now in charge, though she was assisted by D. C. Clark, a local resident, who had been baptized by May before his early departure. Like her father, Clark was born in bondage on a Kentucky plantation and had migrated to Arkansas sometime after the Civil War. It is not clear what he was doing before Dolby and the Mays arrived. By one account, he appears to have worked as a photographer and a Sunday school teacher. Clark writes in *The Gospel Messenger* that after his Brethren baptism, he "set to work...studying the Bible, and the distinctive doctrines of the Brethren church." He goes on to write that he became devoted to doing his part in helping to establish the Brethren congregation in Palestine and has "been working at it ever since." Thus, Clark eventually filled the vacuum created by the departure of James May. With Clark, who knew Palestine and the surrounding area like the back of his hand, Mattie was able to build a thriving Sunday school that would soon go from three to thirty children.²⁹

While Dolby did not shy away from taking over the reins in Arkansas, she realized the magnitude of her task, which was hampered by intense poverty and local racism, and the always pressing need for funding from Brethren to support her efforts. Writing in *The Missionary Visitor*, she complained: "I have never seen the children more ignorant and uncultured than they were. They practically knew nothing of the Bible." Dolby explained that their lack of educational opportunities was encouraged, if not enforced, by local racist whites, which in turn main-

tained the impoverished living conditions of the local black community. After implying that local whites desired to keep African Americans as an ignorant, cheap source of labor, she reveals the miserable poverty that they experienced: “They are living on bread and molasses and will be glad to get plenty of that during the winter.”³⁰ Dolby had discovered a harsh reality in the South that until then she seems to have been unaware: as much as southern whites criticized African Americans for being supposedly ignorant, they often used political and social power to hold them down, keeping them on the lowest rung of the ladder, both to prevent competition and to maintain their own status. In short, ignorance was preferred if not mandated. Yet, undaunted, Dolby refused to be intimidated and persevered in her dogged work to help uplift this down-trodden community until she could write,

You ought to see them! I now have an enrollment of twenty-two children and as nice a little school as you have ever seen. They have proven me, beyond a doubt, that all they need is instruction...When I see how earnest and enthusiastic they are, and how much they seem to enjoy the work, it gives me more real enjoyment than anything I ever did before.³¹

Dolby went on to praise local African-American children and adults in other editions of *The Missionary Visitor* while also emphasizing their poverty and the obstacles they faced. One of the greatest obstacles she stressed throughout her time in Arkansas was the lack of funding to create adequate facilities for them and keep the missionary work going. While sincere in her praise of their accomplishments and her work there, part of the reason for this praise was to demonstrate to the broader Brethren community that the work in Palestine was making progress and was worth the effort to keep it going.

There is a sort of cadence that picks up in Dolby’s writings in *The Missionary Visitor* and *The Gospel Messenger*. She continually contrasts success with the need for greater commitment and resources from the church. The tone of her requests urging funding for her missionary work in Arkansas get more intense in the early fall of 1904: “All we need is a little help...why should not Brethren have a school (patterned after Booker T. Washington’s industrial model) of this kind?” Dolby pleaded, “We ask an interest in your time...We ask an interest in your means...We need your help—will you come to our rescue?” In another issue, she quotes Booker T. Washington, who declares, “What we most need is the money necessary to make the system effective. The indications are hopeful, not discouraging.” The next month, Dolby’s tone becomes more desperate: “We are here trying to do what little we can to advance the cause in this place, but we are in need of a church lot and building...we...ask an interest in your means...”

SHE explained that the “house in which we now hold our services is just weather-boarded (not sealed), and has a loosed, rough-board floor, in which the cracks are so large that the little children have to be careful to avoid getting their feet in them.” Hoping to inspire Brethren to commit more resources to the mission in Palestine, Dolby and D. C. Clark wrote a powerful appeal designed to strike at the Brethren conscience and loosen purse strings:

We appeal to you who are comfortably situated in good homes and whose tables are spread with an abundance of good things, we appeal to you, dear brethren and sisters, to divide your luxury money with God to be used for his poor, benighted, neglected, dark-skinned children in this place. Will you heed the call?³²

Dolby's fundraising efforts were partially successful. While she wrote in *The Gospel Messenger* in April 1905 that "two or three different times I used my last dime" to provide "food and clothing" for "those who were sick and needy," she praised "dear brethren and sisters" for contributing so "lib-

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erally and readily" to begin the construction of a church building. But Dolby stressed that the contributions were not enough to "complete the building," and she "kindly" requested "just a little more." Dolby and others advocating on her behalf, including the editorial board of *The Gospel Messenger*, managed to inspire more donations, which allowed them finally to build "a house of worship." Dolby kept on doing what she could with meager resources, including starting a "public school" in the church, even as she suffered from bouts of malaria that would send her back home for recovery and eventually force her back home for good. As work progressed, she touted the progress that Palestine children were making and years later, she would consider her mission a success that had transformed lives. *The Missionary Visitor* admired Dolby and her work, presenting her in heroic terms: "Sister Cunningham...is a loan woman of her race in Arkansas, standing up for the faith of Jesus Christ as believed in the high ideal of the Brethren church."³³

Dolby's vision for home missions targeted at African Americans extended beyond Palestine, Arkansas. While skillfully pleading for help for impoverished black residents, she, Clark, and *The Gospel Messenger* also advocated for greater Brethren involvement and commitment to missions for African Americans in general. "Much time, labor and money have been spent in foreign fields," she wrote, "yet we must not spend all of energies away from home to the neglect of the home field. Souls here are just as in need and just as precious in the sight of God as are any others." In another article, she and Clark asked for "an interest in your means that other workers may be prepared and sent out and other missions opened among the colored people" of the South. *The Gospel Messenger* strongly advocated that Brethren prepare African American teachers and missionaries for work in black communities in the South.³⁴

Since the latter-nineteenth century, the Brethren home mission had expanded to cities such as Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, and Chicago. Still, these missions appear to have been directed at whites, particularly white immigrants.³⁵ The Brethren church was also becoming increasingly interested in the foreign mission field in places like India and Turkey and would soon be hyper-focused on China. "This was an era of foreign missions in Protestant churches and the Brethren were aware of the foreign mission emphasis," wrote John Lowe Jr. in his 1970 thesis at Bethany Theological Seminary, titled, "The Racial Attitudes of the Church of the Brethren." A few years before sending Dolby and the Mays to Arkansas, the General Mission Board rejected a similar venture in Alabama but enthusiastically embraced ways to extend the church into the far reaches of the globe.³⁶ Even *The Missionary Visitor*, which was an advocate for home missions to African Americans, could not resist the excitement of the foreign mission field. Just a cursory glance through its

editions during these years reveals a fascination with exotic places and people, with its pages full of essays, reports, and photographs from those working in the foreign mission field.

Before Dolby: Landon West and “Our Appeal” for Home Missions

Dolby’s ongoing struggle to get enough resources for Palestine and expanding the mission field to southern African Americans was nothing new. Landon West had been reaching out to African Americans in Southern Ohio since the 1870s. He was an ardent advocate for a Brethren home missions directed toward African Americans in the South. West, called to the ministry in 1864, displayed a racial consciousness that was far ahead of his time. He was one of the white Brethren that had conducted the Love Feast ordination that made Samuel Weir the first black elder in the Brethren church, giving him “the oversight of the black Brethren of the Scioto Valley, Ohio,” and birthing the important Frankfort congregation.³⁷

West kept the drumbeat rolling for home missions to African Americans during these early years in several Brethren publications and in talks to congregations. In the 1890s, he issued a powerful and eloquent public statement titled, “Our Appeal,” asking for human and material resources “for eight millions of souls.” This appeal also betrays the church’s lack of commitment even in these years, as West explains that “the Mission Work among the colored people, has, by our church, been left for years almost entirely in my hands.” Despite his passion and efforts, he was competing with the rising Brethren interest in foreign missions, as Dolby would be years later. Although he made inroads into the African American communities in Ohio and brought the Brethren a few inches in the direction of black home missions, his appeal essentially went unheeded. West never tired of declaring the

need to make the Brethren church a welcoming place for African Americans, as well as reminding his contemporaries of the moral imperative to integrate these marginalized brethren into the religious and social fabric of the Brethren church family.³⁸

Speaking with a Black Voice: The Influence of African American Thinkers and Writers on Dolby

Dolby was an astute and thoughtful woman of her times, keenly aware of the rising currents of black thought and literary expression. She certainly adhered to the ideas of Booker T. Washington, who was the most popular black leader of the early-twentieth century. She believed that African Americans should build up from within their communities and that Washington’s “industrial, technical and manual” approach to training African Americans was a step in the right direction for a people who had so recently “come forth from a state of cruel bondage.” In *The Missionary Visitor*, Dolby advocated that Brethren not only step up home missions to blacks in the South but as part of that effort, they help create schools and training modeled after Washington’s Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. She also echoes Washington during this time in making bold public pleas for money from more privileged whites to advance the needs and interests of African Americans, even implying, like Washington, that whites had a moral responsibility to help.

For the most part, Dolby was no apologist for the perceived limitations of African Americans, as Washington could be at times, particularly in front of southern white audiences. Also, the editorial board of *The Gospel Messenger* sometimes spoke in racially degrading language, explaining to white readers that “when looking at colored men and women they impress us as being big children,” with whom “honesty and morality are not highly prized” because of slavery, in

its efforts to make a case for Brethren donations to a “colored home mission” to “help a race to rise from a low plane of religion and morality to a higher one.” Dolby often stressed the impoverished condition of African Americans in Palestine, but she also trumpeted their progress as well as the achievements of African Americans since slavery. She lambasted the racism that tried to hold them down. Interestingly, in the December 1904 edition of *The Missionary Visitor*, at a time when Dolby was contributing monthly, there appeared a statistical article on the “gratifying” progress of African Americans.³⁹

Dolby went further than just lauding the achievements of African Americans, however. She passionately reminded whites of the intrinsic value of her people. Appropriating the words of the outspoken black feminist, Mary Talbert, who like Dolby was an early black college graduate, she wrote:

As the hand of the dial of the nineteenth-century clock pointed to its last figure, it showed that the American Negro had ceased to be a thing, a commodity that could be bought and sold; but was indeed a human being, possessing all the qualities of mind and heart that belong to the rest of man-kind, capable of receiving education and imparting it to his fellow-man, able to think, act and feel, and develop those intellectual and moral qualities, such as characterize man-kind generally.⁴⁰

Dolby’s writing also reveals the influence of other black women activists and educators of her day, including college professor Josephine Yates and the antilynching crusader Ida B. Wells, particularly when her writing is oriented toward racial pride and dignity. It also appears that she was inspired by W. E. B. DuBois, who was often at odds with Booker T. Washington for advising blacks to forego higher education for training in the trades

and skilled manual labor. Dolby could support and advocate Washington’s manual training approach to economic and social uplift, but she also supported DuBois’s advocacy for “higher learning” and equal opportunity.⁴¹ In a tone that echoed DuBois, Mattie wrote that “the negro” should

not only have the same training (as whites) but that he should have more of it than the white man has. His education should be physical, moral, intellectual, social, industrial and political, and his educational processes should have the highest structural affinity with the educational processes of whites...⁴²

In another article, Mattie sounds like DuBois in his classic, *The Souls of Black Folk*, which had been out for about a year: “The history of the negro is the history of a downtrodden and neglected race. American boasts of her freedom and Christianity, but we, as American negroes, have known little but to be abused and misled.”⁴³ And DuBois (though male-centric): “The history of the American Negro is the history of...this longing to attain self-conscious manhood...He simply wishes to be both Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face.”⁴⁴

While Washington and DuBois generally represent two oppositional schools of thought regarding black advancement in the early twentieth century (manual training/foregoing political rights vs. higher education/advocating for political rights), Dolby’s synthesis of both reveals a reality that has only fairly recently been appreciated in historical scholarship: these views were not always incompatible with each other, ideologically or in practice, and were sometimes considered together as viable approaches for advancing and protecting African Americans in a Jim Crow society. Dolby appears to have been a

student of both, embracing them together as a combined approach for racial uplift.

Dolby certainly internalized these black voices of her day, so much so that in *The Missionary Visitor* she sometimes plagiarizes their writing word-for-word, or she changes their excerpts just slightly while making them her own. The quote from Mary Talbert used above is one example of appropriating an excerpt verbatim. This quote opens a larger piece that she wrote under her name for *The Missionary Visitor*, in November 1904, titled, "Our Need." Almost this entire essay is pieced together (skillfully and with flow) from the black writers and thinkers of her day lifted from a 1902 edited volume, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*. It moves from the words of Mary Talbert to Josephine Yates, to Professor J. H. Jones, to Professor Nathan B. King, and ends with a quote from Booker T. Washington, which, in his case, is appropriately credited to him.⁴⁵ While Dolby is obviously plagiarizing, which is problematic in any context, there is no reason to believe that she is not authentically taking the words on as her own. They speak deeply to her context and reflect her own thoughts and feelings. Moreover, her own personal writing is as thoughtful and well-written as those whom she admired and copied. Dolby may also be considered an intellectual in her own right, not only from her mastery of theology at Manchester and her own deep engagement with the black intellectual tradition of her day but also from her later study of Greek and the classics at Wilberforce College, where it appears she may have been an invited guest lecturer.⁴⁶ Her children remembered her as having an uncanny ability to know the answers to their questions with a vast reservoir of knowledge at her fingertips.⁴⁷ Importantly, the black voices of her day were rarely heard in the larger white world, which either ignored or invalidated them. Dolby is using her access to the Brethren world to mediate that voice to this

predominantly white religious community, to share these narratives that challenge the racist stereotypes that permeate much of white society, in hopes of transforming perception and inspiring them to action on behalf of African Americans in Palestine and throughout the South.

Dolby Returns to Ohio and Makes History

In early 1907, Dolby's ongoing vulnerability to malaria finally impacted her health to such a degree that she would have to leave Palestine for good. As a midwestern transplant, she was particularly vulnerable to the southern mosquito virus that took thousands of lives. She went back home to Russiaville, Indiana, and then joined James May in visiting "colored Brethren" in Frankfort, Washington Church, and Circleville, Ohio. Dolby soon began focusing on the teetering Frankfort Brethren congregation, located in Jeffersonville, Ohio. She went to work trying to revive this congregation, which over the years had lost so many members that the church had "gone down." The Frankfort church was where the ex-slave and first black Brethren elder and minister, Samuel Weir, had begun "working among the black population" and eventually started a congregation where he ministered until 1884.⁴⁸ Frankfort was also the area from where perhaps the important black Brethren emerged in the nineteenth century, such as Harvey and Martha Carter, and the itinerant preacher, James May. The latter worked with Dolby during the early days of the Palestine mission and now a close peer as she worked to rebuild the Frankfort church.⁴⁹

That same year, Dolby married Newton Dolby, who was an engineer at Wilberforce College in Xenia, Ohio—a flourishing school started by black and white abolitionists for African Americans—and with whom she would bear six children.⁵⁰ Newton's father, Wiley Dolby, was an ordained Brethren

minister before his death in 1905 and had been inspired to join the German Baptist Brethren by Landon West. Their marriage thus combined two of the earliest—and few—black Brethren families. After relocating to Wilberforce with her husband, together they made the thirty-mile trek every week

Just like she did in Palestine, she poured her heart into the Frankfort congregation.

back to Jeffersonville to rebuild the Frankfort congregation, including holding prayer meetings in local homes. Just like she did in Palestine, she poured her heart into the Frankfort congregation. She expressed in one letter how “the old members...have told me, with tears coursing down their cheeks, that they have heard more gospel teaching since I have been there than they have heard for years.” Dolby would continue to urge Brethren through *The Gospel Messenger* to assist the mission in Palestine as she also tried to motivate Brethren to help resurrect the Frankfort church. Shortly after arriving at the Frankfort church, she lobbied the regional and general mission boards to “support or partially support” the “mission... among the colored people...and do for us the best you can.” Perhaps reflecting her own feelings regarding her past struggles for resources in Palestine, she continued: “The colored people feel as though the Brethren care very little about them and have done very little for them anyway.” In response to Dolby’s eloquent and candid appeals, D. M. Garver of The Mission Board of the German Baptist Brethren of Southern Ohio wrote to Galen B. Royer of the General Mission Board in Elgin, Illinois, strongly advocating for the work she was doing and requesting financial support on her behalf. While it is

not clear if she received support, there is a good possibility that money was forthcoming since she and Newton were able to breathe life back into this congregation. Their efforts were certainly recognized in late 1907, less than a year after their marriage, when John Calvin Bright and Elder Samuel Horning, both church leaders in the southern Ohio district, visited the Frankfort congregation and “installed” the Dolbys “as deacons.” Bright reported in *The Gospel Messenger* how impressed he was with the devotion, energy, and eloquence of the members of the Frankfort congregation. He also gives a rare glimpse into Dolby’s congregation:

Some of these members had been slaves in the border States...while others were from the ‘Black Belt’ of the South, and know what it was to hear the crack of the lash, and felt its stinging cut. Indeed, at least one had helped his master to fasten the slaves into gangs of fifties and hundreds, and drive them down South to the slave market of the ‘Black Belt’—the dread of all slaves of the more northern states.⁵¹

However much financial assistance the Brethren were giving, they expressed their commitment to Dolby and the Frankfort congregation by taking an unprecedented step that would make church history. On December 31, 1911, during Love Feast at the Frankfort church, Mattie Dolby became not only the first woman installed as a minister or officially recognized as a minister but the first (and only) African American woman installed as a minister. Elders Jonas Horning and Sylvan Bookwalter of the southern Ohio district conducted Dolby’s unusual lying on hands ceremony. It had been close to seventy-five years since Annual Meeting sent a committee “to silence” the great Sarah Major from preaching.⁵² But now an African American woman was offi-

cially called by her peers to preach, something that only a few years earlier was probably unimaginable to most Brethren. It appears that Dolby would be the only woman installed at least until the early 1920s when Annual Conference decided to license women for the ministry.⁵³

Placing her accomplishment within a broader context during this time, African American women lived in a racist society where they had to contend with two major disadvantages: they were both black and female. They were, in this sense, doubly disempowered, an underprivileged status that reached back to slavery. This status made them vulnerable to white supremacy, which prevented them from mobility in a white patriarchal world. Yet in one corner of that white universe, Dolby had broken through that impenetrable white barrier, which was all but unheard of for a black woman in those times. Thus, while the Brethren were not as rigid in their racial views compared to mainstream white society, she had become an African American female minister in a ministerial field dominated mostly by privileged white men of German descent.⁵⁴

Sylvan Bookwalter announced Dolby's installation into the ministry in *The Gospel Messenger*. But in this announcement, he writes something very revealing regarding how, despite Dolby's acceptance into the white ministerial leadership, the color line sharply divided black and white Brethren. Bookwalter explains that Dolby "was installed into the ministry, that she might do more effective work among her own people." It appears that this color line was drawn from the beginning. In 1849, after Samuel Weir was installed as the first black minister, he was told to "go to his own race and hold meetings." Bookwalter's reference to African Americans as Dolby's "own people" also reveals a distinction between Brethren white and black that reached back to the days when Weir came into the church. Brethren accommodated African

Americans in the church to be sure, but they seemed to have preferred that black members remain apart from whites in segregated congregations such as the one at Circleville, Ohio, that began in the 1870s as well as in the Frankfort church. The 1955 history of the Brethren church in southern

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Ohio explains that after the Circleville church "disintegrated" in 1907, the church soon changed its "complexion," meaning that it became a white church, which underscores the reality that during this time, black and white churches had been normalized. As Dolby implied above, the impact of being treated as a struggling black outpost of a dominant white church was felt by many black Brethren who believed that the larger white body cared little for them.⁵⁵

Dolby ministered to the Frankfort church for close to five years. While the church appears to have experienced some growth during her time there, it could not compete with nearby Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church where much of the town's small black population attended. The membership remained small, and the

prospects for the church were dim. This reality likely made it a little easier for Dolby to make her next move when in 1915, the family relocated to Mt. Morris, Illinois, after Newton was offered a position as an engineer at the central heating plant at Mt. Morris College. A Brethren school started in 1879, Mt. Morris College was a small but flourishing liberal arts school. At one time, the town had boasted of being the literary center of the northwest when Illinois was on the far reaches of the frontier. By the time of the Dolby family's arrival, this was still a source of pride because of the college and the town's long history as a publishing community. There is not much accessible information about their time in Mt. Morris. While there, the Dolbys became members of Church of the Brethren in Mt. Morris, which had expanded from a small nearby country church called Silver Creek to holding services in the "commodious chapel" in town. It is possible that Dolby's ministerial experience and gifts found an outlet in this Brethren academic community. It is also interesting to consider that she and her family may have brought about integration in this Brethren church by their presence and participation. Curiously, it was not until she lived in Mt. Morris that the *Brethren Family Almanac* first included her name on its ministers' list (1916), though she had been a minister for about five years.⁵⁶

Two years later, in 1917, the family relocated again, this time to Urbana, Ohio, likely because Newton had gotten a new job there, perhaps at Urbana College, an institution inspired by Swedenborgian ideas that not only believed in racial equality, but that considered Africans an enlightened people.⁵⁷ While Urbana had a history as a progressive community, it also had a dark racist underbelly, like many other Ohio cities and towns. Two decades before Dolby's arrival, white residents had blasted their way into the local jail with guns to get to a black man named Charles Mitchell, who was accused

of sexually assaulting a white woman. The mob then tortured Mitchell before hanging him to death, after which they placed his battered body on public display for a day.⁵⁸ The shocking shootout and murder made national news. The trauma of this brutal public execution was certainly still deep in the memory bank of the small Urbana black community when the Dolby family arrived.

Dolby Leaves the Brethren: Journey to the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Church of God

Desiring to stay within the Brethren fold, the family attended the Springfield, Ohio, Church of the Brethren, located about twenty-five miles away from Urbana. They were likely the only black members in this traditionally white congregation, thus once again integrating another Brethren congregation. The family seemed to have found a church home there for almost seven years until a new church administration took over in 1924. According to the familiar narrative, it was shortly after this change that the Dolby family was told that they were no longer "welcome as before" and encouraged to "find a place of worship closer to home." There is no accessible information that can offer more insight into what happened at Springfield. The Dolby children would later "attribute racial prejudice as the motive behind this request." The pastor who took over in late 1924 was Samuel Z. Smith, an evangelist and church planter, but no sources reveal how he might have felt about the Dolby family's presence in his otherwise white congregation. Other factors may have had some influence. During this time, the Ku Klux Klan soared in membership nationally and was particularly strong in Ohio. There is a troubling photograph dated September 8, 1923, of a nighttime KKK march through the center of Springfield with onlookers dressed in suits and holding their hats in respect as the hooded procession passes

by. Such a racist climate in Springfield may have had a connection to what happened to the Dolbys the following year and certainly reveals that the town's Church of Brethren was not the only place where this black family was not welcome.⁵⁹

One can only imagine the hurt and humiliation the Dolbys felt to be treated as outcasts in their own church. At forty-six years old, Mattie Dolby had spent her life to that point in a Brethren tradition that was deeply part of her identity. To sever that connection for good required something egregious, as well as perhaps an accumulation of microaggressions inflicted by white Brethren. But rather than appealing their mistreatment or moving on to another Brethren congregation, the Dolbys essentially protested with their feet. They walked out of the Brethren church and through the doors of the welcoming St. Paul's A.M.E. Church in Urbana.⁶⁰

Sometime after joining the congregation in 1924, Dolby served in a ministerial capacity at St. Paul's, though it is not clear if she was ordained. This church provided a safer spiritual enclave, one where her family and all African American members would be treated with dignity away from the humiliating racism so dominant in most white Christian churches. The A.M.E. church emerged from a desire to be free from the white control of the Methodist Church and to have an institution in which the black religious imagination could shape and build. Dolby found a community at St. Paul's where her family's interests and needs were met, where they were welcome and sought after, and where they could have a voice in their affairs in community with others who shared similar experiences and goals. Some of Dolby's descendants would make their church home at St. Paul's A.M.E., including her granddaughter, who would write a history of the church.⁶¹

In 1926, only two years after joining St. Paul's, Newton Dolby died prematurely of a

heart attack. Dolby's friend and Manchester classmate, Otho Winger, now president of the college, came to Urbana to comfort the grieving family and gave Newton's eulogy. Without Newton, Dolby and her six children struggled hard to make ends meet, doing whatever they could while pooling

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their resources from odd jobs that some of the older children picked up. Barely able to survive and leaving St. Paul's behind, in 1928, the family left their home in Urbana and moved to a farm operated by Dolby's brother John Edmond Cunningham in Howard County, Indiana. Here Dolby lived for five years before going to Chicago, where her brother Joe worked as a doctor and where two of her older children had moved by that time.⁶² It appears that while there, Dolby may have attended an A.M.E. church in the city. Still suffering hardship, Dolby applied for a pension from the federal government, which was recorded in the *Congressional Record* in March of 1933. Submitting it on her behalf was Rep. Arthur Lamneck, a Democrat whose district included part of Columbus, Ohio. Dolby received some kind of "one-off" lump sum pension payment, but it is not clear how much she received or why she qualified.⁶³

In 1936, Dolby returned to Urbana with her two youngest children. But rather than returning to St. Paul's A.M.E. Church, she became a church planter and helped birth a congregation that would soon become the Hill Street Church of God. The budding congregation considered the experienced

Dolby as “God’s answer to our need.” Using her home in the early days as a makeshift church, she oversaw the congregation’s efforts to pool their resources to make a down payment eventually on a church building. Dolby worked closely with Louise Terry, an African American evangelist, to

She would soon become an ordained Church of God minister and nurtured teens and young adults, many of whom would go on to Anderson College, a Church of God school that today is Anderson University.

gain members through community outreach, and it was not long before the congregation had gained a reputation in the community “as the people who could get a prayer through.” She would soon become an ordained Church of God minister and nurtured teens and young adults, many of whom would go on to Anderson College, a Church of God school that today is Anderson University.⁶⁴

Despite the Church of God’s emphasis on “visible unity” and early attempts at integration, churches within the denomination were segregated, with white and black ones sometimes in the same town. This separation was the case with the church that Mattie Dolby helped start, even though there had been a white Church of God in Urbana since 1910. Once again, the color line ran through a church where she would make a significant contribution, and African Americans were relegated to “second-class stand-

ing” within the larger church. The merger of white and black congregations would not occur until the 1960s and 1970s, as would be the case when the black Hill Street Church of God merged with the white Northside Church of God in Urbana. In Dolby’s time, she served a flourishing black congregation that included many children, teens, and young adults who knew her affectionately as “Mother Dolby” or “Aunt Mattie.” Some of her own children and grandchildren were members of this church, including her youngest daughter Lula May and her husband, Albert Honoré, a New Orleans native, who would be Dolby’s protégé to take her place as minister at Hill Street. In her 1976 essay on Mattie Dolby, Mildred Hess Grimley recounts a story of how one night Dolby eased Albert out of a frightening panic attack where he felt enveloped in spiritual darkness and led him into the light of Christ and ultimately the ministry:

It was the dead of night and Albert awakened in great terror. Spiritual darkness was engulfing him. ‘I’m going to die,’ he wept to Lula May. ‘No you’re not,’ she cried. ‘Albert you’ve been fighting God too long... I’ll get Mama!’ Lula May ran next door and called her mother. Kneeling by the side of the bed, Mattie and Albert ‘prayed through’ until morning. Albert arose ‘a new man in Christ Jesus.’⁶⁵

In 1951, Dolby was in a serious car accident where she sustained injuries that would require two operations over the next few years. A year later, her sister Eva was also in a car accident and died from her injuries, followed the next two years by the deaths of her brothers John and Will. Dolby continued to minister as much as she could, working through physical pain, depression, and exhaustion. Finally, not long after her second operation in 1956, Mattie Dolby

passed away at the age of seventy-seven. She was laid to rest beside her husband, Newton, in the Oak Dale Cemetery in Urbana, Ohio.⁶⁶

MATTIE Dolby was a pioneer in the Church of the Brethren and an empowered woman of her times. As a black woman in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century America, where African Americans were severely proscribed by racist boundaries and where women were repressed by patriarchy, she transgressed those boundaries with remarkable skill and determination. A rural farm girl, Dolby achieved higher education in a white Brethren institution against the protests of her patriarchal father and the exclusionist orientation of the larger world of white male-centric academia; she became a successful black missionary in the South and an ardent lobbyist for white funding; and she made history as the first woman installed as minister in a traditionally white church whose ministerial leadership was completely dominated by males—and this eleven years before women would be licensed as ministers in the Church of the Brethren.

While she reflected Brethren humility in her life and work, Dolby used her pen to speak with a clear and critical voice about the poverty and indignities suffered by African Americans, and the need for whites to

commit more of their hearts and resources to help uplift impoverished African Americans. She also echoed the black writers and thinkers of her day, such as Mary Talbert, Josephine Yates, W. E. B. Dubois, and Booker T. Washington, who provided her with a bridge to a black intellectual tradition that was sorely missing from her white religious context, and she tried to extend that bridge into the Brethren world through her writing. And while that world made some attempts to confront its biases, it was still susceptible to some of the prejudices of the larger white culture, which was interwoven with their own. This prejudice likely hindered any robust outreach to African Americans. As Caleb Kragt stressed in his recent essay, “Desegregating the Body of Christ,” the “tolerated entrance” of African Americans “into the Brethren tradition was followed by considerable disconnection.”⁶⁷ Long before Dolby and her family were asked to leave the Springfield church, she certainly understood—and felt—this disconnection, but perhaps hoped that her home church would move further along in the ways she was pushing it to do. Sadly, it appears that her church, at least the Springfield congregation, ultimately resisted by pushing her out of its doors instead. ♦

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1. Special thanks to Jeanine Wine and the Manchester University Archives and Brethren Historical Collection at Funderberg Library. Jeanine graciously answered all my endless requests for information and never lost patience with my flurry of questions. She perhaps knows more about Mattie Dolby than anyone in the Brethren world and this essay would not have been possible without her guidance. I also want to express thanks to the late Mildred Hess Grimley for her groundbreaking essay, “Mattie Dolby: No Sound of Trumpet,” which appeared in *Messenger* in 1976. I stood on her shoulders to write this essay.
2. “Richard Cunningham.” This manuscript was prepared by a family “History Committee” consisting of Margaret Dolby Williams, Kathleen Cunningham Williams, and Myrtle Pettiford Cunningham in June 1958.” It is posted by a family descendant, Germar Reed (<https://www.cunningham-reed.com/blog/richard-cunningham>) (Accessed June 10, 2020). And “A (Cunningham) Family History,” in Manchester University Archives and Brethren Historical Collection.
3. “Richard Cunningham.”
4. Jackson Marrow, *History of Howard County, Indiana, Vol. I* (Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Co., 1909), 346.
5. “Richard Cunningham,” ms.
6. “Richard Cunningham,” ms; Jeanine Wine to Nick Patler, email, August 24, 2020.

7. Mildred Hess Grimley, "Mattie Dolby: No Sound of Trumpet," *Messenger* (1976): 16; Margaret Plummer to S. L. Smith (Manchester University), July 8, 2002, and Rolland F. Flory, "A Christian Family and an Early Student of Manchester College," Newsletter, August 1969, in Manchester University Archives and Brethren Historical Collection.
8. Scott Jaschik interview with Stephanie Y. Evans about her book, *Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850–1954: An Intellectual History, Inside Higher Ed*, June 21, 2007 (<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/06/21/black-women-ivory-tower>) (Accessed April 5, 2020).
9. Controversy had been stirring for a while in the church over higher education for Brethren men and women. Conservative members were cautious of educating Brethren at colleges because they believed intellectual training led to worldliness which would severely compromise the spirituality of the church and weaken the denomination. Progressive members viewed the creation of Brethren schools as vital to the growing thirst for higher education among young Brethren, as with Americans in general, and that having their own schools would provide education while maintaining the church's values. These progressives forged ahead and started Brethren colleges. See Stephen L. Longenecker, *The Brethren During the Age of World Wars: The Church of the Brethren Encounter with Modernization, 1914–1950* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 2006), xxviii–xxix, and O. C. Sollenberger, "Relief as It Will Help Evangelism," *Star of Cathay* (Elgin, IL: Church of the Brethren) Spring 1944, 17–19.
10. Donald F. Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine: A History of the Brethren, 1708–1995* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1997), 260–61; Russell V. Bollinger, et. al., *Manchester College: The First Seventy-Five Years* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1964), 35.
11. Nick Patler, *Jim Crow and the Wilson Administration: Protesting Federal Segregation in the Early Twentieth Century* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2007), 77–78.
12. Patler, *Jim Crow and the Wilson Administration*, 77; Crystal Mikell Reynolds, "A History of the African American Student Experience at Indiana State University, 1870–1975," unpublished paper, Special Collections, Indiana State University, 2. Mattie Dolby's friend, Nelly Rainey, would attend Bethany Bible School (today Bethany Theological Seminary) in 1905–06.
13. Bollinger, et.al., *Manchester College*, 36; Otto Winger, *History of the Church of the Brethren in Indiana* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Publishing House, 1917), 273–74.
14. Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 265; John William Lowe Jr., "The Racial Attitudes of the Church of the Brethren, 1708–1970" (Unpublished MA Thesis, Bethany Theological Seminary, 1970), 36; *Minutes of the Annual Meetings of the Church of the Brethren (1908)*, 207.
15. Annemarie R. Hartzell, "Men of War, Men of Peace: Brethren Ideologies and the Civil War," *History: Student Scholarship and Creative Work*, Elizabethtown College, 14.
16. Caleb Kragt, "Desegregating the Body of Christ," *Brethren Life & Thought* (Fall/Winter, 2018–2019): 31; Lowe Jr., "The Racial Attitudes," 24–35; Hartzell, "Men of War, Men of Peace," 14.
17. Kermon Thomason, "Black Brother," *Messenger* (June 1977): 31, 32.
18. Jesse R. Garst, *History of the Church of the Brethren in the Southern District of Ohio* (Dayton, Ohio: Otterbein Press, 1921), 154–55. In his recent groundbreaking essay, "Desegregating the Body of Christ," Caleb Kragt stresses that "despite our best theology as captured in statements going as far back at the Civil War—the majority of the congregations of the church of the Brethren look like we are a segregated institution..." p. 31.
19. Jeanine Wine, "Mattie Cunningham Dolby, 1878–1956," unpublished manuscript, Funderburg Library, Manchester University Archives and Brethren Historical Collection. Jeanine Wine is an archivist at Funderburg Library, Manchester University, and has a passionate interest in Mattie Dolby. She has diligently compiled much information on Dolby to create a solid biographical manuscript, including rare photographs. She also put together a printed display of Dolby's life and work; Margaret Plummer to S. L. Smith (Manchester University), July 8, 2002, Manchester University Archives and Brethren Historical Collection; Grimley, "Mattie Dolby," 16; Elizabeth Hendrix, "Two Who Endured," *North Manchester Historical Society Newsletter*, November 1991.
20. Grimley, "Mattie Dolby," 16; Hendrix, "Two Who Endured."
21. Grades from Mattie Cunningham, Manchester College Student Records; and Wine, "Mattie Cunningham Dolby, 1878–1956," Manchester University Archives and Brethren Historical Collection.
22. Photographs in Jeanine Wine, "Mattie Cunningham Dolby, 1878–1956"; and Gregory Bond to S. L. Smith (Manchester University), January 23, 2002, in Manchester University Archives and Brethren Historical Collection.
23. Patler, *Jim Crow and the Wilson Administration*, 37.
24. Mattie Cunningham, "Mattie Cunningham, of Palestine, Ark., Sends in a Good Report from Her Field," *The Missionary Visitor* (March 1906): 180.
25. Jeanine Wine, "Mattie Cunningham Dolby, 1878–1956"; Mattie Cunningham, "Colored Mission in Palestine, Arkansas," Annual Report, 22–23, in Manchester University Archives and Brethren Historical Collection; Mattie Cunningham, "Arkansas Colored Mission," *The Missionary Visitor* (October 1904):

- 425; Forrest City, Arkansas," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forrest_City,_Arkansas) (Accessed May 21, 2020); "A Negro Lynched," *Daily Public Ledger* (May 22, 1894).
26. Jeanine Wine, "Mattie Cunningham Dolby, 1878–1956"; Cunningham, "Colored Mission in Palestine, Arkansas," Annual Report, 22–23; "Bible Study Notes," undated, in Manchester University Archives and Brethren Historical Collection; Durnbaugh, 397.
 27. Wine, "Mattie Cunningham Dolby, 1878–1956"; Thomason, "Black Brother," 31.
 28. Mattie Cunningham, "From Palestine, Ark.," *The Missionary Visitor* (September 1904): 402.
 29. D. C. Clark, "Palestine Mission—Past and Present," *The Gospel Messenger* (May 19, 1906): 315.
 30. Mattie Cunningham, "Negro Children of Palestine, Arkansas," *The Missionary Visitor* (October 1904): 429; Grimley, "Mattie Dolby," 18.
 31. Mattie Cunningham, "Negro Children of Palestine, Arkansas," *The Missionary Visitor* (October 1904): 429–431.
 32. Grimley, "Mattie Dolby," 18; Mattie Cunningham, "Negro Children of Palestine, Arkansas" (October 1904); "Our Need" (November 1904); "Home Life of the Colored People in the South" (December 1904), all in *The Missionary Visitor*.
 33. Grimley, "Mattie Dolby," 18; Messenger editorial, "Home Missions," *The Missionary Visitor* (December 1904): 530; Mattie Cunningham, "Palestine Colored Mission, Ark.," *The Gospel Messenger* (December 2, 1905): 773; Mattie Cunningham, "From Palestine, Arkansas," *The Gospel Messenger* (February 17, 1906): 112; Visitor editorial, "Mattie Cunningham, of Palestine, Ark., Sends in a Good Report from Her Field," *The Missionary Visitor* (March 1906): 180; "Manchester College Alumna, Martha Cunningham Dolby," unedited manuscript, in Manchester University Archives and Brethren Historical Collection.
 34. Mattie Cunningham, "Negro Children of Palestine, Arkansas," *The Missionary Visitor* (October 1904): 431; Mattie Cunningham and D. C. Clark, "Home Life of the Colored People in the South," *The Missionary Visitor* (December 1904): 514; "The Colored Children," *The Gospel Messenger* editorial (July 1906): In its advocacy of training African American teachers and missionaries to go South rather than whites, *The Gospel Messenger* believed that black teachers and pastors would be able to navigate racism better than whites teaching black children and families because it would not provoke white resistance.
 35. Stephen L. Longenecker, *The Brethren During the Age of World Wars: The Church of the Brethren Encounter with Modernization, 1914–1950* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 2006), xxxi.
 36. Lowe, "Racial Attitudes," 59, 61.
 37. Thomason, "Black Brother," 31; "West, Edmund Landon," Donald Durnbaugh, ed., *Brethren Encyclopedia*, 1332.
 38. Landon West, "Our Appeal," emailed by Andrew Pankratz, Brethren Historical Archives, Elgin, IL.
 39. Mattie Cunningham and D. C. Clark, "His Life of the Colored People in the South," *The Missionary Visitor* (December 1904): 514; Messenger editorial, "The Colored Mission," *The Gospel Messenger* (May 20, 1905): 315.
 40. Mattie Cunningham, "Our Need," *The Missionary Visitor* (September 1904): 482–484; "The Colored Children," *The Gospel Messenger* (July 1, 1905): 411.
 41. W. E. B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1983), 52.
 42. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 52.
 43. Mattie Cunningham, "Negro Children of Palestine, Arkansas," *The Missionary Visitor* (October 1904): 429.
 44. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 4.
 45. Daniel Wallace Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature* (Naperville, IL: J.C. Nicholls & Co., 1902), 17, 23, 120; Mattie Cunningham, "Our Need," *The Missionary Visitor* (November 1904): 482–483.
 46. Wine, "Mattie Cunningham Dolby, 1878–1956"; Grimley, "Mattie Dolby," 19.
 47. Grimley, "Mattie Dolby," 19.
 48. Mattie Cunningham to Bro. Royer, March 4, 1907, in Manchester University Archives and Brethren Historical Collection; Durnbaugh, "Frankfort, OH, Church of the Brethren," *Brethren Encyclopedia*, 506; Wine, "Mattie Cunningham Dolby, 1878–1956."
 49. Interestingly, Fayette County, like so many other places in Ohio, had been a major route on the Underground Railroad and was buzzing with activity when Weir arrived there in 1849.
 50. Newton and Mattie's children from oldest to youngest were Richard, Margaret, Theodore, Alta, Elizabeth, and Lulu May.
 51. Mattie Cunningham to Bro. Royer, March 4, 1907, and E. M. Garver to Eld. Galen B. Royer, March 5, 1907, in Manchester University Archives and Brethren Historical Collection; Mattie Cunningham, "From Mattie Cunningham," *The Gospel Messenger* (February 9, 1907): 91; John Calvin Bright, "A Prayer Meeting with the Colored Brethren," *The Gospel Messenger* (January 14, 1908): 43; Durnbaugh, "Dolby, Martha Cunningham," and "Dolby, Wiley" *Brethren Encyclopedia*, 395.
 52. Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 380.

53. Wine, "Mattie Cunningham Dolby, 1878–1956"; Augustus Waldo Drury, *History of the City of Dayton and Montgomery County, Ohio* (Dayton: The S. J. Clarke Pub. Co., 1909), 710; earliest female Brethren ministers, see Dean Garrett to Nicholas Patler, email, August 13, 2020. One other woman may have been serving informally as an assistant pastor around 1913. Dean Garrett writes that Martha Keller served informally as a pastor with her husband David Keller at the West Dayton Church of the Brethren (1913 to 1916) and was officially licensed in 1924.
54. Patler, *Jim Crow and the Wilson Administration*, 28.
55. Sylvan Bookwalter announcement, *The Gospel Messenger*, January 13, 1912; Garst, *History of the Church of the Brethren in the Southern District of Ohio*, 154; H. H. Helman, ed., *Church of the Brethren in Southern Ohio* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Publishing House, 1955), 129; "Black Brethren," Inclusion of Ethics into the Church of the Brethren: 1989 Church of the Brethren Statement: Church of the Brethren Annual Conference (<http://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1989-inclusion-of-ethnics.html>) (Accessed August 3, 2020). Dolby's installation as pastor may not have posed the same challenge as would the prospect of a white female pastor, since her installation occurred outside of the mainstream church body in a segregated group, not posing a threat to the white majority dominated by males. In short, it did not threaten gender boundaries because it occurred outside of the dominant group.
56. Garst, *History of the Church of the Brethren in the Southern District of Ohio*, 155; Helman, *Church of the Brethren in Southern Ohio*, 249; "Certificates of Membership, Mt Morris," Springfield Church of the Brethren Box, Brethren Heritage Center; Wine, "Mattie Cunningham Dolby, 1878–1956"; "Mount Morris College, Mount Morris, Illinois, 1839–1932" (<https://www.lostcolleges.com/mount-morris-college>) (Accessed July 10, 2020); "The Village of Mt. Morris" (<http://mtmorrisil.net/history/#:~:text=The%20Rock%20River%20Seminary%20was,of%20the%20dignified%20little%20Village.>) (Accessed July 10, 2020); *Brethren Family Almanac* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Publishing Co., 1916), 86. Mt. Morris College flourished with literary societies, a debate team, a glee club, and college orchestra, as well as competitive basketball and football teams. The college would eventually merge with Manchester College.
57. Robert William Rix, "Carl Bernhard Wadstrom, (1746–1799)" (<https://brycchancarey.com/abolition/wadstrom.htm>) (Accessed July 19, 2020).
58. "The Tragedy at Urbana," *The Indianapolis News* (June 5, 1897).
59. Wine, "Mattie Cunningham Dolby, 1878–1956;" Grimley, "Mattie Dolby"; "Members of the Ku Klux Klan parading at night in Springfield, Ohio, on September 8, 1923," Photograph, The Ohio History Connection, SC 2722.
60. St. Paul's congregation dates back to the 1820s, making it one of the oldest A.M.E. churches in the Midwest. Benjamin W. Arnett, who served as pastor from 1876 to 1905, was also an Ohio state legislator who led efforts to repeal the state's draconian Black Codes. See "Benjamin W. Arnett: African Methodist Episcopal Church," Ohio Central (https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/African_Methodist_Episcopal_Church?rec=571) (Accessed July 9, 2020).
61. Nicholas Patler, "A Human Rights Movement on the Frontier: Building an Underground Railroad Community in Wayne County, Indiana, 1820–1850" (MA thesis, Bethany Theological Seminary, 2015), 215–216; "Shelia Jean Clay," Obituary, *Springfield News-Sun* (February 10, 2009).
62. "Richard Cunningham," ms; Grimley, "Mattie Dolby," 19; "A Family History: Cunningham-Reed," in Manchester University Archives and Brethren Historical Collection.
63. H.R. 900, Seventy-Third Congress, First Session, *Congressional Record* (March 9, 1933) 102; History of Bills and Resolutions, Senate Bills, p. 336; email correspondence, Dr. Lee A. Craig, Department of Economics, North Carolina State University, to Nick Patler, August 2, 2020. Dr. Craig is an expert on the history of pensions in the U.S.
64. Church of God Yearbook 1949, 1954 (Anderson, IN: Clergy Bureau of the Church of God); Lulu Honore, "History of the Hill Street Church of God," Northside Church of God, Urbana, Ohio, 1910–1980. The black Hill Street church merged with the white Northside Church. Also, Lulu Honore, who wrote this short history, is Mattie Dolby's daughter.
65. Rufus Barrow Jr., *Making Good the Claim: Holiness and Visible Unity in the Church of God Reformation Movement* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016), xi, xiv, xvii; Honore, "Northside Church of God"; Grimley, "Mattie Dolby," 20; Albert Honore obituary, *Springfield News-Sun* (January 31, 2008).
66. Wine, "Mattie Cunningham Dolby, 1878-1956;" "A Family History: Cunningham-Reed."
67. Kragt, "Desegregating the Body of Christ," 32.