"Not Lip Service, but Life Service"
Growing Up in Monmouth

In many ways Maurice McCrackin's upbringing was not unusual.\(^1\) Like many of his contemporaries born at the turn of the century in small Midwestern towns, he came from a close-knit family bound together by a common Christian faith. The McCrackins worked hard and did without frills. But another strand was woven into this conventional cloth. McCrackin's family, although accepted and respected within the community, also set itself apart as somewhat more determined or more pious or more active than most. As one townsperson put it, "The Findleys and the McCrackins were a peculiar bunch. Well thought of, but peculiar."\(^2\)

There was no father in the household. Robert McCrackin had died of tuberculosis when his younger son, Maurice, was only three. His death put responsibility for raising the three children on their mother, Elizabeth Findley McCrackin. A bright, well-educated woman who could read the Bible in Greek, she supported the family at first by teaching. But it was her quiet, loving presence that sustained them--that and stories of their father and other members of the large extended family surrounding them.

Maurice McCrackin's eventual involvement in the civil rights and human freedom movement had deep roots in his family's historical commitment to Christianity, as interpreted by Presbyterianism, and in his forebears' involvement with Christian service, abolitionism, and the Underground Railroad. Both sides of the family had originally settled in the hills of southern and eastern Ohio. The McCrackins had lived in Ross County, near the town of Chillicothe, since the early 1800s. Most were farmers, though some were merchants and others teachers. On his mother's side, the Findleys and the Walkers lived near New Concord and Cambridge, Ohio. When Maurice was a child, his mother told him stories about her two grandfathers, who had stations on the Underground Railroad in the forested hills of east-central Ohio. Maurice was fond of telling this story:

One of my great-grandfathers had a $500 bounty on his head. He narrowly escaped having a runaway slave discovered in his house. My other great-grandfather, who was a doctor, once almost walked into a death trap when he was asked to go late at night far into the hills to visit a very sick patient. He sensed danger and didn't go. The next day he discovered that an ambush had been planned and no such place or person existed.\(^3\)

From earliest childhood, Maurice was nourished by such stories of heroism, sacrifice, and service.
By the end of the nineteenth century, Maurice's maternal grandfather, James Findley, had migrated to western Illinois. There he and his wife raised their five children on a rented farm. Findley did well enough to send all of his children to college before he retired and moved into town. In the meantime, several of the Findley children moved back to Ohio and began their careers near relatives there. One of them, Elizabeth, would eventually marry Robert McCrackin and start the family that Maurice was born into.

As a young woman, Elizabeth Findley taught the classical languages at the South Salem Academy in Ross County, Ohio, where her sister Mary was also a teacher and her brother Willis was principal. Two other brothers, Samuel and John, were ministers. One served for a time as minister at the Presbyterian church in Bainbridge, Ohio, before moving to a church in Chicago, while the other became a campus chaplain at Purdue University. Willis too dreamed of serving as a missionary teacher and soon left the South Salem Academy to establish a boys' school in Bogota, Colombia. En route, however, he contracted yellow fever and quickly succumbed. He died on August 21, 1889, at the age of twenty-four. Willis, the uncle Maurice never knew, was buried along the banks of Colombia's Magdalena River, a symbol of unfilled missionary zeal.

The parents of these five accomplished and idealistic teachers and ministers, Maurice's maternal grandparents, had possessed a deep commitment to the work of the church. The Findleys were temperance workers, Sarah a close friend and co-worker of Frances E. Willard, the famed temperance campaigner, and James a consistent opponent of the liquor interests in his county. For his zeal in keeping the county dry, the elder Findley was heartily disliked by a number of neighbors, and once in the heat of a temperance campaign someone burned his hay stack. Not only did this grandfather serve as a role model for righteous advocacy, but he also encouraged the fullest development of his daughters, Elizabeth and Mary, who were to nurture Maurice and encourage him later in his own brand of Christian activism.

In this context, Elizabeth, called Bessie, and Robert H., called Bob, established their own family. They had met on a croquet court at the South Salem Academy when Bessie was sixteen and still a student. Years later, after she and Bob had graduated from Monmouth College in Illinois and Bessie had begun her teaching career, they were married and set up a home in the Ross County settlement of Storms Station. Their first child, Julia, was born in 1899. A child who died in infancy, called "Little Mary," followed a year later. In 1903 Robert was born, and their last child, Maurice, was born on December 1, 1905.

Maurice's birthplace in southeastern Ohio is located in an area once home to the prehistoric Hopewell Indians, who constructed elaborate burial mounds--including the world-famous Serpent Mound--in the nearby Paint Creek Valley. At the turn of the century, when the McCrackins lived there, few vestiges of the Indian culture remained save for these mysterious and largely unexplored mounds. Storms Station was little more than a railroad stop. There Bob McCrackin leased a grain elevator, served as local postmaster, and operated a general store. Six months after Maurice's birth, the family moved a few miles away to the town of Greenfield in Highland County, where they also remained only a short time. Bob McCrackin was suffering from respiratory problems, compounded by a deep sense of melancholy. His wife was worried about how the family could be supported during her husband's illness. So, in 1907, when Maurice was one and a half years old, his family moved from Ohio to Normal, Illinois, to be closer to the Findley grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

In the town of Normal, Maurice's father again rented a grain elevator, although the work almost certainly aggravated his illness. After just a year there, when Maurice was three, Bob McCrackin died of tuberculosis. He was forty-one years old. Bessie McCrackin also contracted
consumption, but survived after a lengthy convalescence. Her faith undaunted and her determination strengthened, she wanted to raise the children in the kind of surroundings they would have had if their father had been with them. Throughout their childhood, Julia, Bob, and Maurice heard her talk of "Papa" so frequently that they grew up thinking of him as a living person who would have appreciated their good marks in school and praised them for any acts of kindness they might report.

Following her husband's death, Bessie took her family from Normal back to Monmouth, not far from where she was born and raised, moving in at first with her parents, Sarah and James, and her unmarried older sister, Mary. Mary, as the principal of the Monmouth High School, played an important role in the children's lives as she became their mother's confidante and companion. Somewhat sterner than Bessie, Mary nevertheless loved contests and games. Both women were firmly committed to the social gospel and the working out in their daily lives of the great precepts of Christianity. They were avid readers and witty conversationalists, warm and adventuresome, each in her own way. Now the children had two energetic women to laugh at their pranks and make sure they ate all the vegetables on their plates.

For several years after returning to Monmouth, Bessie worked as a substitute teacher, leaving her children in the care of their grandparents. Eventually she decided that this arrangement put too much responsibility on her aging mother. She needed to find some way to earn a living and yet be at home most of the time with her children.

Though Monmouth in the first decade of the century could hardly be called cosmopolitan, it was a comfortable, cultured college town where retired ministers and Presbyterian missionary families on furlough lived comfortably on their small stipends. In 1910, with a population of around eight thousand people, Monmouth supported five Presbyterian churches, each with its own personality and emphasis. Maurice's family attended the First Presbyterian Church, later called Grace Presbyterian, which was the only United Presbyterian church among the group.

Some of Maurice McCrackin's earliest memories reveal the feelings he always associated with church: "We would sit in pew 19, on the south side of the sanctuary. Sometimes I would go to sleep, my head in my mother's lap and my feet on the lap of my grandfather. In those early years of church-going I don't remember much of what was said. Probably little was said that I understood. But I will never forget how I felt in the quiet and reverent atmosphere. I can still feel the solemn awe that came over me as our minister read the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper. His voice carried such tender compassion and love that the mood he inspired has never completely left me."4

As Maurice grew older, he became increasingly involved in the church activities—attending Sunday School, where he learned to recite the names of the books of the Bible in order, performing with his cousins on the violin, and taking part in the Christian Endeavor, an interdenominational organization for young people to encourage fellowship and service. What he remembered most was the wonderful singing and hymns ranging from "I'll Be a Sunbeam for Jesus" to "Love Lifted Me," "A Volunteer for Jesus," and "Onward Christian Soldiers." Young Maurice was always most conscious of the spirit of God when he sang as part of a group.

With its gracious tree-lined streets and comfortable frame houses, Monmouth came as close to matching the nostalgic notion of the "good old days" as any town in the Midwest could. Wyatt Earp, the famous lawman of the Old West, was born there, and Ronald Reagan lived there for one year of his peripatetic childhood. The Reagan family, parents Jack and Nelle with children Neil and Ronald, lived several blocks away from the McCrackins, from 1918 to 1919. Young Ronald attended second grade at Central School, the same school Maurice had attended.
some years before. Reagan's limited memories of Monmouth focus on the Armistice celebrations and include "parades, the torches, the bands, the shootings and the drunks and the burning of Kaiser Bill in effigy." The selective filter of McCrackin's memory ignores the Great War, except for the fact that two cousins stayed with his family while their father served as a chaplain overseas.

Chautauqua performances were popular in Monmouth. Lecturers and performers arrived in town by train and set up large tents for a week of presentations, bringing excitement and entertainment in an era before television and movies. William Jennings Bryan, the famous orator and populist politician, came to town, as did handbell ringers and other assorted acts. Children did odd jobs to earn the price of admission, which was ten cents.

Tent evangelists also came to town, and Maurice was often in the audience, more attracted to the preachers who emphasized love and service than those who threatened hellfire and brimstone. He was especially moved by the singing of hymns like "Nearer My God to Thee" and "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

Monmouth College, from which both of Maurice's parents had graduated, was the intellectual and social nucleus of the town. Female students lived in the college dormitories, but male students had to find food and lodging on their own. It was common for Monmouth families to take them in. It struck Bessie that if she took in boarders, she could give up teaching and earn a modest living at home without leaving her young children. For a few years she did so, in her small rented house. Then she and her children moved into the larger Xi Delta fraternity house. Located a block away from the college, most of the house served the fraternity members. Young Bob and Maurice slept near the college students on the third floor. Their mother served as housemother and cook to as many as twenty lodgers and forty boarders at a time.

With chickens in the back yard, students serenading the passersby from the upstairs balcony, and innumerable comings and goings, the fraternity house was a lively place. Maurice was happy there. In later years he still remembered the large coal-burning stove with its self-contained water-heating tank and the prominent slogan "From Kalamazoo Straight to You." In particular he remembered the immense breakfasts his mother prepared on that stove, scrambled eggs or waffles kept warm in the oven until enough had been made for the boarders. Washing the dishes was Maurice's responsibility, and in later years he jokingly excused his avoidance of dish detail by claiming that he had done a lifetime of dishwashing in those early years.

The children's upbringing was rigorous. The Sabbath was kept holy--no work or loud horseplay was permitted. To circumvent this rule, Bob and Maurice had a secret cubbyhole above the staircase where they retreated to read the funny papers given to them by a family friend. The children were to be quiet, but they could play such games as Parcheesi, Flinch, Rook, and Old Maid. On Sunday evenings the extended family group--mother, aunt, grandparents, and children--gathered at the Findley home for prayer and their favorite Bible verse game. Sitting in a circle in the dim light of dusk, each would get a turn at reciting a Bible verse. The first person would quote a verse beginning with the letter a, and so on through the alphabet. Maurice liked his turn to fall on j because its corresponding verse was so short: "Jesus wept."

In contrast to the quiet Sundays, all members of the McCrackin clan were kept busy during the week with various jobs. Maurice earned extra money by mowing lawns. He usually earned fifty cents a lawn and was especially delighted when several people in a row of houses hired him because he could race across their lawns, cut three at a time, and finish in a hurry. He also delivered the Monmouth Review, a route that took two hours a day and earned him $1.25 a week.
During these years Maurice also had plenty of time to play and, with best friend Ralph Davies, called Red, to get into a bit of mischief. For instance, on the way to school they were known to dig up a few turnips from Farmer Stewart's garden. Once they got caught at it and had to apologize. On another occasion Maurice and Red were arguing during class. Maurice accused Red of saying something, and Red whispered a bit too loudly, "No, I didn't." "Yes, you did," piped Maurice in full voice, bringing the classroom lesson to a standstill. The teacher, Miss Jane McConnell, called them both rude, and made them apologize in front of the class. Red said, "I am sorry for being rude." Maurice, who did not feel particularly sorry, said, "Me, too." But Miss McConnell made him deliver a full apology: "I am sorry for being rude." Brother Bob kidded Maurice for years about this incident, later addressing letters to him as "Rude" or "Rudolph."

Another story, fondly remembered, involves the time Maurice, Bob, and one of their cousins played in a small orchestra for a church service. They dared one another to play a popular tune as prelude, and at least one woman in the congregation caught on and chided them that “Will the Chewing Gum Keep Its Flavor on the Bedpost Overnight?” did not belong in church. Later the Reverend Arnold teased the group about the "discord in the violin section."

Maurice and his older brother Bob had a close relationship cemented by a shared sense of what was expected of them. If Bob’s teasing pushed Maurice to the point of frustration, rather than have the younger boy run to their mother, Bob would lie down on the floor and let Maurice pummel him with his fists until he had vented all of his frustration and the two were laughing once again.

Love for his mother motivated Maurice as well and kept him from doing anything like cheating at school. Being the youngest, he probably drew out his mother's tenderest feelings. He remembered her reading to him from *Youth's Companion* and Ralph Conner's books for boys—all inspirational and highly moralistic. In the winter all the children sat near the register for warmth, and sometimes Bessie would let Maurice comb out her long hair, the sparks flying as friction built up in the dry air. Only once did he worry that his mother had deserted him. He recalls the time when she was very late in returning from shopping, and he was stricken with panic. He stood at the edge of the front window so as to see past the corner and toward town. He was beside himself with worry when suddenly he saw her climbing the hill past the college. With a sigh of relief he rushed out the front door to greet her, never mentioning how worried he had been.

When Maurice was in high school, his mother inherited enough money from an Ohio relative, Aunt Lizzie, to purchase a large house on the corner just opposite the college and two doors away from the fraternity house where they had been living. Now she could take in fewer students and do less cooking. She would also have room for her recently widowed father. Grandfather Findley enjoyed regaling his grandchildren with stories of his early experiences as a farmer in Ohio and as a prohibitionist. He once told Julia, Bob, and Maurice about the terribly cold winter when he had ridden a horse across the frozen Ohio River. He also enjoyed telling stories passed down in his family about sheltering Negroes on the Underground Railroad. The children took these stories in and dreamed of the ways they, too, might someday risk danger in order to befriend those who really needed help.

Although there were several hundred black people in Monmouth as Maurice was growing up, he had limited contact with them as individuals. Bessie occasionally hired a black woman named Mrs. Ford to help with the household chores. But at that time Maurice was unaware of prejudice and its consequences. He remembered being surprised in junior high school when a
black friend took offense at a comment he made. He could not afterward remember the com-
ment, but he did remember becoming conscious of the volatile tension between the races.

Meanwhile, a number of important events relating to civil rights were taking place. In
1896, nine years before Maurice's birth, the U.S. Supreme Court had issued its infamous Plessy
v. Ferguson decision, the legal fruit of the social backlash against Reconstruction. It allowed for
"separate but equal" treatment of blacks and set the stage for legalized American apartheid or
"Jim Crow." In the year Maurice was born, twenty-nine militant black intellectuals met in Fort
Erie, New York, and issued a manifesto demanding an end to racial discrimination. This was
called the Niagara Movement and was a forerunner of the National Association for the Ad-
vancement of Colored People, which was founded four years later in 1909. In 1911 the Urban
League was founded in New York City. These and other developments hinted at the coming so-
cial changes in the world Maurice was preparing himself to serve. In the meantime, few in
Monmouth took note of these events, although the schools and churches were instilling values
that might predispose the town's sensitive young people toward an interest in brotherhood and
responsibility.

A conscientious high school student, Maurice remained active in the church and the "Hi
Y" program of the Young Men's Christian Association. And always he earned money to sup-
plement the family income. Maurice worked after school at the Cruisin-Nelson-Martin Depart-
ment Store and on weekends at the Wirtz Bookstore. Besides being a hard worker, he was
remembered by friends as a polite and gentlemanly youth, always ready with a joke. The motto
next to his picture in the Monmouth High School yearbook reads, "He may lose his head but not
his heart."

After graduating from high school in 1923, Maurice enrolled in Monmouth College. He
had flirted with the idea of becoming a physician, a course his brother was pursuing. But he also
felt drawn to the ministry and to mission work in particular, partly, he later said half in jest, be-
cause of his encounters with physics and chemistry in the pre-med curriculum. A more likely
cause, however, was the motivation inculcated in church and home, where service in the name of
Jesus was expected.

In college Maurice participated in student service organizations sponsored by the YMCA
and became active in the Student Volunteer Group. He also joined the fraternity he had lived
with for so long, though later he came to disapprove of the idea of closed membership. Another
interest was public speaking. His idealism was stoked by the likes of Sherwood Eddy, one-time
secretary of the International YMCA, and Kirby Page, both of whom were inspired writers and
moving public speakers whose message had to do with putting Christian beliefs into practice.
These men stressed the working out of God's plan in this life through cooperation, reform, and
sharing. "Not lip service," Eddy emphasized, "but life service." Such influences focused
Maurice's Christian commitment on the ideal of service to the poor and disinherited, goals Jesus
expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, and on "doing what Jesus would do" in any given situ-
ation. These simple but problematic ideas would become the guiding principles of Maurice's life.

All the time Maurice was growing up, he had been surrounded by stimulating conversa-
tion and recruited into organized activities. Privacy was hard to come by, and so in the midst of
all the company he had developed a way of protecting his inner life. He kept feelings and per-
sonal matters to himself and conversed with others about issues or about how things were going
in their lives. He was always friendly, always ready with quips and jokes, but people around him
often did not know what was on his mind.
What was on his mind when he entered college was not only which career to choose or what cause to espouse. Like most young men, he was very much interested in girls. After so many years of guarded emotional expression, he was also primed to experience his first love in an intense and poignant way. As a freshman at Monmouth he was drawn to a co-ed named Faith Martin, a beautiful young woman, always fashionably dressed and very popular. At Christmas-time he gave her a ring--not an engagement ring, but certainly in his mind something very close to one. He sent her the ring along with a sprig of clover with one leaf on it and the words to "I'm Looking Over a Four-Leaf Clover," with the emphasis on "the one leaf remaining / Is someone that I adore."

At first Faith did not take this present as seriously as it was intended, but when she learned from others how strong were Maurice's feelings for her, she decided to return his gift as a way of showing him that she did not consider herself his steady girl. She did so in a way that must have been very painful to him, handing it over at the dormitory door. Later he realized that several of her friends had observed the transaction from above.

After Maurice had mourned the termination of that relationship, he apparently led an active social life. Photographs of the time reveal a handsome young man with a prominent chin, wavy brown hair, and a sensitive mouth. In an effort perhaps to disguise his sensitivity, he allowed this statement to be printed in the Ravelings Yearbook when he was a junior: "Maurice has a penchant for variety among lady friends. He declares without rancor that he just can't find many girls with any sense and so he goes the rounds." There were other women friends. Many people wondered, for example, if he would eventually marry Gertrude Phelps, the niece of his next-door neighbor, because they saw Maurice with her so often. Although he enjoyed Gertrude's company, he never considered marriage to her.

Maurice stayed busy with all manner of other involvements, including his work at the campus bookstore, where his brother Bob had been employed before him. What he later recalled as significant was his work with the Gospel Teams sent out to United Presbyterian churches in the region and his participation in the Student Volunteer Movement. Again it was singing that stayed with him, especially songs that emphasized service and love: "Have Thine Own Way, Lord," and "Take Time to be Holy." All his life he would look for these songs in hymnals as a test of adequacy. He attended the world meeting of the Student Volunteer Movement held in Indianapolis in 1924, an event which inspired him with its goal of the "Evangelization of the World in This Generation." An English major, Maurice was also active in the yearly oratorical contests sponsored by two literary societies on campus, the Philadelphia Chapter of Kappa Phi Sigma (locally called the Philos) and the Eccritean Society. More significant was his part in founding the Crimson Masque, the drama group on campus, which put on plays for years afterwards in the old converted gymnasium, which they called the "Crackerbox." Maurice performed in only one play, Napoleon's Barber. These activities afforded him some early experience in public speaking and organizing people around something that was fun to do--two aspects of fellowship that he was to incorporate into his unusual approach to ministry. And he participated in all these activities with his best college friend, John Wilson.

John, son of a Presbyterian minister, was a lodger at the McCrackins' boarding house. More scholarly than Maurice, John was nevertheless a willing accomplice in whatever high jinx Maurice might propose. He and Maurice were roommates for several years at the fraternity house, forming a bond of friendship that was to last throughout their lifetimes. After a busy day at college, the two of them would sometimes put their arms around each other's shoulders and jest in unison: "Our feet are bruised, but we have climbed this day."
Each morning they participated in another ritual that speaks to the tension they were learning to manage between responsibility and fun. They would set three alarm clocks, one for six o’clock, one for six-thirty, and one for seven. They would turn the first alarm off and sleep until the second went off. When the third alarm went off, they would get up, satisfied with the illusion they had created of having slept in. John and Maurice also chipped in together to buy a 1913 Ford for twenty-five dollars. They once won a prize in a float contest by draping the car with nets and calling it the “Wreck of the Hesperus.” On another occasion John drove a group of boy scouts to a nearby state park, returning on the bare rims of the tires after eleven blowouts and vowing to give up his equity in the investment for twenty-five cents.

And so the college years passed in relative tranquility amid strong family ties and playful friendships. Indeed, Monmouth offered Maurice a grounding and comfort that he could draw on throughout his lifetime.

Following his graduation from Monmouth College in 1927, Maurice left the security of his hometown and set out to pursue ministerial studies in Chicago. He packed his bags, left his family, and headed for Chicago Theological Seminary, not far from where his brother was finishing up a medical internship. After one semester there he transferred to nearby McCormick Seminary, drawn by its more intimate atmosphere. McCormick was then located near the Fullerton El stop on Chicago’s near North Side, a residential neighborhood about a mile from Lake Michigan. In 1927 McCormick was a pulsing intellectual center, lively and exciting. This was the era of gangsterism in Chicago, and the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre would occur in 1930 just blocks away from the seminary. But the seminarians hardly noticed; they were preoccupied with their studies. As part of their training, McCormick students visited Hull House and met Jane Addams, its founder and director. Addams had established the settlement house movement in one of Chicago’s poorest districts as a model of community-based social services. Hull House operated a day care center and sponsored cultural events, health clinics, and workshops. Visiting Hull House was an experience that was to reshape the young Maurice’s notion of what ministry should be, and he later cited Jane Addams as one of those who had influenced him profoundly.

After his first semester, Maurice was joined at McCormick by his friend John Wilson, who had taken some time after graduation to consider his future plans. John became Maurice’s roommate again and gladly joined his new circle of friends. Together Maurice and John became the nucleus of a group who called themselves the "Co-operative." They sported derby hats and attended movies and lectures together, giving each other such nicknames as “Horseface,” "Sockem,” and "Pray Some More.” This lightheartedness in fellowship balanced out the seriousness with which they took their callings. Roy Linberg, another McCormick associate, later took up a settlement house ministry that was to build on the Hull House experience. John Wilson eventually directed the Ohio Council of Churches. Both men kept in touch throughout the years of their ministries with their friend Maurice, whom they nicknamed "Mercenary" because of his frugality. Interestingly, they ended up shortening that name to "Mercy," a name more appropriate to Maurice's evolving focus.

Maurice was especially influenced in the seminary by Professor George L. Robinson, a courageous and outspoken pacifist and opponent of World War I. Robinson, though a prolific writer and popular lecturer, had the capacity to welcome students into his office as though he had all the time in the world for each one of them. McCrackin recalled "the morning 'Robbie' declared his pacifist faith and at its conclusion stood his powerful 6’ 5” frame against the wall, his
arms extended wide like a cross, and said, 'I would stand with my back to the wall and be shot down rather than take another human life.'

Around this time Maurice joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the pacifist alliance founded during World War I. Certainly joining the FOR in the 1920s was a radical step for the young seminarian to take. After graduating from the seminary, Maurice wrote to Robinson to thank him for his witness, and the two corresponded off and on for many years. Robinson's accessibility to students and his heartfelt pacifism were to have a lasting impact on Maurice's ministry.

Popular among the seminarians was Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps*, published in 1896 and popular for three decades afterward. The book offered a fictional image of what would happen if the ordinary members of a church actually modeled their lives after Jesus' example. It was from this source that Maurice devised the test for all future actions: What would Jesus do? His immediate answer to this question was to prepare himself for missionary work abroad.

While McCrackin was in his final year at McCormick, the world changed dramatically. On October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed, and the world began a steep dive into economic depression. None of the seminarians fully envisioned the repercussions of this crash for their future ministries; and there was nothing they could do about it in any case except continue their studies.

In 1930, the summer after graduation and ordination, Maurice set sail for Persia, as the country was then called, to begin his work as a missionary. He was not the only member of his family inspired to do missionary work. Like their Uncle Willis before them, his sister and his brother were also preparing to go abroad as missionaries. They and their spouses and children would be leaving for the Cameroon, West Africa, shortly after Maurice left for Persia. None of them knew it then, but they were riding the crest of the last wave of national evangelistic zeal, a wave that would crash with the world economy and changing world conditions during the time they were serving abroad.

While Maurice's seminary friends went forth to marry and begin their more conventional ministerial careers in small midwestern churches, he began a difficult apprenticeship in preparation for a different path. His ministry would combine all the best influences of his youth, but it would go beyond what he had dreamed of in Monmouth or at McCormick. Maurice McCrackin's pilgrimage was under way.

### Notes for Chapter 2

1. The experiences recounted in this chapter are reconstructed from interviews with McCrackin and others, conducted during a 1987 visit by Maurice McCrackin and Judith A. Bechtel to Monmouth, Illinois.
2. Interview with Betty Allaman, June 1987.
4. Ibid.
6. Interviews with Maurice McCrackin, conducted by Chuck Matthei. These valuable transcripts, not yet available to the general public, are being edited for publication by a colleague of Chuck Matthei, former director of the Institute for Community Economics, Greenfield, Massachusetts.
7. *Ravelings Yearbook* 1927. This yearbook was published every other year. The sexist overtones of this remark would have embarrassed McCrackin in later years.
8. “Pilgrimage.”