



B.T. Roberts
(1823-93)

Free Methodist Historical Society

Newsletter

S U M M E R / F A L L 2 0 0 3 — V o l u m e 4 , N o . 1

“Can You Help?” The Historical Center in Action

“Have you got any records about my great grandfather?”

“Can you provide information for our church’s upcoming centennial?”

Answering requests like these is an important part of the ministry of the Marston Memorial Historical Center. Each week phone calls, emails, and letters bring inquiries that the Historical Center staff take seriously and respond to as quickly as possible.

What do people want to know? Here is a sample from the past six months:

Missionary Dan Owsley in Brazil needed information on General Superintendent E. P. Hart for a class in Free Methodist history. The Historical Center happily photocopied and mailed the material.

Historian William Hardt, working on a book about Methodism in Texas, requested information about Texas Free Methodism which the Center was able to supply.

Cornerstone Christian Fellowship in Omak,

Washington, needed information from the 1944 minutes of the Washington Annual Conference. The Historical Center has a nearly complete set of *Minutes and Yearbooks* going back to the first combined *Minutes of the Annual Conferences* in 1864 and so was able to help.

Pictures and information to help with the celebration of fifty years of FM Bible quizzing was supplied.

The Center was able to provide a Canadian correspondent with an obituary, pictures, and record of yearly pastoral appointments for Tobias L. and John Fletcher.

Information about Jasper Newton Lightner, a Free Methodist preacher, was requested by his great grandson, Sheridan Eric Lightner. Sheridan wrote a book for his family and donated a copy to the Historical Center, thus augmenting the Center’s holdings.

The Marston Memorial Historical Center is a servant of the church — the Free Methodist Church and also the larger Body of Christ in the world. This is a key part of the Center’s mission. □

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Hermon Church Celebrates “One Hundred Years of Service”

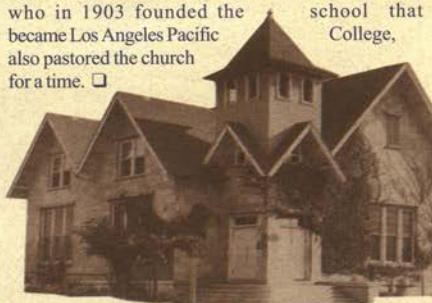
The Hermon Free Methodist Church in Los Angeles celebrated its centennial in May. Arleta Richardson and Marilyn Woody prepared a ten-page historical sketch of this congregation which has figured prominently in twentieth-century Free Methodist history.

For years the Hermon Church was the campus church of Los Angeles Pacific College. In 1965 LAPC merged with Azusa College to form what is now Azusa Pacific University. This change brought major loss of faculty and students from the Hermon area to Azusa. In recent years, however, the church has found new life in multiethnic ministry to its changing community. Currently under the leadership of Pastor Don Bowers, the church includes congregations worshipping in English, Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, and Cantonese.

The Hermon Church gained some notoriety back in 1953 when its renovated sanctuary became the

first in the denomination to have a divided chancel.

Hermon’s pastors over its 100-year history have included Robert Warren and his son Robert Warren, Jr., E. D. Riggs and his son Donald Riggs, George W. Griffith, E. S. Zahniser, C. A. Watson, Virgil Raley, Jack Mottweiler, and Richard Maurer. Clyde R. Ebey, who in 1903 founded the school that became Los Angeles Pacific College, also pastored the church for a time. □



The Mission of the Free Methodist Historical Society is to preserve Free Methodist heritage and transmit it faithfully to each generation in order to assist the Free Methodist Church in fulfilling its mission.



The Pentecostal Vision John Wesley

On November 2, 1863, the controversial evangelist John Wesley Redfield died near Marengo, Illinois, where he had been staying since suffering a stroke three years earlier. At Marengo, Redfield had preached one of his most remarkable revivals, resulting in the conversion of E. P. Hart and many others.

The evangelist was 53 when he died.

Before his death, Redfield managed to complete a 425-page memoir which became the basis for Terrill's *Life of Rev. John Wesley Redfield*. This manuscript, housed in the Marston Memorial Historical Center, is still of interest. Part of its significance lies in the fact that many key passages were not included in Terrill's book.

Redfield, something of a mentor to the younger B. T. Roberts, was virtually the co-founder of the denomination. Wilson Hogue signaled this when he placed an engraving of Redfield at the front of volume two of his *History of the Free Methodist Church*, matching the Roberts portrait at the beginning of volume one. Because of his early death, however, and since he published little, Redfield is much less known.

Redfield is interesting from several angles. One is theological: the way Redfield spoke of salvation, sanctification, and particularly the work of the Holy Spirit.

Redfield frequently used the language of Pentecost and of power, especially toward the end of his life. I quote several passages below, then comment on their significance. (Redfield's often idiosyncratic spelling, grammar, and punctuation have been corrected.)

Redfield felt that God desired the church to "aim at reaching the highest demonstration [of God's power] as revealed on the day of Pentecost. I am strongly impressed that Pentecost is God's ideal of what a church ought to be." He describes a revival in a Methodist church in Philadelphia, apparently in the late 1840s, that he felt was truly Pentecostal in tone. He writes,

The doctrine of personal holiness was made the theme of our labors, and in a few days we were compelled to close

the church and lock the doors after the congregation had filled it comfortably full or we should be so crowded that it would be impossible to do anything. The slaying power of God was felt and seen in its operations to an extent next to Pentecost — jumping, shouting, falling, and sinners unmasked would run over the tops of the pews, wading through the masses of people, and rush to the altar of prayer.

In February 1862 Redfield received, he said, a special revelation that he should go to Syracuse, New York, site of an earlier revival, and there "repeat my efforts for a special revival of religion after the type of Pentecost." Redfield said he heard "a voice to my inner ear saying to me that Syracuse is the Jerusalem of America, and from that point must salvation go forth to save the nation." His ministry in Syracuse a dozen years earlier had been merely "the first dawning rays of that type of religion which must usher in the Millennium, and after the pattern of Pentecost." Redfield recalled that in his earlier ministry in Syracuse the church had experienced "a power . . . that savored largely of the Pentecostal type. Such power and such unearthly demonstrations I never saw as a whole and such conflicts with the power of perdition." Redfield felt that God showed him that "Pentecost was heaven's ideal of a church on earth, and all that then took place was yet to be repeated."

Near the close of his life, Redfield reflected on the mission of the Free Methodist Church, as he understood it. In an important passage he wrote,

I am strongly impressed that God has had one grand design in raising up this people, and that is to bring the church back to that type of religion which had its inauguration on the day of Pentecost, . . . to give to the world an abiding specimen of what the gospel is to do for men. As long as the world sees only the moral

change produced by the gospel they will soon learn to parry its claims, and seeing the deficiency of the gospel to meet the wants of mankind, they will hardly feel to give full credit to the doctrine that sin has been the cause of all moral and physical evil and that Christ is a restorer every way capable of completing the task of mending all our derangements. But let an occasional evidence as on the day of Pentecost be given that Jesus can heal our sickness, cast out devils, and call upon the resources of infinite power in pressing need, and then the world will have a perpetual testimony before it that God is God and that the Christian religion in its purity has God's special care and protection.

"I now see," Redfield added, "that Pentecost with all its wonders and miracles is the lowest point from which to rise. If the gospel is the plan by which men are to be restored to what they have lost, I see not why we are not authorized to take our stand point on Pentecostal ground and from that rise to our highest ideal of paradise as led by the Holy Ghost." Yet, he said, all genuine spiritual "advance is in the track after our Captain Jesus who was made perfect through sufferings, and we too shall find that sufferings precede each and every advance step."

Almost a year before his death, as Redfield was suffering from the results of his stroke and the anguish of being sidelined from ministry and wondering why God did not heal him, he decided to fast and pray "and lay my whole case before the Lord." He wrote out a prayer which suggests both his personal struggle and his theological conviction. He was still hoping to be God's catalyst for a great revival in Syracuse. He wrote:

O Lord, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in Syracuse as in heaven.

First petition: O Lord, make me every whit whole.

Second petition: Send the Pentecost-

of y Redfield

by Howard A. Snyder

tal baptism of the Holy Ghost in all its power, glory, and extent, and with all the accompaniments of Pentecost.

Third petition: Send us a revival in depth, breadth and extent and power such as this nation has never known. . . .

Fifth: Grant to usher in the jubilee of freedom to every man, woman and child within this broad nation. And for these, God helping me, I will fast and pray till the token or answer comes.

Redfield did not see his petitions answered. Though he did return briefly to Syracuse, he was very ill and unable to conduct another revival.

What should we make of Redfield's focus on Pentecost?

First, Redfield was using Pentecostal language half a century before "Pentecostal" came to be associated with tongues-speaking. Redfield was a Pentecostal in the sense that many later nineteenth-century holiness folk were. They hoped to see the same power that was demonstrated on the Day of Pentecost unleashed in the church in their day.

Second, the Pentecostal revival Redfield envisioned was both personal and social — for the church and for the larger culture. Redfield was a lifelong ardent abolitionist and saw his antislavery views as connected with his concern for revival. Genuine Pentecostal revival would transform society and lead to the Millennium. On this point he was in sync with many other revivalists (not just Methodists), especially in the period before the Civil War.

Finally, it is somewhat surprising to find Redfield using such strong Pentecost and power language this early in the nineteenth century. During the late 1800s, many American Christians (especially in the Holiness Movement) began emphasizing the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" — unintentionally preparing the way for modern Pentecostalism. But here is Redfield in the 1840s, '50s and early '60s speaking of the Pentecostal baptism — and in effect embodying his own Pentecostal movement! □

Bibliographic Note: Numerous references to Redfield occur in the denominational histories by Hogue and Marston and the biographies of B. T. Roberts by Zahniser and Benson Roberts. B. T. Roberts' tribute to Redfield, first published in *The Earnest Christian*, is reprinted in Elias Bowen, *History of the Origin of the Free Methodist Church* (Rochester, NY: B. T. Roberts, 1871), 311-24.

The standard source is Joseph Goodwin Terrill, *The Life of Rev. John Wesley Redfield*, M.D. (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1912) which has occasionally been reprinted. It consists mainly of extracts from Redfield's memoir, but Terrill omitted much

and in some places heavily edited Redfield. (A critical edition of Redfield's memoir is in preparation.)

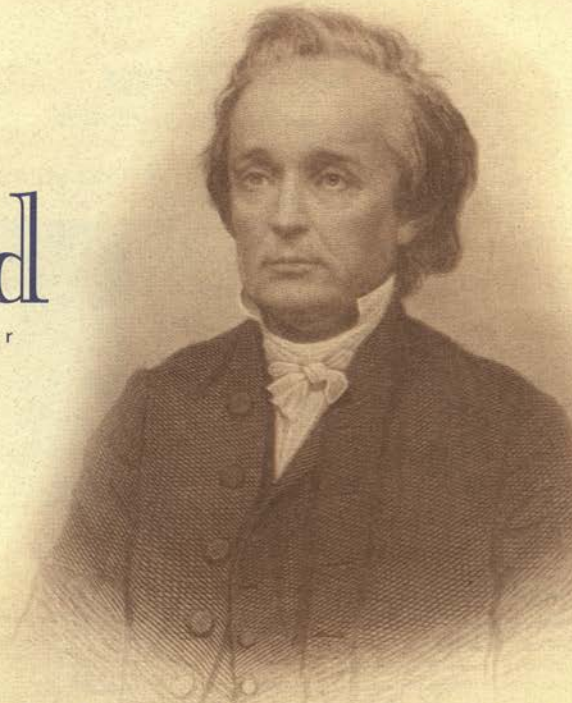
There are interesting references to Redfield in many early FM biographies and autobiographies — particularly in E. E. Shelhamer, ed., *Life and Labors of Auntie Coon* (Atlanta, GA: Repairer Office, 1905) and Edward Payson Hart, *Reminiscences of Early Free Methodism* (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1903). See also the biographical sketch in William C. Kostlevy, ed., *Historical Dictionary of the Holiness Movement* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 213f.

News & Notes

• **SABBATICAL FUNDING AVAILABLE** — Funding for pastoral sabbaticals is available through the Louisville Institute (www.louisville-institute.org/grants.html). The Historical Center can assist pastors or churches with information on how to apply. This is one possible way to underwrite a Pastoral Renewal Sabbatical at the Historical Center. The application deadline for the current cycle is September 15, 2003.

• **EXTRA COPIES** of the Newsletter free of charge are available upon request (up to ten copies to one address). If you wish to hand out the current or back issues to friends or family, you can make your request by email at History@fmcna.org.

• **IN COMING ISSUES:** Biographical sketch of Harmon Baldwin; profile of *The Earnest Christian Magazine*.



Book Review

Methodism and the Shaping of American Culture, edited by Nathan O. Hatch and John H. Wigger. Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 2001.

American church historians have largely neglected Methodism as a subject worthy of intensive research, in part because of their focus on intellectual history as well as on urban religion. Since early Methodism was a populist movement that spread rapidly among rural and artisan classes, most scholars have considered the standard historical accounts to be adequate. However, Methodism had a profound influence on the early republic and especially resonated with the surging democratic impulses of Jacksonian democracy. The puzzle for contemporary historians has been the contrast between this expansive influence and the inexplicable neglect of a denomination that became America's largest within a few decades.

These ten essays restore Methodism to its central role in the shaping of American culture in antebellum America. Rather than focusing on intellectual history, these historians look at Methodism in terms of social history and examine this movement from the "bottom up."

Readers should especially take note of Nathan Hatch's seminal essay, "The Puzzle of American Methodism," particularly his observations concerning Methodism's three themes that provided potent populist appeal under Francis Asbury's leadership: "God's free grace, the liberty of people to accept or reject that grace, and the power and validity of popular religious expression" (p. 27). Neither should they overlook John Wigger's finely-grained account of the Methodist itinerancy in "Fighting Bees: Methodist Itinerants and the Dynamics of Methodist Growth, 1770-1820," especially his study

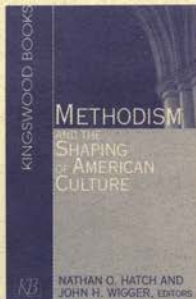
of the circuit riders as a "national brotherhood." And readers will be treated to one of the best examples of contemporary Methodist historiography in Catherine A. Brekus' study of women preachers, "Female Evangelism in the Early Methodist Movement, 1784-1845." These exceptionally rich essays derive their highly-detailed portraits from intensive research in primary resources — often from elusive, newly-uncovered resources — and represent a remarkable improvement over older historical studies. In practically all cases, these essays overturn long-standing interpretations and assumptions about the nature of early American Methodism.

Of special importance for Free Methodists is Kathryn T. Long's analysis of Phoebe Palmer, including Palmer's relationship with Free Methodism. In her essay, "Consecrated Respectability: Phoebe Palmer and the Refinement of American Methodism," Long points out Palmer's careful balance between holiness and social status, and her rejection of both Henry Ward Beecher's accommodation to social aspirations and Free Methodism's rejection of worldliness as definitive of the life of holiness. While Free Methodists "gloried in their role as enthusiastic, persecuted outsiders" (p. 299), Palmer embraced holiness of heart and life as a sanctified insider of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Long argues, "The two movements — Palmer holiness and the Nazirite sanctificationists — reflected the adaptability of perfectionism, along with so many other aspects of American Methodism, to radically different social and cultural locations" (p. 301).

Highly recommended for Free Methodists and others interested in Methodist history.

—Barry W. Hamilton, Ph.D.

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