



B.T. Roberts
(1823-93)

Free Methodist Historical Society

Newsletter

WINTER 2005 — Volume 5 , No. 2

Search for the Free Methodist Soul — **Bishop José Ildo and Asian Mission Leader Polly Ho Give Focus to Global Free Methodism Symposium**

“Search for the Free Methodist Soul—A Global Conversation” will be the theme of the second symposium on FM history and identity, scheduled for March 14-15, 2005. José Ildo Swartele de Mello, first bishop of the Free Methodist Church in Brazil, and Asian Free Methodist missions leader Polly Ho, executive director of the Asia Pacific Free Methodist Missions Association, will help North American Free Methodists understand what FM identity looks like in other parts of the world.

A third key presenter will be Pastor Mark Van Valin of Spring Arbor, Michigan, who has been a significant leader in pastoral ministry and urban mission within our denomination. The moderator will be Bishop Emeritus Gerald Bates, and Howard Snyder will provide a wrap-up summary toward the end of the event.

The conversation for “Search II” thus goes global. It will be not only intergenerational but also international. The symposium will meet from 1:30 p.m. Monday until noon Tuesday, March 14-15. This time the location will be the ample facilities of the West Morris Street Free Methodist Church, Indianapolis.

The symposium will continue and expand the conversations begun at last year’s gathering. It will again include small-group discussion, informal conversations,

and times of worship and praise. The purpose of the symposium is to stimulate reflection on and renewed commitment to the identity and mission of the Free Methodist Church. So we will think together about such key themes as:



- Continuity versus Change
- Grace plus Discipline
- Form and Freedom
- Music and Worship

The event is open to all who wish to participate. No special invitation is required, though participants should register in advance.

Registration will be \$35 per person, or \$30 for those who pre-register by February 14, 2005. The registration fee includes the Monday evening meal and Tuesday Continental breakfast, plus copies of last year’s presentations, for those who want them. Participants are responsible to arrange their own overnight lodging, but the Historical Center can provide information on options.

This second Search for the Free Methodist Soul is again being sponsored by the Marston Memorial Historical Center, the Center for the Study of Wesley and Society, and the Free Methodist Historical Society. A third symposium is projected for March of 2006.

For more information and registration form, contact the Historical Center. You may send an email to history@fmcna.org.



Top to Bottom: Bishop José Ildo Swartele de Mello, Polly Ho and Mark Van Valin

Published by the
**Marston Memorial
Historical Center**
ISSN 1546-4199

Cathy Fortner, Director
Kate McGinn, Archivist

World Ministries Center
Box 535002
770 N High School Road
Indianapolis, IN 46253-5002
(800) 342-5531

E-mail: history@fmcna.org

Website:
www.freemethodistchurch.org
(Select “About Us,” then click on Marston Historical Center)

Editorial Committee

Howard Snyder, Editor
Cathy Fortner
David Bundy
Kate McGinn
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Layout & Design

Andrea Anibal

Educator, Psychiatrist, Minister—

HE SERVED GOD WITH HIS MIND:

ORVILLE S. WALTERS, M.D., PH.D.

BY LOUISE CAMPBELL

WALKING DOWN THE STREET, HE CUT A DASHING FIGURE. TALL, STRAIGHT AND SLENDER—AN EDUCATED, CULTURED MAN WHO KNEW A GREAT DEAL ABOUT MANY SUBJECTS. ORVILLE S. WALTERS, SAID BISHOP EMERITUS DONALD BASTIAN, HAD A “TEN-STORY BRAIN.”

In a tribute at Walters’ memorial service, Bastian noted: “Dr. Walters had the gift of knowledge—not scintillating knowledge, but knowledge of a flinty and crisp sort, won at the cost of arduous labor.” The bishop said he “was never in [Walters’] presence without feeling a deepened respect for the gift of reasoning and wanting to think more carefully, for Christ’s sake.”

In a critique of Walters’ writings presented to the Free Methodist Medical Fellowship (which Walters founded), Dr. Gayle Stephens

wrote that Walters “exuded knowledge, competence and seriousness of purpose. His piercing eyes inspired my attention, his speech was precise and his range of vocabulary was dizzying.”

Walters shared his knowledge freely, publishing more than 70 professional papers. His subjects included education, medicine, administration, ministry, psychiatry, and the relationship between science and Christianity. He also penned two studies of John Wesley in *Methodist History*. Walters once wrote in *The Christian Minister*, “One wonders how many church attendants are aware of any distinction between the titillation of their religious susceptibilities through symbolism and atmosphere, and the conscious appropriation to one’s deepest need of a profound verity.”

◀ O.S. Walters,
1903-1975

Family Heritage Born in 1903, Orville Selkirk Walters, was raised in a loving home shaped by thrift and necessity. His mother was a Scottish immigrant from Selkirk, Scotland. (It is said he wore Scottish plaid neckties in his mother’s honor.) A devout believer, Mother Walters had been converted in a Moody-Sankey meeting back in Edinburgh.

Orville’s father, Frank Simpson Walters, was the oldest of seven children. His conversion occurred, most probably, in an old-time revival or camp meeting on the American Great Plains before Kansas or Nebraska were states. He and Orville’s mother were married in North Dakota and settled in Enid, Oklahoma, where Orville was born. Frank was a rural mail carrier but lost his job in the transition from the horse to the automobile. For some time Orville’s mother worked at menial tasks for wealthy families, her earnings helping to educate Orville and his two sisters and brother.

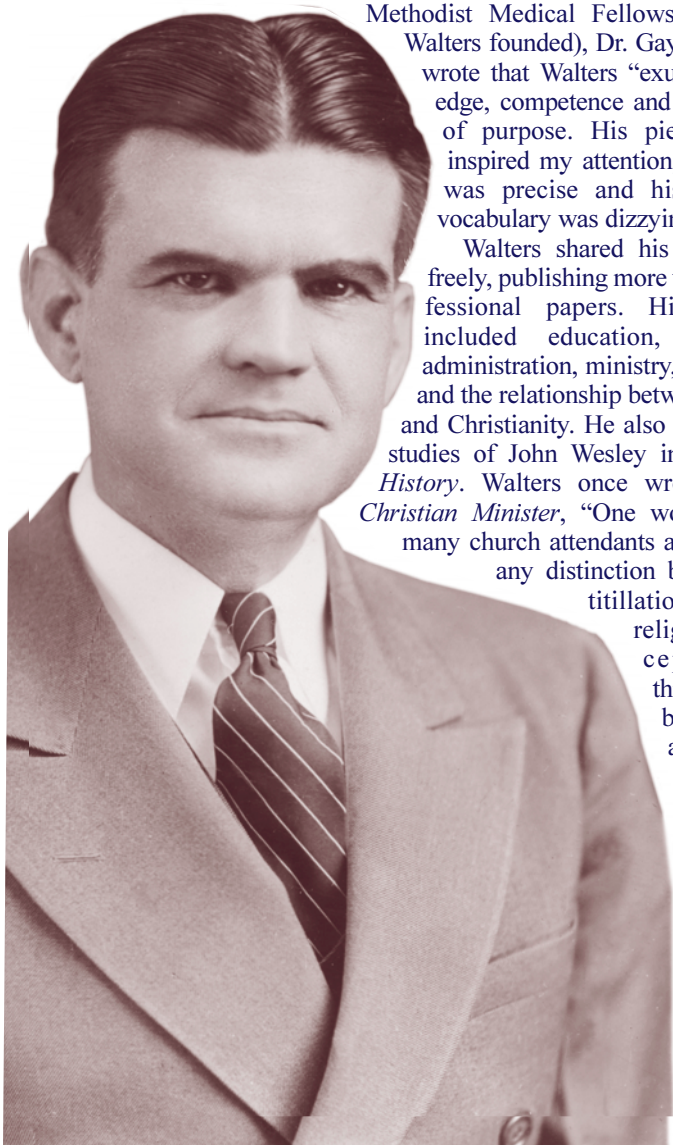
As the oldest, Orville supplemented the family budget by delivering telegrams, mowing lawns, and running errands. His mother strongly urged him to attend “our own [Free Methodist] church school.” A neatly-typed inquiry was sent off to Central College in McPherson, KS (now Central Christian College). Orville received a reply from the president, offering him a position in the president’s office until graduation from junior college. The year was 1922; he was nineteen years old.

Finding A Vocation Young Orville aspired to become a medical missionary. After junior college he entered the University of Kansas, graduating with a B.A. Rather than foreign missions, however, Orville was led into a medical and educational career in the United States.

In 1930 Orville married Geneva Faley. Geneva made a loving, supportive home for their children—two boys and a daughter. Their son Stanley became an Old Testament scholar and taught for several years at Greenville College. He was later a professor at Central Michigan University and Knox College, University of Toronto, and has served as a Presbyterian pastor. Currently he is visiting professor of religious studies at Tyndale University College, Toronto. The Walters’ other children are Dr. Richard Walters, an educator and writer in Chattanooga, TN, and Mrs. Margery Browning, active citizen, Christian, and mother, living in Boulder, CO.

Orville earned a Ph.D. at the University of Kansas, based on his research on blood physiology. He taught at St. Louis University for five years while studying for his M.D., which he received in 1939. In 1953 he became a fellow in the Menninger School of Psychiatry in Topeka, KS, and later qualified as a diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

In 1939 Walters was elected president of Central College. He served until 1944, when the U.S. government asked him to open a medical practice in Buhler, KS, since the doctor there had been drafted. Still needing a year’s residency in medicine at the time,



he spent weekdays at Wesley Hospital in Wichita, fulfilling his college duties on weekends. When the war ended, he returned to practice in McPherson, where he became a leading physician and a board member of the hospital. To this day his name stands in a place of honor in the foyer.

Walters always cared greatly for anyone in need. He once took a Central student—who his buddies thought was merely “homesick”—to the local hospital and personally performed an emergency appendectomy. Orville and Geneva worked as a team. They jointly pioneered a popular sex-in-marriage course in the Free Methodist Sunday School. They entertained freely and kept up an intense interest in foreign students, not only at Central but later in other church and university settings.

Dr. Walters developed a distinguished medical and psychiatric career. In 1959 he became Director of Health Services at the University of Illinois, Urbana. During his tenure there an extended sabbatical allowed him to spend time as a visiting professor in Japan, Taiwan, and India. His long university career included positions as clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Illinois, Urbana, and clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Illinois, Peoria. His many articles included significant contributions to basic hematology. Technical writings on psychiatry and religion were a life-long interest. Recognized for his scholarly contribution, Dr. Walters was listed in *American Men and Women of Science*, *Who's Who in America*, and *Who's Who in Religion*.

Dedicated Churchman Dr. Walters was an ordained minister in the Free Methodist Church and served his denomination in many capacities. On occasion he filled the pulpit or lectured at special events. He never wavered in his love for the church, actively serving wherever he lived, always teaching Sunday School. He envisioned the denomination's Department of Service Training as an alternative to then-widespread talk of “leadership training,” and served as its general director, 1937–59. For several years he edited and wrote for the book review section of *The Christian Minister*, and for seventeen years was a trustee of Greenville College, chairing the board from 1958–64.

Man of Science, Man of Faith Walters' article “A Christian Approach to Death” in *Light and Life* magazine (March 18, 1975), later distributed also by the Christian Medical Society, was a ringing affirmation of profound faith. “Men have tiptoed around the subject of death for centuries,” he wrote; “They have avoided speaking of ‘death’ by using euphemisms.” He noted however the new interest and psychological and sociological research dealing explicitly with death. Colleges and universities were adding courses on the stages of dying, and the issue was now intensely discussed.

These developments were triggered in part by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross' book, *On Death and Dying*, but Walters dissented from her typology, noting that Kubler-Ross made little use of the resources of the Christian faith. He discussed the significance of the biblical teaching about the living Christ, “man's eternal contemporary.” Divine grace is granted the believer for the dying hour, as is the comfort of the Holy Spirit and the assurance of Christ's victory over death. As a scientist and Christian, Walters noted: “A cold, sterile and brash scientism, when stripped down to its inductive presuppositions, would seem to require a greater leap of faith than belief in the God of revelation.” He argued, “one of the finest traditions of the early Christians concerned their

“The counselor who has not experienced divine forgiveness can never have an adequate understanding of what happens when personality conflict due to moral lapse meets the forgiving and transforming power of divine love.”

poise and confident faith in the face of death.” The great mass of Christian testimony to victory over the fear of death must be accounted as historical evidence.

Dr. Walters had surgery for stomach cancer in 1974 but the disease continued and he died in February, 1975. During this time he found enjoyment in nature to the fullest, appreciating the simple beauties of life. “I have found enhancement in my love for my family,” he wrote. “I have kept up my hobbies, flower growing and photography, trying to capture and perpetuate some of nature's delicate loveliness.” Preparing now for his own passing, Walters left in the hands of his doctors this statement of his faith:

I am ready to give up this life with awareness of my own defects and inadequacies, but with confidence in a loving, personal God, who cares for individuals as well as worlds. I face death with faith in a living Christ who came to reconcile us to God; who, by His own atoning death on the cross enables us to become sons of God and joint heirs with himself. I approach death with a deep sense of gratitude for the abundant life that has been mine through grace ministered by the Holy Spirit and through the fellowship of God's people. “Thanks to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Dr. Walters crowned his writing career with his testimony in the face of death: “I have been a committed Christian since age seventeen and have tried to practice my faith across the years as a medical school teacher, president of a church junior college, family physician, psychiatrist, and university medical school administrator. The experience of God's presence has been a consistently ongoing reality. With the self-awareness that is required in the competent psychiatrist, I cannot identify in my own experience the stages commonly attributed to a dying patient.”

Orville's wife Geneva survived him, and died in 1996 at the age of 93. Both were buried at the East Peoria Free Methodist Church in Peoria, IL, their lives having enriched the world and the church they loved.

Bibliographic Note: Orville S. Walters' collected papers (twenty-seven linear feet) are housed at Asbury Theological Seminary. The Marston Memorial Historical Center also has a collection, consisting largely of articles published in Christian and also professional journals, such as *The Psychoanalytic Review*, and including a summary of Walters' life and publications prepared by Dr. G. Gayle Stephens. Many of Walters' articles are available or cited on the Internet, as well.

News & Notes

▷ **ALDRSGATE BIBLICAL SERIES** – Help needed! The Historical Center is seeking to complete its ABS collection and is lacking the following study guides: Jeremiah, Ezekiel A, Matthew, Luke, John A, Colossians and Philemon, Timothy and Titus. Also the following leader's guides are needed: Corinthians, Ephesians.

▷ **PASTORS' SABBATICAL PROGRAM** – Scholarships are now available for pastors' mini-sabbaticals at the Historical Center in Indianapolis. The amount available is \$350 per week up to a limit of \$1,000 per person. Contact Cathy Fortner, 800-342-5531 (or by email: history@fmca.org) for information and scheduling.

Book Review

Methodist and Radical: Rejuvenating a Tradition, edited by Joerg Rieger and John J. Vincent (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2003) - 192 pp. ISBN 0687038715 (paper).

Methodist and Radical: Rejuvenating a Tradition is a collection of essays by authors from around the world. Each essay attempts to speak to the center of Methodism from the margins of Methodism, wherever that may be. The essays “are united in the vision that the church as a whole is best shaped and transformed not from the top down but from the bottom up, by perspectives from the margins.”

The book begins with a simple question: “Can there be a Methodism that is radical?” Citing the legacy of John Wesley, the editors challenge their readers to bridge the gap between Wesley’s day and our own because “the future of the church as a whole and the Methodist tradition in particular can only be conceived if—like Wesley himself—we deepen our conversations with the margins.”

The book’s authors argue that when we minister to those at the margins, such as the poor and disenfranchised, we are not really bringing God to those people. To the contrary, oftentimes it is we who find God at the margins, a God who has already been working there long before we arrived.

Another important claim in the book’s contributors make is that how we view the margins depends, in a very real sense, on our view of God. “All that we do is related to our images and

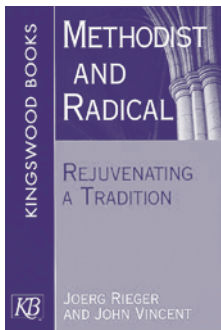
visions of God.” Do we see God as concerned about and operating on the radical margins, or do we see God as primarily concerned with the calm, mainstream of Methodism and Christianity? Our view of God will directly influence how we practice our faith.

All in all, this collection of essays is a commendable read, especially for Free Methodists. Many of the authors are quite pointed in their implicit challenges to us, as part of Methodism, to regain our sense of the pulse of the margins. In this sense the book serves as a reminder of our own Free Methodist roots. Awareness

of and focus upon the margins recalls our founder, B. T. Roberts, and his deep concern for the poor and voiceless.

Though some essays fall outside of the theology of Free Methodism and would be controversial in our context, as a whole the book is thought-provoking and helpful as it tries to spur the rejuvenation of our shared tradition. If we as Free Methodists are to regain the radicalism of the early movement, we must listen to the voices on the margins and reconnect to the Holy Spirit’s ongoing work there. Only by so doing will we be able to again be both Methodist and radical.

— Lyle McCoon, Jr., doctoral student in *New Testament*, London School of Theology and recent graduate of *Asbury Theological Seminary*



Editorial — Cambridge Notes

This issue of the *Newsletter* was edited in Cambridge, England, where Jan and I spent seven weeks as part of my Asbury Seminary sabbatical. I am doing research and writing at Tyndale House, an evangelical studies center near the University of Cambridge that has an excellent library in biblical studies and early Christianity. Tyndale House was established in 1944 to promote faithful study and application of the Bible in the church in the United Kingdom and more broadly (www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk).

There are some Free Methodist connections. Over the years several Free Methodists scholars have occasionally studied here, including Don Demaray and Matt Zahniser, working on particular projects. My focus right now is on summaries of basic Christian doctrine as I prepare to write a book.

Historically we tend to associate Methodism more with Oxford than with Cambridge, but Cambridge University has been very significant in renewal movements over the years. D. L. Moody’s meetings here in the late 1800s had a great impact, and the university has been a center of student Christian movements. (Did you see the film, *Chariots of Fire*?) A fairly recent book, *From Cambridge to the World: 125 Years of Student Witness*, by Oliver Barclay and Robert Horn traces the history (Inter-Varsity UK, 2002). Cambridge is associated with the rise of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, the Keswick movement, foreign missions, and indirectly with the rise of the Student Volunteer Movement in the United States.

A key Cambridge figure was Charles Simeon, vicar of Holy Trinity Church in the Cambridge city center for half a century—1784 to 1836. Simeon was a major evangelical Anglican influence on students at the university and also more broadly. Young Simeon was just beginning his ministry as John Wesley was nearing the end of his. Wesley met Simeon in December, 1784, and commented on the promise he saw in Simeon’s ministry. Simeon, Wesley noted, “has spent some time with Mr. [John] Fletcher, at Madeley; two kindred souls; much resembling each other, both in fervor of spirit, and in the earnestness of their address.” Wesley said Simeon told him “that there are three parish churches in Cambridge, wherein true scriptural religion is preached; and several young gentlemen who are happy partakers of it.”

So once again we see the links in the chain—the ongoing story of what God has done and is doing, of which we also are privileged to be a part.

— Howard A. Snyder



The Quotable Roberts

The popular theology of the day teaches that one is not expected to quit sinning in every way unless he professes holiness. This is altogether wrong. The Scriptures plainly teach that one is not truly a penitent—much less a Christian—until he sets himself to stop doing wrong, and to do right in all respects—that is, to obey God in everything. ... The Apostles everywhere insisted that professed penitents should *Do works meet for repentance*. They were not in indecent haste to have them believe that God had accepted them. Hence there was, at once, a marked change in their converts. ... True repentance is always attended with appropriate fruits. If it does not bear immediate fruits it is not genuine.

— B. T. Roberts, “True Repentance,” *The Earnest Christian* (May 1885), 130-32.