

B.T. Roberts
(1823-93)

FREE METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

SPRING 2008 — Volume 8 , No. 3

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)

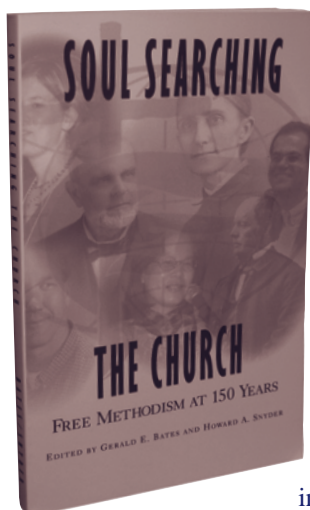
Editorial Committee

Howard Snyder, Editor
Cathy Fortner
David Bundy
Kate McGinn

Layout & Design

Erin Newton

Historical Center Publishes *Soul-Searching the Church*; Launches New "FM Soul" Blog



The sesquicentennial of the Free Methodist Church is still a couple of years off, but in anticipation of that significant milestone the Marston Memorial Historical Center and Light & Life Communications have published the 192-page book, *Soul-Searching the Church: Free Methodism at 150 Years*. In addition to its twelve chapters, the book includes a useful Study Guide with ten discussion-and-reflection questions for each chapter. The book is thus a timely resource for Sunday School classes and small groups.

The book sparkles with surprising insights. Doug Newton writes that "History recedes from view along a curve" and must intentionally be recited: "History doesn't repeat itself; people repeat it." Nazarene historian Stan Ingersol notes, "Wesleyan people sometimes cannot distinguish between the Wesleyan message and the message of radio and television preachers." Pastor Linda Adams asks, "Who's to say which of

our distinctives need to be outgrown and which need to be preserved at all costs?"

To continue the "soul searching" discussions, we have begun a new online blog. Check it out at www.freemethodistsoul.org.

The book has been published in tribute to Betty Shipley (1938-2000), a loyal and faithful Free Methodist who supported the Marston Memorial Historical Center.

Soul-Searching the Church is available from the Historical Center, and also is now listed on www.amazon.com for \$8.99.

In Coming Issues ...

- "When My Town Holy-Rolled" — Revisiting a 1950s account of a circa-1900 Free Methodist revival in Pennsylvania.
- "How B. T. Roberts Voted" — to the surprise of FM leader J. G. Terrill.
- "James Hudson Taylor's Decision to Become a Free Methodist" after serving with China Inland Mission.

▷ DR. MIKI YAMAMOTO conducted research at the Historical Center in preparation for the 100-year celebration of the Kakogawa Free Methodist Church near Osaka, Japan. >>>>

▷ RESEARCH GRANT applications for study at the Historical Center are now available. Contact the Center for more information.

▷ OUR WEBSITE has logged over 6,000 downloads of Betty Ellen Cox's Kirundi-English and Kinyarwanda-English dictionaries since they were posted in October. This is an amazing response and a significant ongoing extension of Missionary Cox's ministry.

▷ EXTRA COPIES of the Newsletter are available free of charge upon request (up to ten copies to one address). If you wish to send current or back issues to friends or family, contact the Historical Center by phone or letter or by email at History@fmcna.org.



News
& Notes

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.

A LONG FAITHFULNESS:

GLENN AND HELEN HAMILTON

BY DAVID G. HAMILTON

The attention of the world in 2005 was riveted to the rooftops of buildings in New Orleans as the flood waters rose as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Some sixty-three years before that cataclysmic event, Free Methodists attending a summer camp meeting were clinging for life on the roof of a tabernacle that had been built along the shores of the Allegheny River in Northern Pennsylvania. A flash flood that began in the early morning hours had by mid-morning reached the eaves of the tabernacle.

Among those perched on the roof were a young pastor, his wife of four months, and their young nieces. Rev. Glenn Hamilton had entered the ministry in 1940 and was at the time serving as the pastor of the Free Methodist Church in Ulysses, Pennsylvania, where some 100 years prior his great-grandfather and grandmother Hamilton, having emigrated from Northern England, had settled. His Grandfather George Hamilton along with his Grandmother Julia had been converted in a tent meeting in Ulysses in 1895. They had joined the church under the pastorate of Rev. J. J. Zahniser. Glenn's father, Arthur, was their son.

As a young man, Arthur Hamilton attended a Free Methodist Church pastored by Gertrude Grimm. Free Methodist

General Superintendent B. T. Roberts was a champion for women's ordination, but Pastor Grimm could not be ordained since the denomination at that time banned women's ordination. Pastor Grimm felt the call to preach, but official ordination never came.

Young Arthur Hamilton struggled spiritually in his early adult years. He went to his pastor, Gertrude Grimm, for spiritual advice. On one occasion he was visiting the parsonage, and Pastor Grimm hid him in a closet when a visitor came to the door. It would have been considered quite improper for a single man and a single woman to be alone together.

Not long afterwards, Arthur went to the altar twice—once to settle spiritual matters, and the second time to join with Gertrude in holy matrimony.

Around 1900 the district elder approached Gertrude about being appointed to another circuit. Arthur struggled at the thought of following his wife's pastoral career, a move that would necessitate his moving away from the farm he so loved. Arthur surrendered to God's will in the matter and was prepared to move. However his beloved Gertrude died unexpectedly as a result of complications from the mumps.

Arthur's parents, George and Julia Hamilton, were descended from several of the founders of this nation. George's ancestors, the Gridleys, had been members of Rev. Thomas Hooker's congregation and among the first settlers of Connecticut. Another ancestor, Johannes Dyckman, had served as assistant director to Peter Stuyvesant in New Amsterdam (later New York). Johannes' mother was a direct descendant of Miles Standish and John Alden of Plymouth colony. Thus the Hamiltons shared an enduring appreciation of the American experiment, along with their deep devotion for God.

Several years after Gertrude's death Arthur married Mabel Barkas. Mabel and her siblings had been raised as Roman Catholics, their grandparents having come to America during the great Irish potato famine. Mabel was converted to Christ through the Free Methodist Church, and she faithfully followed her Lord until her death. Her brothers Will and John became district elders in the Free Methodist Church.

The Ministry of Glenn and Helen Hamilton

Glenn and his wife Helen, sitting precariously on the roof of that tabernacle, watched as many of their possessions—even Helen's wedding dress—were swept away in the torrents of the flood. Late in the afternoon the couple was finally rescued by boat, among the last to be rescued.

Glenn continued his preaching ministry. In those days Free Methodist pastoral appointments were limited to three years. During World War II Glenn's appointment was extended to five years. Since it was so difficult to purchase gasoline, much less a car, due to war rationing, Glenn and Helen walked up to ten miles a day visiting their parishioners.

Their daughter Ruth arrived in August, 1943, so Glenn and Helen had a child to carry on their shoulders during their long walks over the Pennsylvania hills. The pastor's remuneration at that time consisted of the Sunday morning offering along with various forms of produce, chickens, rabbits, and the like. One wintry week Glenn's salary totaled seventy-two cents.

In 1946 Glenn and Helen were appointed to the Sheffield circuit. During their two years at Sheffield their son David (the author of this article) and their daughter Darlene were born. In 1948 the Hamiltons moved to the railroad town of Renovo in



The Hamiltons' wedding (1942)

central Pennsylvania. Glenn's pastorate in Renovo witnessed some remarkable conversions, especially among the teens and young adults, and the church grew significantly.

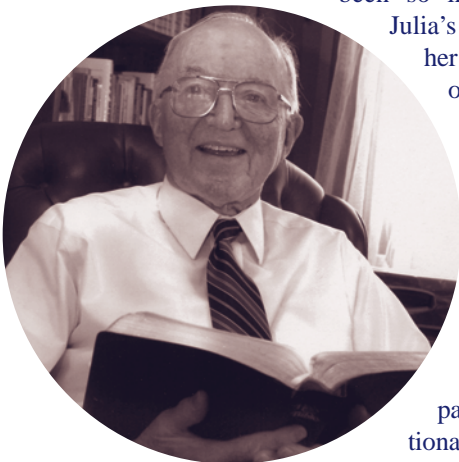
Because of the three-year rule, the Hamiltons were appointed next to the Penfield circuit. Like the Methodist circuits of old, this assignment consisted of several preaching points (Penfield, Mill Run, Tyler, and Gardener Hill). While Glenn was preaching at Gardener Hill, Helen reopened the Tyler church and was in charge of meetings there.

In 1951, During his appointment at Penfield, the old 1935 Chevrolet that had carried the Hamilton family to General Conference in Hillsdale, Michigan, finally had to be retired. For several months Glenn had to hitch a ride with various Catholic neighbors in order to make his appointed rounds.

One of the enduring memories of the Hamilton children was the reading every night from Hurlburt's *Story of the Bible*. Glenn had been so inspired by his grandmother

Julia's teaching of Bible stories to her grandchildren that he carried on the tradition. In later years Helen became the Bible quiz coach for her children and other youth. The church's Bible quiz team excelled, winning several eastern regional titles as well as the international championship in Winona Lake, Indiana.

During the 1940s and 1950s pastors often had to be bi-vocational due to the small salaries paid by some of the churches. Over the years Glenn helped support himself as a coal miner, a brick layer, a lumberjack, a substitute teacher, and even for awhile as a Fuller Brush salesman. His highest calling however was always to serve the spiritual needs of his congregation and other members of the community. Helen served as Sunday School superintendent for most of the years of their ministry, along with terms as a member of the board of trustees, treasurer at both the local and district level, camp registrar, CYC/Junior Church director, and successful Bible quiz coach.



Above: Glenn Hamilton;
Below: Helen Hamilton.
Photos courtesy of The
Bradford Era



Faithfulness to the Present

In 1961, having served successfully in Galeton and Coudersport, Glenn was appointed to a struggling church at Duke Center, in hope that the church could be saved from closing. During their early years at Duke Center Glenn and Helen took in five sibling orphans (Gary, Elizabeth, Loretta, Linda, and Brian) and raised them as their own. As a result of this as well as other characteristics Helen was named Mother of the Year for their county.

In 1963 the Cyclone church was added to the circuit. Glenn

served as the pastor of the Duke Center church until 1990 and as pastor of the Cyclone Church from 1963 until the present. He was just appointed to his forty-fifth year as its pastor and has now begun his sixty-eighth year of pastoral ministry.

Glenn and Helen Hamilton have always believed that ministry in a community should extend far beyond the local church. Over these last 67 years Glenn has done extensive work as a hospital chaplain, including ministering to families after two commercial plane crashes. Glenn and Helen have served as volunteer ambulance drivers and even in their late eighties continue to serve weekly in the local food mission. Glenn has performed over 2000 funerals, plus countless weddings. The community has so appreciated their loving service that a few years ago Glenn and Helen were crowned king and queen at the county fair.

And what do co-laborers think of the Hamiltons? A pastor from another denomination who served congregations for many years in the same area wrote: "People's knowledge of him is widespread, as he has shared in many community events around the county. This has given him an extended ministry that has touched many lives beyond the local church. He is a friend to everyone." His former district leader Robert Brest writes, "I want to say unequivocally that in all the years I have known Glenn I have never heard a sour or a disparaging word from his lips. When I hear the word 'gentleman,' I immediately think of Glenn. [He] knows everyone. Many of these people are unchurched, so Glenn will stop and visit with them. When a death ensues in one of those families, Glenn is the only one who has paid them the time of day, so [they] naturally gravitate to him. Glenn Hamilton is a living legend in McKean County, Pa." The president of the county ministerial association states: "He is a man of unbounded energy. People do not wear him out. Like Caleb in the Old Testament, even in his old age he is a man of unusual optimism for the power and grace of God."

Rev. and Mrs. Hamilton plan to worship again this summer in the same tabernacle (reconstructed at Highlander Christian Camp) from the roof of which they were rescued over sixty-five years ago. And by the way, it is now named Glenn and Helen Hamilton Hall. □

the QUOTABLE Roberts



Those who are
spiritually alive

are growing in grace. They are "like a tree planted by the rivers of water"; however dry the season may be, they keep on growing. ... The same circumstances that enable a live soul to prosper and become stronger, cause a dead one to give up entirely, and throw away its profession. ...

So you can judge of your own spiritual state, with a good degree of accuracy, from this — if circumstances control you, then are you dead; but if you control circumstances and make them all contribute to your growth in grace, then you are alive.

— B. T. Roberts, "Signs of Life,"
The Earnest Christian (Oct. 1885), 102-03.

Book Review

Go Figure! Figuration in Biblical Interpretation, edited by Stanley D. Walters (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008). 164 pp. ISBN 978-155635-579-0 (paper).

The name Stanley Walters will be known to many Free Methodists, as will the names of some of the other contributors to this book, such as Frank Spina (Seattle Pacific University). Walters, formerly a professor at Greenville College (and the son of O. S. Walters, profiled in an earlier issue of this *Newsletter*) currently teaches religious studies at Tyndale University College in Toronto. This volume is the fruit of a 2006 conference held at Tyndale.

Walters contributes two chapters to the book, "Finding Christ in the Psalms" and "Death Binds, Death Births." In an afterword Walters notes, "In the reformation now taking place within professional biblical studies, figuration is one of the most exciting developments, and it arises directly out of the urgency of acknowledging the Bible as scripture and of reading it theologically."

Christopher Seitz, Keith Bodner, and Ephraim Radner are also among the nine contributors. Some of the chapters deal not just with Scripture itself but with the way the Bible has literally and/or figuratively been interpreted down through history. Craig Carter's chapter, for instance, analyzes Karl Barth's interpretation of the image of God in Scripture.

The volume opens a window into current trends in biblical (especially Old Testament) interpretation and provides useful insights for the practical use of Scripture today.

— Howard A. Snyder

LETTERS

I'm a software entrepreneur from Boston who also assists a group in Rwanda, and one of my projects there is helping set up a Rwandan-owned technology company to be named Kigali Coders. On the website www.KigaliCoders.com we set up a Rwandan-language guide at <http://www.kigalicoders.com/Kinyarwanda>. I wanted to let you know that we just created a link to your webpage.

— Paul English, Boston, MA

Thank you for the excellent review of the General Conference in the *Historical Society Newsletter*. We need [such] insights to help lead us as a church to healthier, Spirit-led, balance and sensitivity to the issues of wholeness and holiness.

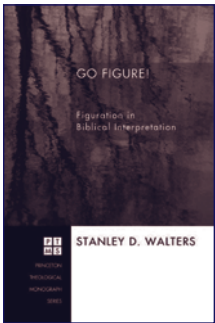
— Joyce and Timothy Thomas, Wilmore, KY

Thank you for your reflections in the recent FMHS newsletter on the 2007 General Conference as well as your aspirations for 2011. I think you are right on target on all accounts. [Bishop James' sermon was] the best I've heard from anybody in my lifetime in relation to ministry to the poor.

— Herb W. Coates, Champaign, IL

I have said for years that we need in our churches a "blend" of the hymns and praise choruses. When I attended Ministers' Conference at Asbury Seminary a few years ago, the music was fantastic. We sang a stanza or two of a hymn, then moved into a praise chorus or two, and then back to the hymn. It was beautiful!

— Ron Robart, Spring Arbor, MI



Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Indianapolis, IN
Permit No. 8783

Free Methodist Church of North America
Free Methodist Historical Society
Box 535002
Indianapolis, IN 46253-5002
(800) 342-5531