

FREE METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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B.T. Roberts
(1823-93)

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FM History at Your Fingertips

More and more Free Methodist historical resources are becoming available online. It really is quite amazing what is already accessible as the digital revolution continues.

FM missionary Larry Winckles has compiled a list of over thirty items; a sampling is given here. In most cases, simply typing in a specific title on your web browser will take you right to the archive (or simply clicking on the title, if you have the title in a document on your computer screen). Some can be read online; others must be downloaded to a computer.

Available free from Archive.org:

- *Free Methodist Hymnal*, 1910
- *Hymns That Are Immortal*, by Wilson T. Hogue, 1907
- *Linden, Michigan Free Methodist Church History*
- *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, by Benson Howard Roberts, 1900
- *Reminiscences of Early Free Methodism*, by Edward Payson Hart, 1903
- *Mariet Hardy Freeland A Faithful Witness*, by Emma Freeland Shay, 1914
- *Clara Leffingwell A Missionary*, by Walter A. Sellew, 1913
- *Autobiography of Rev. Charles H. Sage*, edited by William B. Olmstead, 1903
- *Echoes from Bharatkhand*, by Ernest Ward and Phebe Ward, 1908

From Google Books:

- *History of the Free Methodist Church*, by Wilson T. Hogue, 1915
- *Annual Minutes of the Forty Conferences of the Free Methodist Church*, 1906
- *Incidents in the Life and Labors of Burton Rensselaer Jones*, by Burton R. Jones, 1909

From the Holiness Classics Library:

- *Master Workmen*, by Richard Blews, 1960
- *God's Standards*, by Myron F. Boyd, 1952
- *Holiness Teachings by B. T. Roberts*, edited by Benson Roberts, 1893

From the University of North Carolina:

- *Twice Sold, Twice Ransomed*, by Emma Ray
- *Shadows and Sunshine*, by Eliza Suggs

Other sources:

A number of Free Methodist historical books are available also in HTML format at <http://www.swartzentrover.com/cotor/E-Books/indexebooks.htm>.

The entire list will be posted on the MMHC website. Thanks to Larry Winckles for his work on this! □



"A revival of Christianity, if genuine, is always attended with a reformation."

— B.T. Roberts, "Reformation,"
The Earnest Christian (Nov. 1881), 161.

"No other institution that has appeared among men produces such radical changes in society as the religion of Christ. It is revolutionary in its character."

— B.T. Roberts, "Gospel Reforms,"
The Earnest Christian (May 1890), 133-36.

1910 *Free Methodist Hymnal* Reborn

BY HOWARD A. SNYDER

In 1910 the Free Methodist Church published a new hymnbook at its new Publishing House, 1132 Washington Boulevard, Chicago. Entitled simply *Free Methodist Hymnal*, this was the church's first hymnal since the 1883 *Hymn Book of the Free Methodist Church*. That book of hymns was actually published personally by B. T. Roberts, though commissioned by the church.

The popular 1910 *FM Hymnal* included music as well as words—unlike earlier ones, which were words-only. This was the first hymnbook to use the more formal title “Hymnal.” It was adopted as well by the Wesleyan Methodist Church as *Wesleyan Methodist Hymnal*. Free Methodists and Wesleyans were in fact beginning merger negotiations just at this time.

Now, a century later, the 1910 *Free Methodist Hymnal* has been republished with a new title, *The Holiness Hymnal*. It is a photo reprint, so is the same book, though slightly larger in format. The republication is due to the efforts of Ms. Valerie Ellis and several other members of the Halls Corner Holiness Church near Blanchard, Michigan (west of Mount Pleasant). The hymnal was republished for use in this church's worship services; some members of this church have Free Methodist roots.

Having found one copy only of the *Free Methodist Hymnal* in a used bookstore, Ms. Ellis approached the Marston Memorial Historical Center and Light & Life Communications about permission to have the hymnal reprinted. Permission was granted, and the book was subsequently reprinted in Cooperstown, Pennsylvania. Three copies of the reprint have been deposited with the Marston Historical Center.

The 1910 *Free Methodist Hymnal* is now easily available online, as well. (See article on page 1.)

A Popular Hymnal

The 1910 *Free Methodist Hymnal* went through at least fifteen printings before it was replaced by *Hymns of the Living Faith* in 1951. The last printings were done in Winona Lake, Indiana, the church having moved its publishing house there in 1935.

Multiple copies of the 1910 hymnal are still to be found

here and there in church basements and attics, or in personal collections of older Free Methodists. There are copies also in the old-book collection at the Spring Arbor, Michigan, Free Methodist Church. Carroll Fortress of Jackson, Michigan, a collector of FM hymnals and other holiness books, felt the 1910 hymnal was the best of all Free Methodist hymnbooks—a classic.

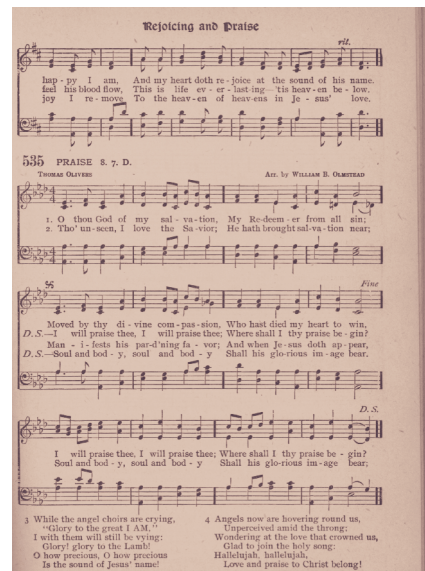
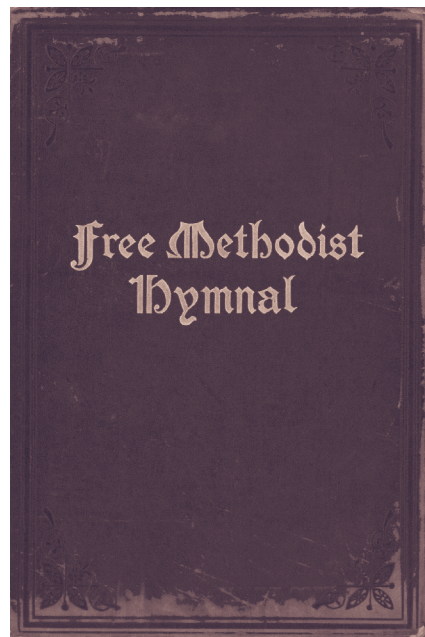
The *Free Methodist Hymnal* was commissioned by the 1907 General Conference. As W. T. Hogue later put it, the General Conference called for “a thorough revision of the Free Methodist Hymn Book, with the hymns to be set to appropriate music.” It was a daunting task. The bishops of the church wrote in the hymnal's introduction, “The instructions given by the General Conference required the reduction of the number of hymns in the old book by several hundred; and the general demand for the introduction of certain modern hymns that are popular with our people as well as with the more general public necessitated the elimination of a considerable number more. Still we find that most of the hymns hitherto in common use among us have been retained.”

In the background here is the influence of the evangelist D. L. Moody (1837–1899) and his famous Methodist song leader, Ira Sankey (1840–1908). Historian Dana Robert notes that in the late 1800s “a revival of congregational singing [had] spread across the country,” in part through the Moody–Sankey revivals and the circulation of a “series of popular gospel hymnals that contained new hymns of Fanny Crosby, William Doane, Ira Sankey, and others.”

This was reflected in the new Free Methodist hymnal. The volume contains a dozen of Fanny Crosby's hymns and several of Sankey's tunes. A remarkable 83 hymn tunes however were written or arranged by Lowell Mason (1792–1872), American Presbyterian organist and

hymnist who wrote over 1600 such tunes.

The 1910 *Free Methodist Hymnal* also contains several hymns by Free Methodists, including Helen Smith Arnold, Vivian Dake, Joseph McCreery, and W. T. Hogue (nine by him);



also Fannie Birdsall Bula's popular setting to the Doxology, (the tune "Bula"), still much in use.

The hymnal was prefaced by an "Address" (Introduction) in the name of five Free Methodist bishops: Hart, Jones, Sellew, Hogue, and Pearce. (Hart actually had retired in 1908 and was succeeded by Pearce.) The bishops noted with satisfaction the prominence of Charles Wesley hymns (well over 200) in the new volume, and the wider variety of subject categories. "We are also pleased with the number and variety of hymns relating to the various phases of Christian experience, particularly of those classed under Entire Sanctification," they wrote.

The hymnal was designed of course principally for a capella singing, since the FM Church did not use instrumental music in worship services until decades later. The hymnal contained no responsive or other Scripture readings, but did print a standard Order of Public Worship at the front which includes the singing of three hymns and "Scripture Lessons from both the Old and New Testament." Since 1910 marked fifty years of the church's existence, some versions of the original edition had the word "Semi-Centennial" embossed on the cover.

The commission that prepared the hymnal consisted of fourteen men (no women), including Bishops Wilson Hogue and William Pearce; B. T. Roberts' son Benson Roberts; future bishop David Warner; and A. T. Jennings, representing the Wesleyan Methodists. Hogue seems to have chaired the committee.

Theology in Hymns

The bishops and the hymnal commission were well aware of the theological significance of hymns and the way a good hymnal encompasses the centuries of church history. In their introduction the bishops wrote,

The value of a carefully compiled Hymnal can scarcely be overestimated. The hymns . . . have been selected from the sacred poetry of all ages and of many countries, and "so rich and abundant is the material that only the best lyrics of the best poets can find a permanent place in them." Hence the literary value of such a production is of no small importance. Then, too, there is a doctrinal value in such a book. . . . The theology of the Church's hymns is scarcely less important than that of her Articles of Faith. . . . It has been suggested that more people of to-day get their theology from the hymns they sing than from the creeds of their respective churches. Again, there are few volumes equal to a good Hymnal as an aid to private devotion. In the hymns of such a collection every phase of Christian experience finds beautiful and helpful rhythmic [sic] expression, as also well-nigh every plaint and yearning of penitent and believing hearts.

The Role of W. T. Hogue

In 1907 Wilson T. Hogue published *Hymns That Are Immortal: With some account of their Authorship, Origin, History and Influence* (Chicago: S. K. J. Chesbro). Hogue says he wrote the book "as a result of studies pursued by the author in the fulfillment of duties imposed upon him by his appointment to serve on a committee on hymn-book revision." Clearly he is

referring to his work on the new FM hymnal, though curiously Hogue makes no mention of the Free Methodist Church. In fact there is nothing in the book that identifies the author with the Free Methodist Church. The publisher is listed as "S. K. J. Chesbro," Chicago. But unless readers knew that Chesbro (Chesbrough) was the Free Methodist publishing agent, or already knew who Hogue was, they would have no idea of the FM connection. Clearly Hogue intended the book for a wider audience, and we know it went through more than one edition.

We also know, incidentally, that Hogue had embraced the rising movement of premillennialism some years earlier, in contrast to B. T. Roberts' views. It is not clear that Hogue exercised any direct influence on the eschatology (end-time views) embodied in the 1910 *Hymnal*, but this is an area where further study might be fruitful. □

(Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of the reprinted *The Holiness Hymnal* may contact Valerie Ellis at 6991 Five Mile Road, Blanchard, MI 49310, or phone her at 231-629-5133 or 231-972-8314. The cost is \$25 plus shipping, with possible discounts for larger orders.)

Bibliographic Note: L. R. Marston, *From Age to Age a Living Witness*, 345–48; Hogue, *History of the Free Methodist Church*, 2:216; and H. Snyder, *Populist Saints*, especially 809. The Dana Robert quote is from her book *Occupy Until I Come: A. T. Pierson and the Evangelization of the World* (Eerdmans, 2003), 94.

Snapshots from the Sesquicentennial General Conference



Top to Bottom:
Paul and Beth Patton as B.T. and Ellen Roberts; Historical Tour Marker

To view these pictures and more go to:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/52427767@N04/>



Book Review

Riches of Wesleyan Holiness Literature

So many good books have recently been published that this time we profile several instead of reviewing one only.

The most significant book ever published on Francis Asbury is John Wigger's masterful new biography, *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists* (Oxford, 2009; 543 pp.). This is the first fully comprehensive biography of the principal founder of American Methodism and is a pleasure to read.

Donald Demaray's latest is *Things Unshakable: Spiritual Formation Readings for Reflection from the Pen of Paul S. Rees* (Emeth Press, 2011; 100 pp.). A good writer edited by another good writer is a treasure. These are columns by Rees from *The Asbury Herald* of the 1960s and 1970s. When the very first selection emphasizes the physical reality of Jesus' resurrection and quotes Karl Barth and Bernard Ramm, you know you're in for a treat, and meat.

C. Wesley King has published *Holiness for Earnest Christians* (Schmul Publishing, 2009; 301 pp.), with a foreword by Dennis Kinlaw. The book begins with a helpful focus on the character of God and ends with "Steps to Receiving Holiness of Heart and Life" (Chap. 11). The book makes extensive use of Scripture and of Wesley and other holiness writers. Wes King and his wife Mary served for thirty years as FM missionaries in

Brazil, where Wes pastored and taught in the FM seminary. He continues a ministry of teaching and writing.

Masterful Living: New Vocabulary for the Holy Life, by Kevin Mannoia (Metaformation and Wesleyan Holiness Consortium, 2011; 110 pp.) is similar in topic but considerably different in approach. Mannoia defines holiness as "living full of the Master who is holy." He argues that holiness is "relational more than propositional," "descriptive rather than prescriptive," and "centered more than bounded."

Lowell Noble has published *From Oppression to Jubilee Justice* (Urban Verses, 2007; 131 pp.), with foreword and epilogue by John Perkins. Noble taught sociology and anthropology at Spring Arbor University for twenty-five years and now volunteers with the John Perkins Foundation. He defines his passion as creating "a theology of society to undergird Christian Community Development." This book, which deals with key biblical themes, is part of that effort.

Finally, Richard Roth, who earlier wrote a history of the Southern Michigan Conference, has published *A Cloud of Witnesses: Bridging the Past with the Future: A History of the North Michigan Conference of the Free Methodist Church, 1876–2009* (Ray Printing, 2009; 219 pp.), building on work previously done by the late Alfred A. Ruble.

With the exception of Wigger (and Rees), all these authors are Free Methodists with long histories of service to the church.

— Howard A. Snyder

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