

EARNEST CHRISTIAN

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EARNEST CHRISTIAN

INTRODUCTION

As the centennial celebration of the founding of the Free Methodist Church of North America draws near, the conviction grows that the history of that church for almost one hundred years reflects, to a great extent, the life and works of one man, Benjamin Titus Roberts, its founder. Emerson's assertion that "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man" is clearly depicted. Generally as the shadow lengthens it becomes vague, but with some men its outlines remain distinct while the area of influence widens. With the subject of this study, the shadow has not only lengthened in the enlarged church, but Mr. Roberts is being more fully recognized in renaming, in his honor, the school which he founded, and in the republication of one of his books, entitled *Fishers of Men*, in 1948. The torch that was held in his hand is the church that he suffered to found; the flame of that torch, his burning love for God and all mankind, especially the poor and oppressed. He tried to promote earnest Christianity in this land. For thirty-three years he edited a magazine significantly named *The Earnest Christian*. He himself was an EARNEST CHRISTIAN, filled with zeal, a flaming example of his Master's holy anointing.

Time softens the characters which it touches. The ecclesiastical conflict, which centered in the person of Mr. Roberts and which resulted in the formation of the Free Methodist Church, has grown dim through the mist of the years. The wounds and bitterness that arose in connection with those disturbances have been allayed, and even though certain issues are necessarily reviewed here, they will probably be judged more charitably, in the light of subsequent events, than would have been possible for those so closely involved in the ecclesiastical ferment of the times. Abel Stevens, prolific writer of Methodism, said, "Great events, involving as they naturally do, extensive controversies and agitations, require time for their right estimation; the characteristic portraiture of their leaders (the best *dramatis personae* of history) cannot be impartially made while the chief actors or their families still survive." During the writing of this work, the last member of the family of Mr. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, M. D., passed away. The dictum of Longfellow, that if a life is worth writing at all, it is worth writing "minutely and truthfully," has been heeded.

This biographical work of Mr. Roberts is significant for Methodist history because of his relation to the ideas and development of the parent body. To the larger church, he is mainly important as a center of the religio-social developments that resulted in the formation of a new church. His attitudes on national affairs are particularly interesting with reference to the problems peculiar to the Civil War period, and organizational activities on behalf of the farmer. His strong opposition to monopolies and trusts, and his comments on labor organizations, and on social and economic questions, supplement the highly devotional character of his writings with their strong emphasis upon piety. His call to return to what he considered the elemental gospel pulsates throughout. Considerable interest is found in the fact that his advanced ideas economically and socially are combined with an extreme conservatism in the field of

religion. There is no better comment of loving devotion than the relations of Mr. and Mrs. Roberts. They shared together the founding and development of the educational institution now known as Roberts Wesleyan College, significant mainly because of its emphasis upon a work-study program.

Herein is attempted a reorientation and interpretation of the life and works of Mr. Roberts with the avowed purpose of presenting him in his more human and intimate relations. Inasmuch as the published works of Mr. Roberts grew mainly out of his life task, an effort has been made to project his ideas into all the major activities in which he was engaged. An emphasis is laid upon organizational form and consecutive development, particularly significant with reference to the church he founded. The social-economic implications are given a larger place than formerly.

As to its scope, the entire life of Mr. Roberts has been reviewed. The initial purpose had been more or less to waive the controversial issues involved in the church, but as the study was made, the life of the man was seen to be so largely involved in the organization that its inclusion became essential to a complete picture. His educational interests were also such an integral part of the life he lived that it became necessary to treat this field more fully. The travel aspects of his ministry were largest since he moved as General Superintendent throughout this country and Canada, so that more space proportionately has been given to them. His life has been treated as consecutively as possible from the historic viewpoint. However, in the interests of a comprehensive whole, particular aspects of his life have been grouped and reviewed, and a few necessary touches have been added incidentally from a following period, or are reviewed briefly from a preceding one. Since all of his travels could not be included, certain portions were chosen that indicated more life and movement.

The original source materials for this study have been unusually large, most significant of which is a large collection of letters and papers of the Roberts family which have been preserved, and which had never, until this time, been made available for study. Much of this has been background material and unquoted. More than eight hundred of those letters which were read, were filed; besides, certain excerpts were taken from a large number of others which were not retained on file.

This work as originally done was submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Pittsburgh in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, which was conferred in 1951. Acknowledgment is gratefully made to Dr. John A. Nietz, thesis advisor and Professor at the University of Pittsburgh for his assistance and his close and valued supervision, and to Dr. Lawrence C. Little, Professor of Religious Education, for his advice and constant encouragement. Dr. S. P. Franklin, in whose classes the first incentive to complete this work was augmented, and Dr. Charles Reed Zahniser, now deceased, who greatly encouraged the author, deserve appreciation. The most important contribution came through the generosity and kindness, as well as confidence, of Dr. and Mrs. George W. Garlock who lent invaluable aid by making available original materials never before studied or published. Also the kindness and assistance of Miss Hazel Sager, and the use of materials from Miss Celia Lawton and Mr. Wallace Worbois are noteworthy. Various librarians were most courteous and helpful, especially Miss Ora Sprague of Roberts Wesleyan College, Mr. Beach of Garrett Biblical institute, and Miss Wilson and Mrs. Day of the Buffalo Public Library.

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED TO MY WIFE, FANNIE ELIZABETH,

without whose help this work could not have been done, spending, as she has, long weeks in typing and correcting copy, as well as giving valued criticisms.

EARNEST CHRISTIAN

CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY AND EARLY LIFE OF BENJAMIN TITUS ROBERTS

A. BIRTH AND ANCESTRY

1. Birth

2. Parentage

B. TRAINING

1. Early Schooling

2. Study of Law

C. RELIGIOUS TRAINING

1. The Sunday School

2. Conversion

D. LATER SCHOOLING

1. Lima Seminary

2. Wesleyan University

A man in his late sixties, presiding over the General Conference of the denomination he had helped to organize, called his fellow Superintendent to the chair, and took the floor in defense of a resolution which had to do with the ordination of women. After admitting his own physical inability at that time to do justice to the subject, and almost despairingly stating, "I have lost heart and lost strength," he went on to argue that men had been brought up to regard women as inferior, and were not willing that the same rights should be given to them. Very many had been brought up under English influences and German influences, and they were powerful in opposing liberal opinions on this subject. He added:

My ancestors were Welsh. I was born with a love of freedom. My earliest recollection of my great-grandfather was as a Revolutionary soldier, and as far as I know I have always stood on the side of the oppressed at any risk. [\[1\]](#)

A. BIRTH AND ANCESTRY

1. Birth

This man, who had then been General Superintendent of his church for thirty years, and who was still endeavoring to carry a conviction which had been his for a lifetime, was born in the year 1823 on a farm "in the uplands of Cattaraugus County, among the hills of western New York, rich in well timbered farms." [2] This was the region of the Genesee country which had been explored and pioneered with such tremendous energy by Charles Williamson. As late as 1792, Mr. Williamson stated, "There is not a road within one hundred miles of the Genesee Country, that will admit of any sort of conveyance than on horseback, or a sled when the ground is covered with snow." [3] Into this rapidly developing country was born, to lowly parents, a child to whom was given the name, Benjamin Titus Roberts.

2. Parentage

His mother, Mrs. Sally Ellis Roberts, was born on Grand Island in Lake Champlain in 1803. When she was two years of age, her parents moved to Smyrna, Chenango County. Ten years later they went to a farm near Forestville where, while living in a log house, she was married to Titus Roberts. [4] Her long life of over ninety-two years took her through the life work of her son, and made her a mourner at his funeral. The Gowanda Leader recorded at her death:

Between her cradle and her grave is written the progress and greatness of the nineteenth century. Her life deserves more than a passing note. A woman of strong religious convictions, of deep and abiding piety, and rugged character she stamped her impress on her family, church and society; and at her own hearthstone grew up a boy who was to be the father of a new denomination in the sisterhood of churches. [5]

In 1827, Titus and Sally Roberts went to Gowanda, and in 1855 moved into the old homestead which became a familiar spot to all the preachers who traveled the Gowanda and Collins circuit. [6] Firmness and sincerity were marked characteristics of each. Despite her advanced years, the spirit of independence, which also characterized her son, was so strong in her that she absolutely refused to have anyone care for her except when she was sick. The religious zeal of his mother doubtless left its impress on the boy, Benjamin. The home was one where fervent prayer ascended to God around the family altar. [7] Titus Roberts was one of the first settlers in Chataqua County. He moved there from Madison County in the state of New York. At that time the wilderness was scarcely broken. From Buffalo, which was then a village of less than a dozen houses, their only road was the beach of the lake. They had to go to mill to Black Rock by boat. He was converted while engaged in the mercantile business, in a meeting held by evangelists who had been raised up under the labors of Charles G. Finney. A few years after his conversion, Titus Roberts sold out his business, joined the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church and preached for one year. But his business, having come back into his hands again, he left the Conference, and from that time till near the close of his life, he labored as a Local Preacher. [8]

B. TRAINING

1. Early Schooling.

The schooling of young Benjamin Titus was about the only interesting aspect of his boyhood. Like most children of the farm in that early period, his days were spent amid scenes of toil, and lacking in many of the benefits that come to those by way of wealth. The raggedness of his constitution in after years was due in no small degree to this early conditioning.

By the flickering light of a candle, or the bright blaze of the fireplace, he studied such books as were taught in the district schools. He engaged in spelling matches which were held frequently in that day, and went from school to school to spell down other competitors. He studied algebra before he saw anyone who understood the science, and began the study of Latin without a teacher. [9]

Schooling and school teaching went hand in hand in his young manhood. By the time he was sixteen, he taught school, often having pupils older in years than himself. Little is known of this period except as it carried over into his later years in his love of precision of speech and in the clarity of his ideas.

2. Study of Law

His study of law was entered upon during the period of his early school teaching. He traveled to Little Falls New York in April of 1842 to be apprenticed to Mr. H. Link There he often watched the Mohawk River rush down though the romantic gorge on its way to the historic Hudson In May 1844 he returned home and continued his law studies with Mr. C. Howe There he remained until an epochal spiritual experience turned him aside from entrance to the bar, for which he would have been ready shortly.

During this period, he began to champion the temperance cause. He early became a speaker at temperance meetings. [10] One of his first speeches as a law student was an abolition speech; that too at a time when the word abolition was a term of severe reproach. a verbal stigma, and in many communities a precursor of physical persecution.

One clearly sees the influence of his law training in the fact that when, years later, he came up for church trial in his own chosen denomination, he kept his defense in his own hands. The adequate handling of that defense, as evidenced by the records left, [11] and the testimony of lawyers who attended the trial, [12] speak for the thoroughness of his law work during this period.

C. RELIGIOUS TRAINING

1. The Sunday School

It is necessary to retrace some steps to discover what led Mr. Roberts to turn aside from his plans for a life in the profession of law. In a running sketch of his life, given in the year 1865, he said:

I have nothing good to say of myself . . . My early associates, many of them, went to ruin. But God's Spirit from my earliest recollections strove with me and restrained me. I never drank wine but once, and that was at a New Year's call. Tobacco I never used, and profanity I abhorred. It was all of grace. [\[13\]](#)

The Sunday School was a factor in his own spiritual training. He continued:

A Presbyterian minister came to me one day when a boy and invited me to go to Sabbath School. I went. I committed many chapters of the Bible to memory. At one lesson I recited the whole of the Epistle of James. Years after, I studied law. Many of my later associates openly rejected the Bible, but my knowledge of its contents not only kept me from infidelity, but enabled me to expose and refute their sophistical objections. [\[14\]](#)

Sometime during this period, the Presbyterian minister of his home town of Gowanda desired to have him educated for the ministry of his church. The young man declined the generous proposal with the statement, "I cannot accept it as I have not been converted." Later this offer was renewed. His refusal was regarded by some as the reticence of modesty. [\[15\]](#) Without doubt, he owed a debt of gratitude to that man who showed such an unusual interest in him.

Another Presbyterian who exerted a lasting influence upon the young man was an older man of puritanical convictions, a business man of some means. He was a zealous antislavery promoter, and was exceedingly rigid in his observance of the Sabbath day, so much so that he ordered his teamsters never to drive on that day, even if they had to wait over within three miles of home. When reverses came and all was swept away, he began anew by purchasing a tract of wild land through which a railroad was afterwards built. He sold the tract in lots, and in the deed of every lot he sold, he inserted a clause prohibiting the sale of ardent spirits upon the premises. Mr. Roberts added, "For this old, puritanic, Godfearing, abiding piety we confess we have a great admiration." [\[16\]](#)

2. Conversion

It was not until Mr. Roberts returned from Little Falls, New York, in May, 1844, to continue his law studies with Mr. Howe that the climactic, spiritual committal of his life took place. The following account is in his own words:

At length it pleased God to answer the prayers of my friends in my behalf. He awakened me to a sense of my lost condition. The instrument was very humble, A pious, illiterate cooper, a very bad stammerer, gave in his testimony at the regular Sabbath afternoon prayer meeting. I was there by invitation of friends, and his testimony found way to my heart. There was no special religious interest but I felt that it was my duty to become a Christian. I commenced to pray. It was hard work, but God encouraged me to persevere. As the light of the Spirit shone, I gave up one thing after another, but I clung to my

profession. For three weeks or more, I plead with the Lord to convert me, but to let me have my choice in the business I would follow. Many who had power with God prayed for me; but I had to yield. Christ demanded an unconditional surrender; I made it. The joys of pardon and peace flowed into my soul. My cup was full, my happiness was unspeakable. [\[17\]](#)

D. LATER SCHOOLING

1. Lima Seminary

The conversion of Mr. Roberts in July, 1844, was followed by a decision to follow the ministry as a career, so he abruptly left off his studies of law, and went to Lima Seminary to prepare for college entrance. It was here he became acquainted with Loren Stiles in 1845, when they were both students at the Seminary, and through many years, they were devoted friends until death took Mr. Stiles. Mr. Roberts recounted of their close association that they had both intended to prosecute their studies farther than through the academic course, but feeling that the Seminary professors were formal, they feared to go on lest they should lose their first love and become cold and formal. They felt that "learning was good, but salvation was better." [\[18\]](#)

Two terms at Lima were sufficient to fit Mr. Roberts to enter college in the fall of 1845. It was during this preparatory period that he wrote to his sister, in a letter dated July 1, 1845:

O, that He would deign to work through so humble an instrument as myself, and by the means of this animated clay, open the eyes of infatuated, sinbenighted mortals. But the more I know of myself the more do I feel my incapacity for standing as a watchman on the walls of Zion. [\[19\]](#)

He wrote to his mother also:

O, mother, I long to know more of God, to enjoy more of his love shed abroad in my heart. Tell me how to crucify myself to the world and live wholly to God. Religion grows more lovely to me the more I know of it: and I hope and expect to live religion while I live, that when I die, I may meet all the saints of God around the throne. [\[20\]](#)

That he was applying himself with diligence is deduced from the above letter in which he stated, "We are all preparing here as hard as we can to get through this term and close up." [\[21\]](#)

2. Wesleyan University

(a) Middletown, Connecticut. Soon after returning home from Lima Seminary, he was accompanied by his father and sister as far as New York on his way to Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut.

He took the steamboat up Long Island Sound and the Connecticut River to the scene of his further preparation for his calling. Middletown made a most favorable impression upon the young man. In a letter to his sister, he wrote that Middletown was "certainly without exception" the pleasantest place he had known. It lay on the west bank of the Connecticut River, some thirty miles from its mouth, and sixteen miles below Hartford. He explained that the land from the river ascended back with a "gradual and even rise." Some of the streets ran parallel with the river, and were intersected by others crossing them at right angles, thus forming some "beautiful squares." He was impressed that the houses were all good, many of them elegant and costly. He had not seen a "poor dwelling" in the town, and almost every house was surrounded by a large and well cultivated garden, containing some choice fruit trees; and many "situations had a fine, large yard in front filled with ornamental trees and shrubs," all of which gave the city an appearance of "elegance and comfort." [\[22\]](#)

This university city where he was to remain until his graduation in 1848 was the business center of a rich agricultural area. It was an old town, settled in 1650 by colonists from Hartford and Wethersfield, first incorporated in 1651 under its Indian name of Mattabeseck. In 1653 it had been renamed Middletown because of its position midway between Hartford and Wethersfield. This was the era of prosperity. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, it was one of the most prosperous towns in the state, and at the time of our study was a thriving industrial, commercial, and educational community.

To give a picture of youth's reactions to its surroundings, a letter from Hannah R. Potter to Miss Ellen Stowe, who was destined later to become the wife of B. T. Roberts, is recorded. Said Miss Potter:

From my window, I have a little miniature view of the Connecticut which seems to roll on silently among the hills and meadows; as if fearful to disturb the slumbers of our peaceful inhabitants. A pale, gray magic vale is spread over the enchanting scene, and the light clouds of heaven seem to be reflected on it as in a mirror in the distance. A few light silvery flakes, unmoved by a breath of air, overspread the canopy of heaven.[\[23\]](#)

No doubt Mr. Roberts shared the beauty of the river with faculty and students in that day. Miss Potter described a picnic of "all the faculty and their families and several students" rowing the river singing, keeping time with the oars, and exploring the shore. Banners, carried with the titles, "We are Roaming," "Life in the Woods," "Much ado about Nothing," and on the provision boat, "Non Nobisnate" (Not made for ourselves), portrayed some of the spirit of the institution on a gala day.[\[24\]](#)

(b) The University Buildings. The appearance of the institution that graced the town, Wesleyan University, presented, in Mr. Roberts' thinking, a complete contrast to the pleasant homes of the community. He was looking at the buildings of the American Literacy, Scientific, and Military Institute which the founders of Wesleyan University had accepted on condition that they raise an endowment of forty thousand dollars, and before the newer buildings had been erected to grace the campus. South College, built in 1824, was acquired by Wesleyan at the time of its incorporation in 1831. For many years this building served as a recitation hall, chapel, and dormitory. Another place which was doubtless familiar to Mr. Roberts was the College Cemetery, located between Foss House and the Observatory,

where President and Mrs. Wilbur Fisk and President and Mrs. Stephen Olin were buried subsequently.

In a letter to his sister. Mr. Roberts affirmed that as much as he loved learning for itself, and greatly as he desired to become versed in human lore, nothing but "clear conviction of duty," brought to his mind by "Providential interferences in opening the way," could ever induce him to spend three years within those "gloomy" walls. For, in the "quaint true words" of his friend Morrow to his friends at home, "The houses here are aristocratic the college looks more like a prison than an institution of learning."[\[25\]](#) But he philosophized that he ought to feel "at home" when pursuing the path conscience and the Spirit of God pointed out for him to walk in.[\[26\]](#)

(c) Faculty Problems. The problems of the faculty members of Wesleyan University were not different from the human problems of our own day. The wife of Professor Harvey Lane, writing to her mother the year after Mr. Roberts was graduated, said that Professor Smith's salary had been cut down to one thousand dollars and that he thought he should be obliged to close their house in order to live on his income. He had complained "bitterly" and she thought he might leave the institution when a "better offer" presented itself. He had always had a salary of eleven hundred and fifty dollars previously. "But this is private," she confided.[\[27\]](#)

(d) Stephen Olin, President. There is a brighter side to the picture, however, when attention is directed to the outstanding character then at Wesleyan, Dr. Stephen Olin, whose great intellect was matched by his understanding sympathy for youth. Dr. Fisk, founder of the University, had been allowed a European trip to restore his health, and to buy books and apparatus. He was accompanied by Professor Harvey B. Lane, the cousin whose home was frequently visited by Ellen L. Stowe. Dr. Fisk was known for his ability to choose invariably the right man for professorships. When his health failed and he saw that another would have to take over the institutional burdens, he had named Dr. Stephen Olin as his successor. Dr. Olin did not assume his duties, however, until 1842, after spending some time in foreign travel. At the time Mr. Roberts entered Wesleyan University, Dr. Olin was a man in the height of his career as minister and college president. Doubtless the influence of Dr. Olin was great in shaping the views of Mr. Roberts on a gospel for the poor. Mr. Roberts quoted Dr. Olin as saying:

Sometimes we hear men prate about 'preaching that may do for common people, while it is good for nothing for the refined and educated!' This is a damning heresy. It is a ruinous delusion. All breathe the same air. All are of one blood. All die. There is precisely one Gospel for all; and that is the Gospel that the poor have preached to them. The poor are the favored ones. They are not called up. The great are called down. They may dress, and feed, and ride, and live in ways of their own choosing; but as to getting to heaven, there is only God's way, the way of the poor.[\[28\]](#)

It is small wonder that such a man as described by John E. Robie in the Buffalo Christian Advocate, should greatly influence the students. He maintained that Dr. Olin was the most powerful preacher he had ever heard, and he made the assertion without a reservation. Mr. Olin did not "affect the orator," his manner had peculiarities which were "against the laws of art." He "gesticulated badly, defying all rules."

His utterances were often "exceedingly defective," especially when he was "powerfully excited." Such, however, was the "massive magnitude of his ideas, the majesty of his language, the comprehensiveness of his logic, sweeping in mighty curves around the whole field of his subject, and concentrating at its very core," and such the earnestness of his spirit, rising often to sublimity, that one was "overwhelmed, if not appalled, at the example of intellectual and moral mightiness which he presented." [29] Mr. Robie asserted that his "very failures" were usually great sermons, being remarkable for their thorough thought and sound logic, even when they lacked his "usual vivid feeling." [30]

(e) Revival under Redfield. Perhaps the outstanding spiritual experience of Roberts during his Middletown years was the revival held there by John Wesley Redfield, M.D., who became one of the outstanding evangelistic leaders in the "west." Among the personal papers of Mr. Roberts is to be found the license which made Dr. Redfield a local preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Mr. Roberts gave his impressions of the revivalist. He said he had first heard Dr. Redfield preach while attending school in the city of Middletown, Connecticut, where his preaching created a "profound sensation." He wrote of Redfield's "unearthly, overpowering eloquence," and "moving appeals" which disarmed criticism, and prepared the way for the reception of the searching messages he presented. For a time, those at the school doubted which way the scale would turn. Dr. Olin heard of the commotion, and being unwilling to take the representation of any, arose from a sick bed, and went to hear for himself. Mr. Roberts said that Olin with his "majestic intellect," and deep experience in the things of God "could not easily be imposed upon," and a "candid hearing" satisfied him both of the "sincerity and the soundness of the preacher." "This, brethren, is Methodism, and you must stand by it," he had asserted, and, Roberts commented, "His word was law." The faculty, the official members, and the church then received and endorsed the work. Mr. Roberts said that he had never before witnessed such results as followed. Professors of the college, men of outwardly blameless lives, saw that they were not "right with God," frankly confessed it, and "laying aside their official dignity," went forward for prayers. The city and adjoining country were moved, and for some eight or ten weeks, the altar was "crowded with penitents," from fifty to a hundred going forward at a time. Dr. Olin seconded the effort in the University, and went beyond his strength in exhorting the students and praying for them. Mr. Roberts added that nearly all the young men in the college were "converted" and of the converts, a large number became ministers of the gospel. [31] It is recorded that three hundred were converted at the church while the work went forward at the college. Joseph Goodwin Terrill said that President Olin took a lively interest in the work, and though in ill health, he undertook to give a ten minute talk to the students in a large recitation room one day, but the "minutes swelled into hours; and the speech was afterward published as one of his great intellectual efforts." [32] A letter written to Ellen Lois Stowe by a student during that period, may perhaps recount that very experience spoken of by Mr. Terrill. She said:

I have just returned from a prayer meeting at College. It is the annual concert of prayer for colleges. The room (you know the one for prayer meetings) was crowded full and after the meeting had just commenced, Dr. Olin came in and after one or two prayers he arose and addressed the students. Oh, Ellen, here is where I must fail to give you any idea of the power, the mighty power in his speech. The whole College seemed moved After

speaking of the object for which they had convened, the great importance of educated men being pious men, he addressed himself particularly to those who had made up their minds to seek religion. Oh! what power!! Why, Ellen, tears streamed from all eyes and convulsive Sobs of joy were heard from all sides. [\[33\]](#)

As a result of this revival, there were nearly four hundred conversions, and twenty-six of the students became ministers of the gospel. Here it was that William Kendall, a classmate of Roberts both at Lima and at Middletown, entered into a more deeply consecrated life. Dr. Daniel Steele, also a classmate, might have been inspired for the life and work of writing on the deeper themes of Christian life and experience. The influence upon Mr. Roberts can be traced more fully in the positions he afterwards took which harmonized with the preaching he heard during his Middletown years. That Mr. Roberts did identify himself as a seeker at the altar for prayers may be deduced from the letter to Ellen Stowe quoted above, which reads:

There have been, I should think, between twenty and thirty conversions here, not many of your acquaintance. I suppose, however, of the students Roberts and Brigham you may remember.. They have both come out decidedly for the Lord. They both, I believe, thought to have experienced religion before. [\[34\]](#)

The impressions on the mind of Mr. Roberts concerning the effectiveness of Dr. Redfield led him to select Dr. Redfield as evangelist for revival meetings, after he became a minister, and to entertain him in his home.

(f) Essays. The attitudes of Mr. Roberts toward school life and activity are revealed by the essays and addresses of this period. In his essay on "Beauty" there is revealed something of his extreme individualism. He wrote:

By the beautiful I mean that quality of an object which is capable, when the mind is in its ordinary state, of exciting in it this sensation. Anything that excites in me this sensation of beauty is beautiful to me, though it be unable to produce the same feeling in any, other individual. Whether it does excite in me this sensation or not, I alone can determine. [\[35\]](#)

He took to himself the same dictum of a right to decide in the realm of religion.

An essay on "Self Reliance" throws some light on his nature and disposition. He wrote:

We should study to know our own capabilities. The history of the achievements of prowess and genius is chiefly useful as it informs us of what we are capable of accomplishing. [\[36\]](#)

Then, after referring to some others as Plato, Cicero, Paul, and Luther, he rather boldly, in the spirit of Supreme self confidence known to college youth, asserted.

Had we lived in their day we might have wrought the work which they achieved Living in an age of greater demands, if we but open our hearts to the inspiration which may be granted to us, not less than to any who have gone before, and availing ourselves of the better instrumentalities fitted to our use, we may like them set in motion influences which shall be felt long after the bell of eternity has mournfully wrung the knell of the departure of earth.[\[37\]](#)

He further expressed his belief that "correct principles can and will prevail when properly advocated, even in spite of public opinion," and that

The powers of everyone properly improved and employed are adequate to the surmounting of every obstacle that can be presented in the pathway of duty if we with strong hearts rise above all doubt, and trust in ourselves and in the power that always sustains the good and true.[\[38\]](#)

That unswerving purpose, however interpreted, which characterized his after life, might have found its source in his ideal of action, expressed in the more flowery style of his youth:

Unmoved by the trumpet voice of popular applause that often lures to swift destruction, undaunted by the loud asseverations of an infatuated people rushing with mad impetuosity to the brink of ruin, his is neither attracted nor driven from the orbit in which a higher than earthly potentate has commanded him to move. As soon the shining spheres should quit their course and fly in wild confusion through the boundless realms of infinite space, as he forsake the path his conscience and his God made for him to tread.[\[39\]](#)

Not only with faith in the path of duty but in the power of self discipline to accomplish its ends, he averred:

This character admired by men, applauded by angels, and approved by God is in the power of each of us to cultivate, Not without an effort can we thus rise, not without a desperate struggle can we break the charm around us thrown by the short lived pleasures of sensual enjoyment.[\[40\]](#)

A letter dated June 27, 1846, added a note of realism to the words above:

Surrounded as I am by temptations of the most seducing kind, and taking into view my own natural weakness, I am led to wonder at that grace which has thus kept me from falling.[\[41\]](#)

He was learning the valuable lesson that the designs of God are in the path of application. On May 21, 1847, he wrote his sister, "Study and toil are again the order of the day. But I do not know that I dread it

much."[\[42\]](#)

Nor is there evidence lacking that in these early days there was the normal spirit of enjoyment. From a paper entitled, "A Ramble to the Housatonic," one may follow him on foot through a forest "naked and leafless from the winter blast" with nature's songsters giving "inspiring notes." He stood moralizing, seeing the river as the symbol of a man, overcoming all difficulties; "like the majestic river, impelled by the divinity within him, he moves calmly on." Or he saw the river as a sign of progress reminding him that "we should ever be pressing after some higher excellence." Then clambering up a moss-covered rock he looked down at the "torrent roaring below," the hills around him seeming "to vie with one another in grotesque singularity." His ramble took him into a woolen factory where he saw the difference between the hand loom of yesterday and the speed on the looms of the day. Before he was through he discovered that a little girl of eleven or twelve years of age was "attending two or three of the carding machines." "She was of elegant form, fine shaped features, with beautiful eyes, and the most intelligent expressive countenance I ever beheld on a young girl of her age," Mr. Roberts noted. He found by interrogation that she had worked there for two years, and was surprised and almost indignant when he learned that she was the daughter of the owner of the mill, and was kept there through the sordid avariciousness of the father. Hence, even this excursion of pleasure ended in a conclusion that applied to industry, "This is much against our factories. Children are put into them at an age when they ought to be in school."[\[43\]](#)

This little trip reflected his love of nature in those early years. To his sister he enthused over the scene of his activities:

I have spent vacation here, reading, sailing, etc., enjoying it much. I wish you were here by my side this morning, that you might look out from my window on the most delightful prospect you ever beheld. I have looked at it a thousand times, and it seems more beautiful than ever. The trees are finely leaved out, the meadows and the fields are clothed in their brightest green, the curving river rolls gently and gracefully along, bearing on its bosom, and plainly in sight, several sun reflecting sails, the birds are gaily chanting their most cheerful lays, and lilacs and lilies and pinks are filling the air with the most grateful fragrance.[\[44\]](#)

Admitting that the latter part of his vacation had been lonely, since he knew many of his school chums were in New York on country excursions, and failing, perhaps, to have received that longexpected letter from his sister whom he dearly loved, he sat down and penned this little poem to her:

*Have cares upon you come so fast
Since you have come together
That you can find no time to write
To a poor lonely brother?
Perhaps you think it matters not.
But I will sure tell Mother
That you have quite refused to write*

*To your e'er scribbling brother.
And in my anger I will give
My love all to another;
And then I guess you'll wish you had
Been prompt to write your brother.*[\[45\]](#)

That threat of giving his affection to another was soon to be fulfilled and it was to another that he wrote:

*I have thought of thee when the stars were hung
Beauteous on high,
When night had her sable shadows flung
Across the sky.*[\[46\]](#)

But the story of his romance is left to another chapter since it began at the close of his university career.

The bent of his mind during his college days was reflected in the papers which he wrote. Poverty, he spoke of, as the worst offense. "In all the fearful catalogue of human crime, what other can be found equal in enormity to the crime of poverty?" The closing paragraph of that little brochure was an exhortation:

As then, you would avoid the deadly fang of the serpent, whose bite defiles and destroys, avoid poverty. It will disqualify thee for all honorable avocations, unfit thee for filling any post of importance or trust, stamp deep upon thee the insignia of thy dishonor and disgrace, attain the blood of thy innocent offspring, and render them, like thyself, loathed and abhorred. Let it not therefore come nigh thee nor thy dwelling.[\[47\]](#)

This scathing irony is reflected in his later choices for the poor, and yet at the same time, this philosophy of life, not to be a child of poverty, he heeded by every possible businesslike means he could.

(g) Teaching School. It was during this school period, in 1846, that Mr. Roberts resumed his teaching career to help meet the expenses of his training at the university. At sixteen he had been a schoolmaster, so the experience was not altogether a new one. He wrote:

I intend to leave for my school district, about thirty-six miles from this place I have a good, orderly forward school. I have some studying algebra, geometry, Latin, a class reading Virgil, and expect a class in Greek next week. The people have found out that a student from Wesleyan University is teaching school here, and they are sending in from other districts. I have never taught a more pleasant school, or one easier to govern. I do not punish, and yet I do not hear a whisper from Monday morning to Saturday night. I have not been homesick yet, though this is a back, gloomy place.[\[48\]](#)

That his description of Connecticut school houses stemmed from his own observation is most probable. He described them as "wretched apologies" for school houses, located in some "triangular nook between three roads," exposed to the rudest blasts of winter's wind and to the scorching rays of the summer's sun, with external aspect reminding one of the "shaggy covering of the grisly bear," and internal arrangements to correspond to outside appearance, the seats and benches being usually "exquisite instruments of torture."[\[49\]](#) And although little was done for education, he protested that almost every school district had several "cider mills, distilleries and grog shops." The "highly respectable appearance" which many of the latter presented indicated to Mr. Roberts how much better they were patronized than seminaries of learning.[\[50\]](#)

The school Roberts taught, which began with about fifty-six pupils and increased to seventy as the winter months came on, was in much better condition than some. He wrote to his sister that when he went to the school house where he was to teach, he found that the walls had been whitewashed, and the floors and seats scoured about as white as the walls. It looked neater than he was accustomed to see district school houses look. He commented upon the uniform attendance, and what he had never seen in any school before, "almost every scholar is present at the opening of the school in the morning at nine o'clock."[\[51\]](#)

The dynamic and self-confident spirit of Mr. Roberts as a young man is evidenced by a letter written to his father from Wesleyan University in 1847, when he had failed to secure a position of teaching school at Lodi, New York, for which he had applied. Commenting upon it, he remarked that he could not say that he regretted it very much except on one account. "I should like an opportunity to show the good people of Lodi to their satisfaction that though young, I am not inexperienced." He believed he had seen "quite as much of human life in its varied phases" as usually fell to the lot of one of his age. And as for experience in teaching, he estimated he had taught on the average one season a year since he had been sixteen, and he had "reason to believe" that it had been to the "satisfaction of all." He concluded:

So you will pardon my egotism, I trust, when I say that I think your village has lost a fine opportunity of securing an excellent school! They do not know me yet at Lodi, but if I live, with the blessing of God, they shall hear from me in such a way that they shall not be ashamed to say, 'He was from our place.'[\[52\]](#)

(h) Religious Duties. Besides teaching in the secular schools, Mr. Roberts was engaged in instructing others in religious subjects, one such activity being a Negro class which he described as "a very interesting class at the African Church. My class consists of young ladies, some of them, I believe, devoted Christians." He felt interested in them, and was striving and praying to be the means of doing them good.[\[53\]](#) He expressed the opinion that he did not believe the northern freeman could be found who would not rejoice to see an effective blow dealt out to the roots of domestic slavery. "We are only waiting for the time to come when the blow may be struck and the deadly tree may fall."[\[54\]](#) Yet, he admitted:

They have too much of the slavery spirit even here among the descendants of the Puritans, to worship the Universal Father in the same temple with their sable brethren. They have,

therefore, here in Connecticut not Negro slips, but Negro churches, Negro preachers, presiding elders and Conference.[\[55\]](#)

Mingled with his services to the black sisters were other and numerous ones. He taught a class of young ladies in the Methodist Church after morning service. Besides teaching these two classes on Sunday, he had charge of a school of seventy pupils, led class meeting one evening, prayer meeting another, and boarded around from place to place as he taught:[\[56\]](#) In his essay on "Connecticut" he commented:

And to make the boarding of the teacher as the chief expense connected with the school as light as possible, the woe-stricken teacher, like a parasite, is obliged to board round. Sometimes they improve upon this mode by letting him out to keep as they do their paupers, to the lowest bidder.[\[57\]](#)

Whether this cheaper boarding was his, one may but guess, but probably the demands of his physical and mental exertions guaranteed him sufficient food for adequate living.

(i) Mental Application. As to habits of study, Mr. Roberts believed that he should improve his time and talent to the glory of God. To his father he wrote:

College honors, I am afraid, have too much influence here. I have endeavored not to be swayed by them but I fear that they may have some effect on my mind. I would study because it is my duty to improve the faculties of mind which God has given me and to prepare myself for laboring in the cause of God and humanity.[\[58\]](#)

The serious turn of his mind in this respect is reflected in a letter to his sister in which he stated that he considered himself accountable to God for the manner in which he performed the various offices of the school room, and that "studying to do the best I can, I leave the room at night with a conscience void of offense toward God and man."[\[59\]](#) He followed by his own testimony, saying, "When my heart is often lifted up to God in secret prayer I meet with the greatest success studying. When I am happy in Christ my mind acts with vigor."[\[60\]](#) That his resolve of heart, given to his sister as the rule of his action while in the university, "I am resolved to make the interests of my soul of first importance, my bodily health second, and the improvement of my mind third,"[\[61\]](#) had much to do with his later life, is quite probable.

Roberts revealed in an epistle that he was not always serious. After writing quite humorously to his sister about a love affair, he reflected:

I hope the pleasantness in which I indulged in the former part of my letter will not induce you to think that I am becoming more trifling than formerly. At times I feel lively. But I don't think it wrong. On the contrary, I believe that my health formerly suffered much from melancholy. A correct adjustment of our feelings and deportment in this respect is no unimportant part of our Christian experience. To have a well regulated, well balanced

mind is of great worth. To gain it is my ambition.[\[62\]](#)

It was in Middletown that he imbibed his philosophy of education which is now called the "disciplinary." "The grand object in studying is to discipline the mind, expand its faculties, and prepare it for grappling with and overcoming obstacles."[\[63\]](#) Being near an excellent library he strove to improve his advantages for reading also.[\[64\]](#)

(j) *Graduation.* The results of devotion to study became apparent. As school days drew near their close for Mr. Roberts, he received one of the five scholarships awarded by Wesleyan University, and was chosen to take part in the literary exercises which were then termed the "Junior Exhibition." These honors he shared with two others who were to be associated with him, and with Methodist history, down through the years.

The program read as follows:

Oration "Mission of the American Scholar."

William C. Kendall, Covington, N. Y.

Classical Oration

(modern) "Genius of Saxon Literature."

Benjamin Titus Roberts, Lodi, N. Y.

Philosophical Oration

(mental) "The Moral, the Perfection of the Intellectual."

Daniel Steele, Windham Center, N. Y.[\[65\]](#)

Among the personal papers of Roberts is to be found a copy of his oration delivered at that time. Notice the central statement:

Still with these abatements (where Anglo Saxon literature has given itself to certain evils), the Anglo Saxon literature, in purity of expression, and devotion to the great interests of humanity, stands incomparably above that of any other age or nation. For this preeminency we are entirely indebted to the influence of our holy religion.[\[66\]](#)

The closing words of the oration are an endeavor to prove the truthfulness of the latter sentence. Words which seem more or less ordinary in the reading probably took flame in the more inspired setting of school days.

When he came to the closing days of his university career, one of the first college honors, the metaphysical oration, was assigned to him, and his scholastic attainments were sufficient to open to him the door of the learned society, Phi Beta Kappa. Of those last days at Middletown, he wrote to his father thus:

My Dear Father:

The long looked for period has at last nearly arrived. In a little more than five weeks graduation day will come, the first Wednesday in August, 1848. For four years most of our class have been anxiously waiting for that day. Our appointments for commencement have been given out. I have one of the first honors assigned to me, the metaphysical oration.[\[67\]](#)

Before leaving Middletown, Mr. Roberts was offered the presidency of Wyoming Seminary at Kingston, Pennsylvania. Consulting with Dr. Olin, the President of Wesleyan University, he received this comment, "There are more who are ready to teach than to preach,"[\[68\]](#) with the advice to hold to his calling. So highly did he regard Dr. Olin, and so strong was the urge to the ministry, that he joined the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church that fall, and entered upon the course he had chosen, the Methodist itineracy.

Endnotes

[\[1\]](#) B. T, Roberts, Speech before General Conference of the Free Methodist Church Quoted in General Conference Daily, (October 16, 1890), p.107.

[\[2\]](#) B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, (North Chili, New York: The Earnest Christian Office, 1900), p. 1.

[\[3\]](#) Arthur C. Parker, Charles Williamson, Builder of the Genesee Country. Address before Rochester Historical Society, March 16, 1927.

[\[4\]](#) B. H. Roberts. The Earnest Christian, (May, 1896), p. 158.

[\[5\]](#) Gowanda Leader, Gowanda, New York. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (May, 1896). p. 159.

[\[6\]](#) Ibid., p. 159.

[\[7\]](#) B. H. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (March, 1881), p.99.

[\[8\]](#) B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (April, 1881), p.130

[\[9\]](#) B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, pp. 1,2.

[\[10\]](#) Ibid.

[\[11\]](#) Defense of Rev. B. T. Roberts, A.M. before the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal

Church. (From Notes and Testimony Taken at the Trial) by Samuel K. J. Chesbrough. (Buffalo: Clapp, Matthews and Company's Steam Printing House, 1858).

[12] Letter from Mrs. B. T. Roberts to Mr. and Mrs. Titus Roberts, November 1859. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.182.

[13] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (January, 1865), 5.

[14] Ibid.

[15] B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, pp. 2, 3.

[16] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (October, 1866), p. 125.

[17] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (January, 1865), p. 5.

[18] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (July, 1868), p. 6.

[19] Letter from B. T. Roberts to sister, July 1, 1845. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.6.

[20] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his mother, undated. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.7.

[21] Ibid., p. 8.

[22] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his sister, September 5,1845. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, pp. 10, 11.

[23] Letter from E. R. Potter, Middletown, Connecticut, to Ellen Stowe, New York. June 10,1844. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his sister, September 5.1845. written from Middletown. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, pp. 10.11.

[26] Ibid., p.11

[27] Letter from Mrs. Harvey Lane to Lydia B. Lane, August 9, 1849. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[28] Dr. Stephen Olin. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest christian*, (March, 1864). 72.

[29] John E. Robie, *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, vol. LL, No. 15, (1852), 1.

[30] Ibid.

[31] B. T.. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (February, 1564).

[32] J. G. Terrill. *Life of Rev. John W. Redfield, M. D.*, (Chicago'. Free Methodist Publishing House. 1899), p.164.

[33] Letter from Ernie, Middletown, Connecticut, to Ellen Lois Stowe, New York, February 27, (undated as to year. but probably 1847 or 1848). Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[34] Ibid.

[35] B. T. Roberts, Essay on "Beauty," found among personal papers

[36] 15. T. Robert,, Essay on "Self Reliance," found among personal papers.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Letter from B. T. Roberts, written from Middletown, June 27, 1846. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.22.

[42] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his sister, May 21, 1847. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.25.

[43] B. T. Roberts, Essay on "A Ramble to the Housatonie," found among personal papers.

- [44] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his sister, May 21, 1847. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, pp. 25, 26.
- [45] B. T. Roberts, Poem to his sister. Found among the personal papers of B. T. Roberts.
- [46] B. T. Roberts, Poem found among personal papers.
- [47] B. T. Roberts, Essay on "Poverty." Found among the personal papers of B. T. Roberts.
- [48] Letter from B. T. Roberts, undated. quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, pp. 22, 23.
- [49] B T. Roberts, Essay on "Connecticut," found among personal papers.
- [50] Ibid.
- [51] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his sister. November 23. 1845. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, pp. 13, 14,15.
- [52] Letter from B. T. Roberts, written from Middletown, Connecticut, to his father, Titus Roberts, March 14,1847. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [53] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his sister, January 20, 1848. Quoted by B. H. Roberts Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.17.
- [54] B. T. Roberts. Essay on "Slavery" found among personal papers.
- [55] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his sister, January 20, 1846. quoted by B. H. Roberts. Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.17.
- [56] Ibid., Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, pp. 17, 18.
- [57] B. T. Roberts, Essay on "Connecticut," found among personal papers.
- [58] Letter from B. T. Roberts. Middletown to his father, March 17, 1847. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [59] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his sister, December 20, 1845. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.18.

[60] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his sister, November 23, 1845. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.14.

[61] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his sister, September 5, 1845. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.12.

[62] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his sister, November 16, 1848. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[63] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his sister, December 20, 1845. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family

[64] Letter from D. T. Roberts, written June 27, 1846. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.22.

[65] Printed Program of "The Junior Exhibition."

[66] Oration, "Genius of Saxon Literature," found among the personal papers of B. T. Roberts.

[67] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his father, June 24, 1848. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.27.

[68] B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.29.

EARNEST CHRISTIAN

CHAPTER II

A YOUTHFUL MINISTER OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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A. CONFERENCE OF 1848

1. Mr. Roberts Admitted to Membership

The year that Benjamin Titus Roberts joined the Genesee Conference, 1848, was the year that the Genesee Conference was divided into the Genesee and East Genesee Conferences. The Rev. George Lane, Book Agent of the Methodist Book Concern in New York, and his wife, attended that conference and were duly impressed by the young man, just out of college, who, along with others, became a member of the Genesee Conference that year. [\[1\]](#) In a letter to her niece, Ellen Lois Stowe, Mrs. Lane wrote:

We returned to Buffalo this morning While there (at Conference), several preachers were admitted on trial as probationers. Among others, there was a young man by the name of Benjamin Titus Roberts, a graduate of Wesleyan University, admitted. He seemed to be well thought of, and was admitted without a moment's hesitation on the part of the Conference. Your Uncle was introduced to him last week, but I have not seen him. [\[2\]](#)

2. Incipient Troubles

The events which were to play so important a part in the after career of Mr. Roberts were even then springing up, though he would hardly have taken an active part in them at that time. F. W. Conable, writing of that Conference, stated:

Communications from several Quarterly Conferences were received and read on the subject of secret societies, and a harmless, half-amusing bit of bluster was created in the Conference by a pamphlet relating to the same subject, written by C. D. Burlingham. The case of the author of the pamphlet was referred to a committee.[\[3\]](#)

After having considered and passed a resolution of a committee of which the chairman seems to have been the Rev. Asa Abell, expressing confidence both in the author of the pamphlet and in those it criticized, the following resolution was passed:

Resolved, That we recommend to the ministry and membership within our bounds on both sides of the question, to cease all action on the subject of secret societies which is calculated to alienate affection and create agitation among us. [\[4\]](#)

This is an indication that factions were even then being formed within the Genesee Conference pertaining to secrecy. Conable noted also that in that same year, a meeting of the preachers of the district was held at Rushford, New York, May 8th. He said:

E. Thomas, presiding elder, was in the chair, and S. Hunt, secretary The resolutions, not to say 'acts,' passed at this session of the association may serve to show the spirit of at least some of the preachers, not to say 'apostles' at that time. The resolutions related to the supply of every member of the Church with a copy of the discipline, the appointment of class collectors for benevolent objects, the reading of the General Rules in our societies and congregations, the holding of love-feasts and class meetings according to the Discipline, the instant dismissal of all choirs, immediate introduction of congregational singing, and refusal to tolerate on any pretense whatsoever instrumental music in our public worship, and, the prompt observance of the requirement to read Wesley's 'Advice on Dress,' and his 'Cure of Evil Speaking.' [\[5\]](#)

B. APPOINTMENTS OF MR. ROBERTS

At that Conference of 1848, Mr. Roberts began a career in Methodism which took him to seven appointments in a ten year period. This, however, must be remembered as the period of the reign of the real itineracy in Methodism, when two years were the limit of service, and one year was most common. Dr. Matthew Simpson, who is reputed to have been one of the strongest men of Methodism, early elected

to the bishopric, and who was active in the affairs of the Genesee Conference difficulties which later developed, moved almost every year in his early ministry. His record is as follows:

His first circuit was West Wheeling. The second year he was stationed in the city of Pittsburgh under the charge of Rev. T. M. Hudson. The third year, the station being divided, he was placed in charge of the Liberty Street Church in that city. The fourth year he was appointed to Monongahela City. [\[6\]](#)

If he had not chosen to locate at Allegheny College for a ten year period following the first four appointments, he might have listed as many appointments in a ten year period as his younger contemporary.

1. First Appointment

(a) *Reactions to the Field.* What the reactions of Mr. Roberts were at the announcement of his first appointment, Caryville, are not revealed, but there is something noted about his feelings after he had arrived at the scene of his new labors in a letter to his parents, he wrote:

I am pleased with the appearance which my new field of labor presents I arrived here Saturday about noon Bro. Buck, my predecessor , to my great satisfaction, had not left. He introduced me to Bro. March, one of our stewards. He received me very cordially, invited me to make his house my home until I could find a better place. I shall stay in his family this week, and then I hope to have a permanent boarding place I preached yesterday twice I never had such feeling when attempting to preach as I did in the morning. I tried to have Bro. Buck preach for me, but he would not. I felt that most were sitting as critics comparing me with their former preacher. In the afternoon I had a much better time, and was greatly assisted from on high The Word was listened to with marked attention and with outward manifestation of feeling. [\[7\]](#)

(b) *First Sermon.* Among the personal papers of Mr. Roberts is to be found a copy of that first sermon, marked in his own handwriting, "My First Sermon." It is on the text Matthew 5:8 After referring to the state of Jewish religion, he' proceeded to develop the text thus:

1. What is meant by purity of heart.
2. Consider the necessity of being thus pure in heart.
3. Endeavor to show that this moral purity is attainable
4. Advance some reasons why we should immediately strive to possess it. [\[8\]](#)

After a very searching portion under section one, telling what heart purity is not, Mr. Roberts proceeded in his sermon to define it as

. . . . a restoration of the individual to the moral image and likeness of his maker in which he was originally created a concurrence of his will with the will of God, being governed in all his actions both great and small by the principle of universal love to man and supreme love to God. He who is thus pure in heart has all his tempers, passions, affections as well as actions, words, and thoughts in perfect conformity to the nature of God he is governed in his actions words, thoughts, not by the norms of the world but by the ' will of God.[9]

The sermon as a whole seemed pertinent, closely reasoned and of worth. It seemed to have been typical of his characteristic practice, to launch directly into it as forcefully as he could. the heart of truth, and to apply

The youthful preacher continued to write concerning that first day, that the congregation, both forenoon and afternoon, was large, and appeared respectable and intelligent. In the evening, at the prayer meeting, he judged from the prayers that there was a general coldness and stupor among the members and that a low state of piety existed. There had been reported at Conference one hundred and eight members, but some of these the previous pastor had never seen, so Mr. Roberts estimated there might be eighty or ninety in good standing. He concluded, "I do not mean to spare hard labor or study to sustain myself and make myself useful to this people." [10]

In the same letter, Mr. Roberts gave a picture of his conception of the ministry:

I am trying to give myself up wholly to the work of the Lord, to be a man of one calling, of one work. I cannot get along without I have very much of the assisting grace of God, and I hope that you will pray earnestly that grace may be multiplied unto me more and more. I do feel that my trust is in the Lord, and I do not believe that He will suffer me to be confounded, not because I am worthy, but because His mercy is infinite towards the most unworthy. [11]

(c) Caryville Characterized. In the same letter quoted above, Mr. Roberts told of a call from the Presbyterian minister of the town, which differs from the picture of the relations of Presbyterianism and Methodism painted by George Peck in his book *Early Methodism Within the Rounds of the Old Genesee Conference from 1788 to 1828*. Mr. Roberts commented that the Presbyterian minister appeared "very friendly" and he would judge that he was a "plain, sound, pious, well-meaning man." He expressed the hope that they might live together in "brotherly Christian union," to which, Mr. Roberts asserted, "I most cheerfully assented, and in which hope from my heart I joined." [12]

With reference to Caryville itself, he wrote:

This village is situated six miles west of Batavia, in a most beautiful, fertile, and wealthy region of country. It is in the edge of the oak openings, said to be the best land for wheat in the State. 'Cary Collegiate Institute,' quite a flourishing academy with a pompous name, is

situated here. I think I shall feel more at home from being situated where I can now and then run into a literary institution.[\[13\]](#)

Mr. Roberts had a settled pastorate, with a good membership, a beautiful, prosperous country, and, as he saw it, opportunities for improvement. Probably his desire for a home in these pleasant associations grew, and he soon took that step which characterizes life. In his first sermon he had said:

Man is by nature a social being. During all the intermediate stages of his existence from the cradle to the grave, he seeks someone to whom he can communicate his hopes and fears, his joys and sorrows. And his social happiness is always greatest when in company with those whose religion, education, inclinations, habits, modes of thinking and ways of acting, approximate nearest to his own. [\[14\]](#)

(d) *Marriage to Ellen Lois Stowe.* The young lady, Ellen Lois Stowe, with whom Mr. Roberts was about to join his life, was born March 4, 1825, at Windsor, New York, located on the banks of the beautiful Susquehanna, made famous by Revolutionary incident and novelist's story. Both the Stowe's, her paternal ancestors, and the Lanes, her maternal ancestors, made their mark in early times. The Stowes hailed from Kent, England, and settled at Roxbury, Massachusetts. John Stowe of Milford, Connecticut, was one of the first settlers. One of his descendants founded Yale and three others served as presidents. Calvin Ellis Stowe, who was married to Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was also one of the family. Judge Hamilton Stowe of Cincinnati and Ellen Lois Stowe closely resembled each other in features. One branch of the Stowe family went to Windsor, New York. There Stoddard Stowe married Dorcas Lane, who was sister to the Rev. George Lane,[\[15\]](#) pioneer minister of the Genesee area, and who later became Book Agent for the Methodist Book Concern. The home of the Rev. George Lane and his second wife, Lydia B. Lane, became the training center of Ellen Lois Stowe, and she became a daughter indeed to them.

On the maternal side also, Ellen Lois Stowe had a goodly heritage. The celebrated Committee of Safety of Dorchester, Massachusetts, had listed the name of one, Deacon Lane. The Lane Theological Seminary had been founded by one of the same family. Oberlin College, which greatly influenced Mr. Roberts later on, was an off-shoot of Lane Theological Seminary on anti-slavery grounds.[\[16\]](#) The Rev. George Lane is an interesting study in his own right, having been Assistant Book Agent of the Methodist Book Concern,[\[17\]](#) and later head of the same with Peter B. Sanford and Mr. Tippet as assistants.[\[18\]](#)

The Lane family played a very important role in influencing the life of Ellen Lois Stowe, and through her, as well as directly, the life of Benjamin Titus Roberts. During the years of her association with the Lanes, Ellen Lois had the inestimable privilege of associating with the best names in Methodism, while at the same time she was under the tutelage of the godly and talented Mrs. Lydia B. Lane, with whom she kept up an active correspondence during the entire period of the life of Mrs. Lane, and from whom she received a part of the estate at her death.

The spiritual influence of George and Lydia B. Lane on Ellen can hardly be over-estimated. Mrs. Lane

exhorted the young girl to godliness constantly. In one of her letters were these characteristic words:

Look every day for the divine blessings to rest upon you, and be not satisfied unless you feel that you are heard when you call on the Lord in secret. You know well that all this world cannot satisfy the desires of an immortal mind Let your affections be placed on God and heavenly things. Then, and only then can you expect to prosper and be happy in those things which relate to the present life.[\[19\]](#)

Ellen Lois was first convicted by seeing the godly life of the Rev. George Lane, especially noting the amount of time he spent in secret prayer. Her religious experience that grew out of this conviction came in the Methodist churches of New York City. She wrote:

I saw myself a sinner, and used often to plead with the Lord, to spare my life from day to day and I would seek religion. I prayed in secret and sought forgiveness. During a protracted effort in Green Street M. E. Church I went forward to the altar for prayers, and thought if I could get religion I would. I did not then see that it was in the way. I failed to find the Savior.[\[20\]](#)

Some of her friends thought she should join the church on probation as a seeker but she would not consent. She said, "I felt I ought not to belong to a church till I met with a change of heart." [\[21\]](#) She said that later, in the Allen Street Methodist Church

I was led to see I must be determined and all in earnest or I should finally lose my soul. I then said, 'I will have religion.' I found my way to the altar and besought the Lord with tears and entreaties to save me. The next day, while alone in my room, after consecrating myself to God, I was enabled to believe He does now for Jesus sake forgive my sins. The load was removed, peace and joy sprang up in my heart and I began to repeat, 'My God is reconciled.'[\[22\]](#)

Ellen Lois Stowe had met Benjamin Titus Roberts during his senior year at Middletown University. She had gone to Middle-town, from the home of her uncle in New York, to attend the wedding of a friend and to act as bridesmaid. She was visiting at the home of her cousin, Professor Harvey Lane, whose wife had often made Roberts and his roommate, Clark, welcome in her home. During the course of Commencement events, these students, so soon to leave, took tea at Professor Lane's home, and it was there that Roberts met Ellen Stowe. He was not oblivious to the fair, oval face, with features delicately but firmly cut, the mouth wonderfully sweet in expression. Another by the name of Samuel Howe had once penned these lines:

*Could my poor pen
But half portray thy beauteous mien,
Then might I glory!*[\[23\]](#)

He later added:

*Why should you doubt, endowed with grace:
That may with other fair ones vie.
Your figure's good! and your face is
Not without its sparkling eye.*[\[24\]](#)

Although other calls followed the meeting at the home of Professor Lane, Roberts left Middletown without speaking words of his feeling to Ellen Stowe. However, a dense fog settled down upon the river, and the captain of the sailing vessel on which he was leaving had to put back to Middletown wharf for another evening. Mr. Roberts again found his way to the home of Professor Lane, and it was there that evening that a correspondence was arranged which resulted in a closer acquaintance and led to their marriage on the evening of May 3, 1849.

Ellen Stowe, busy with arrangements for the wedding, had written to her friends of the happy occasion so soon to take place. From Mary S. Bronson, she received a letter from which the following excerpt is taken:

And shall I say that I am glad to hear that you expect soon to be married? Yes, dear Ellen, I do feel to rejoice that you have found a kindred spirit, in whom you can confide I trust your hopes and aspirations are one and you may find in him a complete assemblage of all that a woman's heart could wish to love and honor.[\[25\]](#)

Mary Martindale, daughter of a Methodist minister, and close friend of Ellen Stowe, wrote:

Thou wilt be happy, darling. I know thou wilt. Thou shalt grow strong, thou wilt care for souls, the timid will look to thee and find sympathy. The sinner will gaze upon thee and learn to love Him whom thou servest. Thou wilt have none the fewer trials, but thou wilt have a strong arm to lean upon, a loving human heart to feel for thee.[\[26\]](#)

Mary continued her letter in a lighter tone:

Who will be groomsman? Some congenial brother, I trust, one of our kind. Still it would not make the least difference to me if he should be an icicle, only have him somewhat taller than J. But of course thou canst not control this part of the business.[\[27\]](#)

Whether Mary had her wish the writer does not know. Mr. Roberts journeyed to New York at the appointed time, met Ellen at the home of the Rev. George Lane, and at twilight the wedding party arrived at the church. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. George Lane; Mary Martindale was bridesmaid, and it can only be hoped the unnoted "groomsman" was tall. At this wedding was a notable company since it was a special anniversary week. Among the other guests who sat down to the wedding dinner

were four bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Bishops Mims, Hedding, Waugh, and Janes. Mrs. Roberts wrote of it later, "I was never more calm or collected in my life."[\[28\]](#) The only unhappy one in the offing was Mary Martindale who was thinking about her loss. She later wrote:

I could not have said Good-bye to thee on Monday; I was too weak. I think if anyone save the Doctor had accompanied me to the boat, I should have remained in town. As it was, I begged him to leave immediately. I told him his horse would not stand, and I was left alone. Oh! what a world of meaning is in that simple word - alone. I thought of ye all then, and all the scenes of my pleasant visit passed before me. Yes, the visit has been so sadly pleasant.[\[29\]](#)

Benjamin and Ellen Lois had the happiness of union in contrast to the loneliness of Mary. They spent some few days in New York and no doubt looked upon "the ships of every nation" [\[30\]](#) in its harbor about which Benjamin had written in his university days, and "strolled along its Broadway that traverses like a vertebral column its entire length." They saw "the parks, the fountains, the waterworks" as well as viewed "the interminable crowds of human beings of every hue and language."[\[31\]](#) A letter, dated May 10, 1849, presents a picture of the happy couple. Benjamin wrote:

I write this with my wife leaning upon my shoulder. We leave here this next Tuesday evening at about 6:00 o'clock P.M. We hope to be in Buffalo on Wednesday evening. Therefore you may expect us in Gowanda sometime on Thursday of next week. I am happy as the day is long attending various anniversaries in company with my better half, or in other words my wife! I already experience as yourselves did long since that

*'Domestic bliss had dearer names
And finer ties and sweeter claims
Than e'er unwedded hearts can feel
Than wedded hearts can e'er reveal.*[\[32\]](#)

That Mr. Roberts was a good and thoughtful husband is confirmed by the countless letters expressing a deep and lasting affection which were exchanged through the long years that followed. Mary Martindale wrote in reply to a letter describing the ideal state in which Mrs. Roberts found herself:

I am inclined to think that the one who could make married life as delightful to me as you describe yours to be is either dead or married - most likely dead . . . 'Tis gladsome to be remembered by thee and the dark eyed brother, when nature's magnificence is before thee, pleasant to feel that my name hath become to ye already a household word. May it ever be thus!

A domestic scene was recalled which evidently made its impression, for Mary continued, "I shall think of thee often as sitting near the Woodbine window with thy friend by thy side, thou busy with the needle or

pen, and he with his books."[\[33\]](#)

(e) *Closing Events at Caryville.* The joys of married life did not seriously detract from the success of his first appointment, although he conducted a revival service which was not to his satisfaction. Of it he wrote, "It did not survive the spring fashions."[\[34\]](#) However, in a letter to her aunt, Lydia B. Lane, Mrs. Roberts wrote:

One old sister said to me, 'We would not have Brother Roberts go away for nothing.' The meetings are good. Sabbath day we have large congregations. The prayer meetings are well attended; have one at sunset on Sunday and one Thursday evening That the church is in a very different and far better state from what it was when Mr. Roberts came all admit. They have a very neat, cheerful and pretty 'house of worship.' I like the preaching much.[\[35\]](#)

At Conference time, Mr. Roberts wrote in his Journal:

I had a pleasant year at Caryville. Was favored with some success. Received during the year about forty members into the society. Enlarged and repaired the church at an expense of about six hundred dollars, and paid an old debt on the parsonage.[\[36\]](#)

Probably such a year would have been too blissful if there had not been some inconveniences. That thorn in the flesh was a familiar one, too little money to meet financial needs. He wrote, "I came out myself at the end of the year sixty dollars in debt for board." [\[37\]](#) His wife also felt the stringent circumstances and could give the reason. She wrote to her Aunt Lydia Lane:

There are, perhaps, but few pleasanter stations in the Conference than Caryville, with one exception it is perhaps, one of the best - and that is, their remissness in supplying the temporal wants of their minister, not that they are not able, but the official brethren are so inefficient. They found some difficulty in paying Mr. Roberts a small salary which they knew to be insufficient to meet his expenses, though they have been in the habit of having men that had large families.[\[38\]](#)

Such experiences probably helped him to sympathize sufficiently with his ministerial brethren to exhort the people thus in later years:

. . . . the success of a society depends largely upon the condition of the preacher. If you are doing your share to keep him in good condition, you are doing more than you know to promote the cause of God. Help him temporally. See that he and his family do not want.[\[39\]](#)

The financial stress stemmed, too, from the fact that extra expenses were incurred in the founding of a

new home, and the adjustments that were incident to it. The people evidently did love their pastor, as revealed in a letter from Mrs. Roberts to her Aunt Lydia Lane:

I never knew a people or a community that seemed more generally and sincerely to regret losing their preacher. Many inquired, as we were about leaving, if some change could not be effected, and we could not remain, and when they found we must go, said they would send in a strong petition for us next year.[\[40\]](#)

2. First Year at Pike, New York

(a) Reactions to it. The close of the conference year found the young pastor at the seat of the annual Conference held at Albion, New York, with Bishop Morris in the chair. Loren Stiles and Joseph McCreery, whose names were to become familiar in the near future, came into the Conference in full connection that year.[\[41\]](#) When the appointments were read, Mr. Roberts was unable to write anything more in his journal than simply, "Stationed at Pike."[\[42\]](#) The real reaction came in a letter to his father some time later. He confessed thus:

I know I have been quite too much dissatisfied with my station and with my allotments. I have felt down, clear down most of the time since I came here. I never thought of preaching for the purpose of making money, and I used to think I should not be at all particular about the support I received as a preacher. But when I saw my classmates, whose qualifications, it is modest to say, are not superior to mine, receiving from four to six hundred a year, for labors not as severe as those which I have done, and am doing, and myself receiving at the same time but a bare subsistence, and not even that, while the churches, I believe, possess the ability to give their minister a respectable support, I felt like repining. It seemed as if our people assumed the principle and acted upon it: that it was right and meet and proper to get out of their preachers as much as possible of both labor and money, and to pay them in return as little as possible.[\[43\]](#)

But he confessed his error and admitted that he had been "looking the wrong way altogether." He had been having a hard time preaching because he had failed to look to "the Saviour more and the people less." He said, "But I am repenting of my sin and I feel better, and I believe preach better."[\[44\]](#)

Had the young pastor and his bride of a few months received a little warmer reception at Pike, perhaps the prospects would not have been so drear. But they soon found that the disappointment had not been all theirs, for the people felt free to say they wanted an older man. Concerning it Mr. Roberts wrote:

At our new place we were not expected nor wanted. But the people received us, though coldly, and we went to work to try to do them good. Many were converted and added to the church. The parsonage was repaired and rendered habitable, and the fence which had fallen down, rebuilt. At the end of the second year we left, regretting the necessity of

having our relations severed with so kind and godly a people.[\[45\]](#)

(b) *Getting Settled.* In spite of the attitude of the members of the Pike Church, living arrangements had to be made. In an interim debate on whether they should fix up the rather large parsonage or wait for more definite knowledge from an Oregon call, things shaped up to the satisfaction of both. Mr. Stephen Bronson and his wife decided to move to Pike and make a home for the new preacher and his wife. About the parsonage itself, Mrs. Roberts wrote:

A more forlorn and neglected-looking place I hope Methodist preachers will not often find than this when we first came to it Our house is an old-looking, unpainted building, two stories high, with a good yard in front and a garden spot back, the fence around it in a very dilapidated state.[\[46\]](#)

In a letter to her sister-in-law, Florilla, Mrs. Roberts wrote:

We occupy the two upper rooms, which we have papered and white-washed and painted. We had excellent success in white-washing, especially Benjamin. I wish you could see his success in this line. The outlines are bold and can easily be traced, many graceful curves, and equally abrupt turns. One coat would look like milky water, the next would be one of white-wash in spots about.[\[47\]](#)

The two rooms mentioned were "a small bedroom and quite a large room adjoining, which has two large windows in it," and Mrs. Roberts was ready to admit, then, that "it is very pleasant, particularly since we have papered, white-washed and painted it."[\[48\]](#) This one "forlorn parsonage," "poverty-stricken without and within" soon began to take on the appearance of more comfort, especially within.[\[49\]](#) Their mutual love brightened the drab appearance so that Mrs. Roberts declared, "We are very happy here."[\[50\]](#) There were even brighter aspects at hand.

The sun, when it shines, looks in upon us the livelong day, and our little birds fill our rooms with the sweetest music. We are so retired that we will never be annoyed by the din of the world without, will never long while here 'for a lodge in some vast wilderness.' Neither will we long for the multitude. Our hearts shall be a spring of ceaseless pleasures deep and pure. We will try to be good and do good.[\[51\]](#)

(c) *Call to Oregon.* Something must be said about the call that came to Mr. Roberts from Oregon. His interest in the appeal was typical of his attitude toward mission work. Doubtless, Mrs. Roberts also felt the same interest because of her former association with all the out-going missionaries who visited the home of the Rev. George Lane. About the time of the September 1849 Conference, Mrs. Lane wrote to Mrs. Roberts, "I am sorry you are again agitated about Oregon. I could wish that you might remain in your native land until your health was better."[\[52\]](#) In that letter, she recommended that they should get into contact with Bishop Morris. It is quite probable that a real incentive to that land of the west which

then seemed so remote, might have been stimulated by a book recommended the next year at the Annual Conference. Rev. Gustavus Hines, after his return from Oregon, published a large 12 mo., entitled:

A Voyage Round the World; with a History of the Oregon Mission, and notes of several Year's Residence on the Plains bordering the Pacific Ocean, comprising an account of Interesting Adventures among the Indians west of the Rocky Mountains. To which is appended a Full Description of Oregon Territory, its Geography, History, and Religion. Designed for the Benefit of Emigrants to that Rising Country.[\[53\]](#)

Conable stated that "the body of the book justified the title!" If the title of the book were an index to the contents of the whole, and that to the lure of the west, it is no wonder that these home missionaries on soil so barren, longed for a more productive field. Again and again during this period, their thoughts turned toward the great field of the world. This interest in missions was afterward reflected in a constant oversight of mission areas in the new church which later came into being.

(d) Brighter Prospects. After a proper adjustment to his new appointment, the young pastor was able to overcome the depression of spirit that had been his in the beginning, and his own spirit lifted. To his father he wrote that prospects were rather promising, congregations were increasing, prayer and class meetings were better attended, and he hoped there was an increase of spirituality among the members.[\[54\]](#)

In the wintry month of January, a revival meeting was conducted. He wrote to Mrs. Lane that there had been about twenty conversions, some "backsliders" had been reclaimed, and "the members generally greatly revived." [\[55\]](#)

Here, too, the Roberts had the usual experience of the old Methodist preacher of receiving a donation, and rejoiced to be presented "with a study table for Mr. Roberts, a nice wash-stand, two quilts made purposely" for them "by the young people," a little too small to be sure, but made of "green and red calico" differently pieced with white muslin. Among other articles were a meat barrel [if only there were meat in it!] and a pounding barrel, a harness for "Bill," the horse owned by Mr. Roberts, and also a load of hay and some oats. "They were all useful articles," wrote Mrs. Roberts, "and mostly what we would need." As was too often the case, there was just "a little money." Perhaps Mrs. Roberts was pleased more with her night-cap, three yards of unbleached muslin, a cotton towel, a pepper box, a yard and a quarter of sixpenny calico, and an order from the wool factory which would be one or two pairs of blankets.[\[56\]](#) One of the "queer" members came one day and spent most of the day all of her own accord. In a little package she carried, she told Mrs. Roberts she had brought some shirting and collars. When Mrs. Roberts opened it, she found it to be little more than a yard of "coarse, unbleached muslin and two straight collars, such as men wore some years ago." [\[57\]](#) Such is the age-old custom, to give to the preacher the things which the people do not want for themselves!

A bright picture of their work is the background of loyal youth who thought enough of their young pastor and wife to make the quilts. The very evening of the adult donation, there came to the parsonage some

twenty-four little boys and girls, who sang, played, and had supper and, as children will, "enjoyed themselves." Their offering presented to "Elder Roberts" amounted to four dollars.[\[58\]](#)

(e) Carlton and Secrecy. While Mrs. Roberts was visiting the Lanes that year, another matter became pertinent as Conference approached. Membership in secret societies, as has been previously noted, had become an issue in the Conference of 1848. The Rev. Thomas Carlton, who was soon to become Book Agent, was also a guest in the home of the Lanes at the same time Mrs. Roberts was there. Mrs. Roberts wrote back to her husband in Pike: "Bro. Carlton dined with us today. He found much fault with the Southern Railroad, without cause, it seemed to me."[\[59\]](#) Later in the same letter, she added, "Our people say that Mr. Carlton told Bishop W. last summer that he was not a member of any Secret Society in the world, but did not wish the fact to be known, so you must not mention it."[\[60\]](#) The reference is sufficient to show that secrecy was such a vital issue in the Conference that Mr. Carlton did not want some of his friends to know that he did not belong. This statement seems a rather strange one in view of another statement Mr. Carlton is reported to have made when the Rev. J. B. Alverson, one of the older ministers of the Conference, tried to dissuade him from running for Book Agent. Mr. Carlton is reported to have said, "I can command sufficient secret society influence in the General Conference to secure my election."[\[61\]](#) Mr. Roberts commented, "The event showed that he had not misjudged. He was elected, reelected[\[62\]](#)

(f) Conference at Rushford. In the month of September, Mr. Roberts attended the Annual Conference in session at Rushford, New York. There, after receiving a satisfactory report on his examinations, he was admitted to the Conference in full connection[\[63\]](#) and was ordained deacon by Bishop Waugh.[\[64\]](#)

Mr. Roberts wrote to his wife, who had remained at home, "Yesterday noon, I took dinner at the invitation of Brother Carl-ton with him at Mr. Gilman's."[\[65\]](#) About his examinations, he said, "I am now through with all my examinations. I am very well satisfied in regard to them, and think the committee are. I should be unwilling to exchange my chances with any in the class." Later, in the same letter he wrote, "The report on my case was as favorable as I could desire. Brother Canton, the chairman of the Examining Committee, I was informed, said that my examination was perfect, the best he had ever attended."[\[66\]](#) Another man was mentioned with whom Roberts was to deal in future days. "Brother Fuller preached last night in his usual way. With a deeper baptism of the Holy Ghost he would be a useful preacher."[\[67\]](#)

William C. Kendall, a close friend and class-mate of Mr. Roberts, was at the Conference "with his new wife," so Mr. Roberts wrote. He continued, "I have not seen her. I should judge from his examinations that he has spent considerable time in courting."[\[68\]](#) In connection with an account of the ordination service, Mr. Roberts wrote:

The Bishop made some impressive remarks, as he put to us the questions in the discipline. On the question, "Are you in debt?" he remarked that he would rather go to conference or into the pulpit with a rusty, or patched coat, than wear a good one and be in debt for it. He

said once, since he had been a minister, his coat got too rusty, even for his taste, and he could not get a new one without running into debt, so he got the old one turned.[\[69\]](#)

Turning upon this incident was an amusing one of his own. He wrote:

My hat seems to have incurred the displeasure of the preachers. Yesterday afternoon Brother Woodworth charged it with being deficient in ministerial dignity. Upon my reminding him of the remarks of the Bishop, he took out his wallet and said that if I wore that because I could not get another without running in debt for it, he would give me money to buy a new one. I thanked him, but could not, of course, accept his kind offer.[\[70\]](#)

That year, the father of B. T. Roberts was recommended for deacon's orders. Evidently the Conference passed by without any open conflict with reference to issues that had been arising. Mr. Roberts was returned to Pike, New York, for the second year.

3. Second Year at Pike

(a) *Revival Efforts.* With the resolve at Conference, backed by ordination vows, that "I want to work more faithfully than I have ever yet done for the Lord," Mr. Roberts went back to live another year in the "sweet maple shaded home,"[\[71\]](#) and to promote the work of his church. Revival meetings were a part of the regular schedule of the church.

That year, William Hosmer wrote in the *Northern Christian Advocate*, after speaking of the essential work of Methodism:

It follows, therefore, that revivals are not an incident in Methodism; it is itself a revival, and a constant promoter of revivals. It is Christianity so much in earnest, both in the ministry and in the laity, and with such appropriateness of doctrine and discipline, that it must be successful in the work of evangelizing the world.[\[72\]](#)

Mr. Roberts, with this spirit and endeavor, opened preaching points at East Pike and Eagle, where a revival meeting resulted in the building of a new church.

(b) *Prayers and Advice of Mrs. Roberts.* Mrs. Roberts desired for her husband the greatest usefulness and spirituality. During a visit to New York, she wrote:

If my poor prayers can avail, you will find in your heart 'no melancholy void,' but you will be happy all the day long, and find your spiritual strength 'renewed like the eagle's,' your soul will be filled with light and life, with power and love. How ardently do I desire that my husband should be an all devoted minister of the cross. I ask not for him popularity, but that he may be such an one as our Heavenly Father will delight to own and bless in all his

labors, and dearest, I would be a help and not a hindrance to you.[\[73\]](#)

Spiritual desires were also mingled with practical suggestions, which were probably of value. She wrote, "I am afraid you are preaching too often," and then added, "When you do preach, do be very short, not over thirty minutes."[\[74\]](#) There is evidence that this advice was heeded all down through the years of his ministry, and may be partly responsible for his particular style of striking at the heart of the truth he wished to present, rather than arriving by devious methods.

(c) *Death Enters.* The home of the Roberts had been gladdened by the arrival of their first child, William Titus, but it was not for long. He lived only eleven months. During the period of his health, Mrs. Roberts had taken him with her to visit the Lanes. Because of her husband's homesickness for her, she wrote back, promising, "Be assured it is the first and last time I'll leave thee."[\[75\]](#) At that time she little dreamed of the long and frequent separations the future held for them, because of the nature of the work he would do. These little separations throw into relief the deep love they had for one another. She wrote "Though I am a long distance from you, how I cling to you, and lean upon you in spirit." After many expressions of deep affection to him, she exclaimed, "I must not love my husband too well, or my Father will take him from me. That would be a trial which I feel I could not bear." Because of a snow storm, Mr. and Mrs. Lane insisted that their niece should not leave at the time she had planned, and the time of her homecoming was deferred a week. After writing apologies for the additional delay. She added, "Love to my friends. Beg of them not to think I have run away from you." She closed "with an ocean of love."[\[76\]](#)

When little William Titus was taken from them in death, the young parents reacted with deep sorrow, but also in a spirit of submission. Mrs. Roberts wrote to her father-in-law:

I never knew till since my little Willie died what it was to feel lonely, and I never knew either what it was to confide in Christ I have felt and do feel very anxious to profit by the dealings of my Heavenly Father with me. to be made better, for I feel so sure some greater trial will come upon me if this fails of accomplishing the end for which it was sent.[\[77\]](#)

(d) *Camp Meeting at Collins.* That year, both Mr. and Mrs. Roberts felt they received a deeper spiritual experience at the camp meeting they attended at Collins. Concerning that camp meeting, Mr. Roberts wrote:

The subject of holiness received special attention. Rev. Eleazer Thomas, presiding elder of the district, was a flame of fire. Mrs. Palmer attended the meeting, and labored for the promotion of holiness with a great zeal and success. While I was at Middletown, Dr. Redfield held a protracted meeting in the Methodist Church. Such scenes of spiritual power I never had witnessed. The convictions I there received never left me. At the camp meeting they were greatly increased. Two paths were distinctly marked out before me. I saw that I might be a popular preacher, gain applause, do but little good in reality, and at last, lose my soul; or, I saw that I might take the narrow way, declare the whole truth as it

is in Jesus, meeting with persecution and opposition, but see a thorough work of grace go on and gain heaven. Grace was given to make the better choice. I deliberately gave myself anew to the Lord, to declare the whole truth as it is in Jesus, and to take the narrow way I received a power to labor such as I had never possessed before. [\[78\]](#)

Mrs. Roberts wrote to her father-in-law expressing her regrets that he could not have been at the camp, and then added:

My own soul was greatly blessed. Not in several years have I enjoyed myself as well as I have since the Camp Meeting. I have a more abiding assurance of the favor of God and feel that I am His entirely, and what I have realized of the power of grace to sustain, to comfort and cheer amid sore affliction, I have no words to express. [\[79\]](#)

(e) Kendall, Successor of Mr. Roberts at Pike. Before noting the experiences of Mr. Roberts at his next appointment, it might be well, in the interests of a fuller understanding of the total background, to review the developments that took place at Pike during the Conference year, 1851-1852, under the labors of the Rev. William Kendall. Mr. Roberts recounted that soon a revival meeting was in progress "which spread to all the churches of the place, and to the surrounding country." [\[80\]](#) It began in a singing school which Mr. Kendall was conducting, each session of which was closed "with faithful and affectionate warnings to the youth." As a result, "one hundred were added to the M. E. Church, many to other churches." [\[81\]](#)

As to the expediency of the methods of Mr. Kendall, which soon brought opposition from the officials of his church, one must judge for himself. Mr. Roberts recalled that his custom was to invite to the altar those who desired salvation, and would evidence it by coming out boldly and praying for themselves, and giving up all worldly conformity and associations; second, all backsliders in or out of the church; and third, those who were earnestly seeking a clean heart, and fourth, all such, and only such, as had clear evidence they were walking in all the light, to pray for the seekers. Mr. Roberts commented, "These invitations were a rock of offense." [\[82\]](#)

Mr. Roberts recalled that official committees were appointed to request Mr. Kendall not to preach so much on holiness, for the present at least, lest he should "drive away men of influence needed to the church." [\[83\]](#) It is recorded that for a time Mr. Kendall tried to conform, but soon felt that he must resume his preaching as previously, and that he thereafter began to acquire the reputation of being "self-willed" and "indiscreet." [\[84\]](#) At the close of that year, Mr. Kendall was demoted to Covington. [\[85\]](#)

[4. Rushford, New York](#)

The annual session of the Genesee Conference convened at Le Roy, September 9, 1851. Bishop James was in the chair, and Mr. Fuller was elected Secretary of the conference. [\[86\]](#) The events of the conference moved on smoothly, with little or no evidences of conflict. The appointments were heard with unusual interest by Mr. Roberts for he had served his time limit at Pike. His third appointment was read

out for Rushford, New York.

(a) *Work at Pike and Rushford.* For some time toward the end of the year 1851, Mr. Roberts was called back to the church he had just left to assist his class-mate, Kendall, in the revival work which has been previously described. Mr. Roberts wrote to Mrs. Lane:

I have spent of late two Sabbaths and most of three weeks at Pike. The Lord is doing a wonderful work there. Over a hundred have professed conversion and about ninety had united with our church when I left. The work is still going on. Oh! may it break out in Rushford, and in the regions round-about. [\[87\]](#)

He went on to describe his members at Rushford as being among those of "wealth and social influence, and a stranger among us would imagine that they enjoyed a good degree of life and power of religion. They did years ago." But he explained, the words that then expressed their feelings, they were still using, but the feelings were gone. He felt the prayers sounded stereotyped. He concluded, "I have been endeavoring to arouse them, but fear that I am no more than half awake myself. I am complaining of the stupidity of others when I ought to be shaking off my own. I have far too little power of doing good." [\[88\]](#) Perhaps this last remark was occasioned by the fact that William Kendall, the natural revivalist, was having a stirring time in evangelistic meetings on the field of labor Mr. Roberts had recently left. However, it was not long until he was cheered by the progress of a meeting in his own church. He wrote the following month, on February 24, 1852:

Our meetings are still progressing with a good degree of interest. Our brethren say it is the best meeting they have had for many years. About thirty have thus far passed from death unto life, and among these are some of the most substantial citizens. The conversions are more marked and clear than is common in these days. [\[89\]](#)

On March 7th, he recorded in his *Journal*: "Twenty-one have joined this quarter. An immense congregation today." [\[90\]](#)

That Mr. Roberts applied himself to his work most diligently may be deduced from his Journal entries, which note that he spent his morning in study, rising at five o'clock, reading in the Hebrew and Greek Bible, and making large numbers of pastoral calls. One entry in his Journal of December 3rd read: "Visited among the unconverted most of the day. Preaching in the evening; many forward for prayers and some converted. . . ." [\[91\]](#) At times he felt that all his work was accomplishing little. He penned one day, "Very busy all the forenoon in accomplishing nothing." [\[92\]](#) One day he was really out to make contacts. His *Journal* entry is as follows:

April 7th. Visited today at Fletcher Gordon's, F. F. Gordon's, Rev. E. Metcalf. Z. M. Lyman, M. McFarland's, Keyes, Sheppard's, Cronk's. Gould's, Person's, Hopkin's, Densmore's, Milispaugh's, and conversed with about forty persons. [\[93\]](#)

He was busy working on financial matters for the church, but found that this part of the work did not move as rapidly as he could desire. He thought that this was chiefly because his members, although well-to-do farmers, had not been trained in sacrificial giving. Mr. Roberts wanted to build a new church, but it was not easy to raise the money, as his Journal showed:

March 11th. I have run to and from to see what could be done towards a new church. No one is willing to take hold of it with me. \$400.00 subscribed today.

March 15th. An old Roman complained it was hard speaking to men's bellies because they had no ears. I find it difficult to speak to their pockets for the same reason.[\[94\]](#)

Years later, Mrs. Roberts wrote about those early years in the ministry and told how her husband used to "draw his wood and cut it," and then added, "It is a great thing to be saved from laziness[\[95\]](#)

(b) General Conference at Boston, 1852. During the spring of that year, the Roberts family visited New York, where Mr. Roberts left his wife and went on to Boston to attend the 1852 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The diary of Mrs. George Lane recorded it thus:

May 21st. This morning Mr. Roberts, very unexpectedly to us, came to Boston. We were very glad to meet with him This day I have been to the Conference. I do not feel that there is as much player among the Ministers as would be for their good or for the benefit and prosperity of the church.[\[96\]](#)

On Monday, May 24th, she recorded, "In the afternoon Mr. Roberts and I went to Mt. Auburn. Was much pleased. Had profitable conversation with Mr. Roberts while there."[\[97\]](#) She mentioned that Scott, Simpson, Baker and Ames were elected Bishops, and added, "There was much interest manifested and excitement also."[\[98\]](#) On Wednesday, May 26th, the entry read: "Learned that our fate was sealed, and that my dear husband was released from the Book Concern, and that our pleasant home in New York is to be broken up."[\[99\]](#) That was the date Mr. Thomas Carlton was elected to fill the vacancy of Mr. Lane. On May 27th, she made this annotation: "Left Boston last evening in company with B. T. Roberts for New York. We reached our home at six o'clock this morning. Found our dear Ellen and her little boy well."[\[100\]](#) B. H. Roberts wrote many years later that "Peter Cartwright did not make just the anticipated impression on him, nor Daniel Webster, whom he heard at Fanneil Hall."[\[101\]](#)

(c) Portville Camp Meeting. Probably the Portville Camp Meeting of the Methodist Episcopal Church was one of the landmarks of that year. In addition to the references in his diary, is an article in the *Northern Christian Advocate*, signed "Titus," a pen name he used to sign articles sent to the religious periodicals of that day. From the description Mr. Roberts gave, it was evidently one of those camp meetings, typical of early Methodism, about which one frequently reads in Methodist history. Mr. Roberts wrote that "the woods almost constantly reverberated with the cries of the saints, the groans of the penitent and the shouts of the redeemed." Physical manifestations were' also present, for as Mr.

Roberts noted, "Strong men were shorn of their strength, and left as powerless as if they lay in the arms of death. In one evening, some ten or twelve thus fell prostrate " He continued to report that "some, in their agony, lay upon the open ground all night, groaning and praying for pardon." In his concluding comments, he discussed characteristic elements of his belief, especially his attitude toward free seats, which became more prominent in his thinking just a little later. He noted that camp meetings were needed to counteract the "prevailing tendency to formality" and to remind people that God is no respecter of persons. Then he continued:

In this 'age of progress,' when many of our churches say in effect, to the rich, 'sit thou here, in this good pew, for thou art able to pay for it,' and to the poor 'take this bench, or go, get a seat in the gallery,' we are in danger of forgetting, that in the presence of God, worldly distinctions are lost.[\[102\]](#)

In his Journal, he noted on July 13th that the "Rev. Joseph McCreery preached this morning from John 1:7, one of the greatest sermons I ever heard. Its effect was mighty."[\[103\]](#)

(d) Conference at Lock port, New York. As the time of Annual Conference drew near, Mr. Roberts revised his church records to the point of loss. In his diary he wrote:

Sept. 2. Revised our church record. Some forty or fifty more members were reported than ought to have been. Though I have received thirty or forty more than I have dismissed yet I shall report a decrease in the number of members.[\[104\]](#)

The year ended well financially, with a claim of four hundred dollars paid from his church and with the finances in good condition. He noted, "All seem anxious to build a new house. This has been a prosperous year for this circuit."[\[105\]](#)

The Genesee Annual Conference convened at Lockport, New York, September 8, 1852, with Bishop Morris presiding. It was that year Mr. Roberts received his ordination papers. He wrote in his Journal:

Sept. 12. Heard Bishop Morris in the morning from, 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' Ordained Elder. O what solemn vows are upon me.[\[106\]](#)

Mrs. Roberts wrote to her aunt, Mrs. Lane, of their relations to the circuit:

I never saw a people that seemed so attached to a preacher as they do to Mr. Roberts. You may wonder that I would tell you this. It is a comfort to me that people like instead of dislike him Our Presiding Elder says if they build a church here next year we will be returned; if they do not we will go to some other place Mr. Roberts had the present of materials for a very nice coat a few days since, and the young people are making a handsome coat for us.[\[107\]](#)

Mrs. Roberts 'wrote to her husband during his absence at the Conference, and expressed concern over being moved. Their son, George, had been born but a short time before, and moving at that time looked like an impossible task to her. She said:

I cannot think appointments which are called first in the Conference are always most desirable. Sometimes since you left home I have felt like sending a petition to the Bishop to please send us where there are hired girls a plenty and a Homeopathic Physician. It is not best, nor right to be anxious about what may be but occasionally I have ventured to wonder how we could move if obliged to, in our helpless state.[\[108\]](#)

She instructed her husband to buy a gift for a girl named Mary, who had been a real helper. She suggested "a port-folio, or a fan, or a silver top thimble." Then she continued: "Uncle Tom's Cabin excites my sympathies so that I can neither read it or let it alone. I will make a thorough abolitionist I imagine."[\[109\]](#)

Their second child, then only a few weeks old, had been named George Lane for the uncle of Mrs. Roberts. Mrs. Roberts 'wrote to Mrs. Lane:

Little G. L. (George Lane) is a great comfort to me. I love the name we have given him. Mr. Roberts talks to him much about being as good as his Uncle. He thinks there never was a better man than 'Uncle.'[\[110\]](#)

During the time of Conference, he had been very sick, so that Mrs. Roberts feared he would be taken. When Mr. Roberts received word of the illness of the baby, he offered to go home if he should become worse. He told of a fearful plague of cholera raging in Buffalo. A significant paragraph followed:

We are having quite a stormy time. The Greeks have fallen out among themselves. Slaughter has preferred charges against Houghton, and Houghton against Depew. The charges originated probably in a personal quarrel I am on the Slavery Committee and am very busy now writing a report. There is strong talk now of our going to Niagara Street, Buffalo. I would rather not go there now; but the will of the Lord be done. Several have said, and among them a Presiding Elder, they wished I was three or four years older they would put me on a District. But you need not feel concerned. This of course to you. I cannot tell where our lot may be the coming year. We may have to stay at Rushford. If so we will do it cheerfully, and do the best we can.[\[111\]](#)

As soon as the Conference closed on Tuesday night, Mr. Roberts started for home, drove through mud, rain, and darkness till a late hour of the night and then started early the next morning and traveled over fifty miles that day. Doubtless he was concerned about the sick baby and his young wife who was in ill health. He arrived home about ten o'clock at night, a day ahead of the time he was expected.

The scenes at Rushford had come to a close. The new church was evidently not to be built that year, for the Roberts were moved on to Buffalo, their next field of labor. It was in Rushford that his devotion appears to have been enhanced; the church there had progressed under his labors so that a recognition of his ability was given in his promotion to Buffalo; there his revival work became more marked; his rising criticism of formalism and his antipathy to the pew system were becoming evident; and also his power of literary endeavor were evidenced by his writings in the *Northern Christian Advocate*. A matter of note is the implication of his identification with his old friend, William C. Kendall, who was growing in unpopularity to the point of being marked "unsafe" by the end of that year, and his estimate of Joseph McCreery as an effective preacher.

Endnotes

- [1] Minutes of the Genesee and East Genesee Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, (1848), p. 15.
- [2] Letter from Mrs. George Lane to Ellen Lois Stowe, written from Buffalo, New York, September 11, 1848. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [3] F. W. Conable, History of the Genesee Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, (New York: Nelson and Phillips, 1876), p.564.
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Ibid., p.544.
- [6] Northern Christian Advocate, (June 23 1851), 4.
- [7] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his parent, September 18, 1848. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family
- [8] Original copy of the first sermon of B. T. Roberts. Found among the personal papers of the Roberts family.
- [9] Ibid.
- [10] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his parents, September 18.1848. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Original Copy of the first sermon of B. T. Roberts. Found among the personal papers of the Roberts family.

[15] Adella p. Carpenter, Ellen Lois Roberts, (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1926), pp. 1,1,18.

[16] Adella p. carpenter, Ellen Lois Roberts, (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1926), p. 18.

[17] William Carvosso, A Memoir of Mr. William Carvosso, (New York: T. Masor and G. Lane, 1837), Title Page.

[18] Elijah Hedding. A Discourse on the Administration of Discipline, (New York: Lane and Tippet, 1845). Title Page.

[19] Letter from Lydia B. Lane. to Ellen L. Stowe, August 13, 11140. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[20] Ellen L. Robert., The Earnest Christian, (September, 1861), 282.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Letter from Samuel Howe to Ellen Lois Stowe, October 1, 1840. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Letter from Mary S. Bronson, Windsor, New York, to Ellen Stowe. April 12, 1849. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[26] Letter from Mary Martindale, Prattsville, New York, to Ellen Stowe February 24, 1849. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ellen L. Roberts. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, *Ellen Lois Roberts*, p.41.

[29] Letter from Mary Martindale, Prattsville to Ellen Roberts, May 27, 1849. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[30] B. T. Roberts, Essay on "New York." Found among personal papers of Roberts.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Letter from B. T. Roberts to W. T. Smaliwood, Persia, New York, May 10, 1849. Found among the personal letters of Roberts family.

[33] Letter from Mary Martindale, written from Mt. Kalmia, to Ellen Lois Roberts, August, 1849. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[34] B. T. Roberts. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, p.33.

[35] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Lydia B. Lane, June 16, 1849. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, p.37.

[36] Journal of B. T. Roberts. September 12, 1849. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, p.37.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Letter from Mr., Robert, to Lydia B. Lane, September 22, 1849. Found among the personal letters of the Robert, family.

[39] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*. Quoted by W. B. Rose (ed), *Pungent Truths*, (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House), p.220.

[40] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Mrs. Lydia B. Lane, September 22, 1849. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, pp. 38, 39.

[41] F. W. Corable, *op. cit.*, p.575.

[42] Journal of B. T. Roberts, September 12, 1849. Also, *Minutes of Genesee and East Genesee Conference- of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, (1849), p.19.

[43] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his father, written from Pike, November 20, 1849. Found among letter, of Roberts family.

[44] Ibid.

[45] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (February, 1888), 35.

[46] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Lydia E. Lane, October 24, 1849. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, pp. 41. 42.

[47] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Florilla Roberts, October 25, 1849. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. Benjamin Titus Roberts. p.44.

[48] Letter of Mrs. Roberts to Lydia B. Lane, October 24, 1849. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.41.

[49] B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.38.

[50] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Florilla Roberts, October 25, 1849. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.45.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Letter from Mrs. Lane to Mrs. Roberts, September 14, 1849. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[53] F. W. Conable, *op. cit.*, p.585.

[54] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his father, November 20, 1849. Quoted by B. H. Robert,, Benjamin Titus Roberts. p.46.

[55] Letter from B. T. Roberts to Mrs. Lane, January 17, 1850. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[56] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Mrs. Lane, February 21, 1850. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.48.

[57] Ibid., p. 48.

[58] Ibid.. p.48

[59] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, February 20, 1850.

[60] Ibid.

[61] B. T. Roberts, *Why Another Sect*, (Rochester, New York: The Earnest Christian Office. 1879). p. 53.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Minutes of the Genesee and East Genesee Annual Conference, September, 1850,

[64] Journal of B. T. Roberts, September 29, 1850. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.51.

[65] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife. September 25, 1850. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.52.

[66] Ibid., Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.54

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p. 52

[69] Ibid., Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.53.

[70] Ibid., Quoted by B. H. Roberts. *op. cit.*, p.54.

[71] Letter from Mary Martindale to Mrs. Roberts, June 15, 1850. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[72] William Hosmer, *Northern Christian Advocate*, (February 27, 1835), 2.

[73] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, February 25, 1851. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[74] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, written from New York to Pike, March 3 1851. Found among the personal letter of the Roberts family.

[75] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, written from New York to Pike. March 50, 1851. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Mr. Titus Roberts, September 13, 1851. Quoted by B H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.57.

[78] B. T. Roberts, "A Running Sketch," The Earnest Christian, (January. 1865), 6.

[79] Letter from Mrs. B. T. Roberts to Titus Roberts, written from Pike. New York. August 6, 1851. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.56.

[80] B. T. Roberts, "Rev. Wm. C. Kendall," The Earnest Christian, (July, 1861), 204.

[81] Ibid.

[82] B. T. Roberts. "Rev. Wm. C. Kendall, A.M.," The Earnest Christian, (September, 1881), 278.

[83] E. T. Roberts, "Rev. Wm. C. Kendall." The Earnest Christian, (July, 1881), 204.

[84] Ibid., p.205.

[85] B. T. Roberts, "Rev. Wm. C. Kendall. A.M.." The Earnest Christian, (August, 1861), 229.

[86] Minutes of the Genesee and E. Genesee Annual Conferences, (1851), p.3.

[87] Letter from B. T. Roberts to Mrs. George Lane, January 1, 1852. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Letter from B. T. Roberts to Mrs. Lane, February 24, 1852. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, pp. 81, 62.

[90] Journal of B. T. Roberts, March 7, 1852.

[91] Ibid., December 7.1851. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.60.

[92] Ibid., December 10, 1851. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.60.

[93] Journal of B. T. Roberts, April 7th. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, pp. 62.63.

[94] Journal of B. T. Roberts, March 11th and March 15th. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op.,. cit., p.62.

[95] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Lucy Coleman, undated, written from North Chili, New York. round among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[96] Diary of Mrs. George Lane, May 21, 1852. Found among personal papers of the Roberts family.

[97] Ibid., May 24, 1852.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid., May 26, 1852.

[100] Ibid., May 27.1852.

[101] B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.68.

[102] B. T. Roberts, Northern Christian Advocate, XII (July 20. 1852). 1.

[103] Journal of B. T. Roberts, July 13, 1852. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.83.

[104] Journal of B. T. Roberts. Quoted by E. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.64.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Journal of B. T. Roberts, September 12th. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.66.

[107] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Mrs. Lydia E. Lane. August 30, 1852. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[108] Letter from Mrs. Roberts. Rushford, to her husband, at Lockport, September 17.1852 Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[109] Ibid.

[\[110\]](#) Letter from Mrs. Roberts, Rushford, to Mrs. Lane. 1852.

[\[111\]](#) Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, written from Lockport, September 10, 1852. Found among personal letters of Roberts family.

EARNEST CHRISTIAN

CHAPTER III

ROBERTS AND HIS ASSOCIATES IN CONFLICT WITH EXISTING CONDITIONS

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[A. FIRST IMPORTANT APPOINTMENT OF MR. ROBERTS](#)

Niagara Street Church, Buffalo, was the oldest Methodist Episcopal Church in the city.^[1] This church had come a long distance from the days of Loring Grant whose charge had included "all the present Genesee Conference, and nearly all the Erie Conference; all of western New York from the Genesee River; one county in Pennsylvania (Erie) and all below Cleveland in the state of Ohio."^[2] Buffalo had been previously known in Methodist records as New Amsterdam, and one of the first active pastors there had been James Gilmore.

Concerning the building of the church, George Peck related:

"This was the first church erected in the Holland Purchase; and when it was dedicated, and was known to be a fixed fact, it was a matter of universal astonishment."^[3]

When B. T. Roberts was sent there as pastor in September of 1852, it was a well established city church, at that time a fine appointment for a young man only past his twenty-ninth birthday, but one fraught with grave difficulties for his future years.

[1. Reaction to Appointment](#)

Strange as it may seem, the young preacher, stepped up to the central appointment of the district, had not wanted to be moved there. Mr. Roberts wrote:

At this church we were stationed the fifth year of our ministry. It was the only appointment made for us with which we ever tried to interfere. We felt deeply our lack of ability, experience and grace, to fill so important a position. We entreated the Bishop not to send us there. But when we were sent, we resolved to do our duty faithfully.^[4]

When Mr. Roberts went to Buffalo, he left his wife with their sick child at Gowanda until such time as the cholera, which was raging in Buffalo, should subside. He wrote to his wife in the beginning of his ministry there a note of encouragement: "I dreaded coming here but I am glad now that I am sent to this people. I believe the Lord will use me for their good."^[5] His optimism had evidently grown out of divine help, for he felt the Lord had helped him very much in preaching. His letter continued, "I feel as if our Heavenly Father would make me useful to this people. I am expecting an outpouring of the Spirit. God is willing to grant it. The people desire it."^[6] He had prayed that he might prepare the way of the Lord, and

have a deeper baptism of the Spirit than he had ever before enjoyed. The confession of his own need led him to question his wife. He asked:

How, darling, do you enjoy yourself now? Have you received any special spiritual blessings of late? You will need much grace to meet the duties that await you. You will have a wider field of usefulness than you have ever had before But I have no fears on your account. If you will only have better health, you will, I do not doubt, enjoy yourself much, and fully meet the high expectations.[\[7\]](#)

This letter brought a response in humility on the part of his wife. She 'wrote him in reply that she knew how true was the remark in his last excellent letter that she would need much grace to meet the duties that awaited her. She deplored the fact that she came far short of being "what a minister's wife should be,"[\[8\]](#) and expressed her desire to improve, though she could not see that she did in the least; yet, she added, "Surely religion can make me more useful. if I only had more."[\[9\]](#) It is no wonder his letter brought this and a further reply from his wife, who was trembling in the balance of her own deficiency, brought on, no doubt, by his insistent question about her spiritual qualification. She added, "I dread somewhat, yes a great deal, going to Buffalo, and should even more if I had not just such a husband as I have to lean upon."[\[10\]](#)

Practical questions needed to be settled in the move, for evidently the people of the Niagara Street Church had not furnished a parsonage for their pastor. It appears that pastors had not moved their families to Niagara Street in the past. She wanted information from her husband where she would stop when she made the trip to her new home, or as she put it, "when I come to Buffalo, if I ever do,"[\[11\]](#) and wondered if the stage coach would take her where she wished to go. Mr. Roberts, in going on ahead to make preparations for his wife's coming, was not left without some specific instructions. "Dearest, if you get a cook stove do not get a high-priced one, nor a very large one. And you will not buy anything we can do without. I care not how plain and scantily our house is furnished."[\[12\]](#) Finally George Worthington moved the belongings of the young minister from Rushford to Buffalo by team, and after quite a period of waiting, the Roberts family at length were able to settle in the new pastorate.

2. Beginnings of His Work

Mr. Roberts' optimism at the beginning of his pastorate in Buffalo was not without an estimate of the low spiritual state of the people. He wrote to his father that things were beginning to assume a much more favorable appearance from the standpoint of interest, as evidenced in the increasing congregation, but added, "You have no idea of the low state of Methodism in this city. Nothing but the power of the Lord can save us."[\[13\]](#) In reviewing this situation in *The Earnest Christian* of 1865, he portrayed the congregation as run down, the state of spirituality low, and the people greatly discouraged. He admitted there was a strong temptation on his part to lower the standard, but testified that God kept him from compromising.[\[14\]](#)

3. Revival with Redfield

By November it was determined that Dr. Redfield, who had stirred Middletown while Roberts was attending Wesleyan University, was to assist Roberts in revival services in Buffalo. Dr. Redfield, one of the prominent revivalists of his day, wrote to Mr. Hicks at Syracuse of his contemplated visit:

You may well judge that it will take some large degree of redemption power to raise from the dead an old carcass frozen up for more than twenty years. But it begins to heave and groan in many places. Probably more than, twenty have been converted and reclaimed which in my Opinion 18 equal to one hundred in Syracuse. Brother Wallace and myself will go Saturday or Tuesday to Painted Post where we hope that Zenas the Lawyer (The Rev. Fay Purdy) will meet or follow us and not run again. (Bro. Purdy as usual ran away soon after my arrival), and from that place we expect to go to Buffalo.[\[15\]](#)

Dr. Redfield arrived in due time. Years later, Mr. Roberts summarized the effects of that meeting stating that Dr. Redfield had been there several weeks and had 'aroused great interest in the community, but had met with unexpected opposition from ministers occupying a high official position in the church, and the extent of the progress of the revival had been stayed.[\[16\]](#) Mr. Roberts further commented that there came a quickening of the membership of the church at that time, and that many sinners were converted. But, he added:

A few, less than half a dozen, composed of secret society men, and one or two proud women, encouraged by a former, secret society pastor, held out and opposed the work.[\[17\]](#)

In his *Journal* of January 28th, Roberts told who some of these opponents were, specifying Mr. Robie, Editor of the *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, Thomas Carlton who had recently become head of the Methodist Book Concern, and Mr. Fuller, who with Canton, became prosecutors of Roberts in his trial in 1858. Mr. Roberts claimed that they had defeated the effort made for the salvation of souls, and so prejudiced the people against Dr. Redfield that the church did not even offer to pay his expenses.

4. Convention at Buffalo

The General Anniversary of the Missionary Society of the M. E. Church was held in Buffalo at the Niagara Street Church, at a date which overlapped, in part, the date of the revival services held by Dr. Redfield. This would probably not have been done by a more experienced pastor. Possibly the difficulties that arose from this situation might have been avoided at that time if this conflict in date had not occurred. Bishop Janes, Abel Stevens, and John Price Durbin were among those present for the Anniversary occasion. One of those who preached was Dr. John Price Durbin, a leading light of those days, whom Dr. John A. Roche believed to illustrate more forcibly than any man he had known the greatest number of principles of homiletics and sacred oratory.[\[18\]](#) Roberts was evidently not so deeply impressed, at least with that particular sermon, for in his *Journal* for January 23rd he wrote, "Dr. Durbin

preached this morning from John 4:35 a clear intellectual discourse, wanting in spirituality and life." [19] Bishop Edmund S. Janes, whose service as bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church comprehended a generation, and whose "flute-like voice made upon the hearer a peculiar impression" [20] also preached. Roberts could have said as the bishop did when he died, "I am not disappointed." [21] Roberts characterized his discourse from Acts 9:31 as "rich in instruction and spiritual life." [22] Above all, Roberts believed that the efforts made for the raising of money during this period in which "the aid of eloquence, and wit, and personal and church rivalry was invoked" [23] dissipated the conviction that had been resting upon the people, and that when the revival meetings were resumed at the close of the Missionary Convention, they "found the wheels of the car of salvation were effectually blocked." [24]

Perhaps a more important part of the Convention, from the standpoint of this narrative, is the entry Roberts made in his *Journal* that on that very day, January 23rd, some of the brethren, three of whom he specifically named, came out in opposition to him. One thought the standard of religion too high; a second objected to measures used, and a third believed that "we should grow up into holiness." [25] Roberts attributed this open opposition to the effect of the influence of certain of the visiting ministers who were attending the Missionary Convention. Whether this judgment be correct or not, it does seem certain that this revival meeting with Redfield, with the opposition that developed, was probably a key to some of the situations in the future.

Dr. Redfield left Buffalo and the responsibility for the meeting fell upon the shoulders of the young pastor. He asserted that some who had opposed the meetings began to make amends by trying to support the meeting, but without acknowledging their wrong. He believed the Lord did not bless them, and recorded for the night of January 29th, "a poor meeting." [26] The next day he tried some very close preaching, telling them, in the words of James that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." [27] A "good time" in society meeting was followed by "quite a flare up." [28] Mr. Roberts recorded that attempts were made in that meeting to compose quarrels among the members but matters were only made worse. Those who had hindered the revival, he charged, began to hunt up pretexts, and repeated everything that he had said which was capable of misconstruction. The whole had a paralyzing effect upon him and he acknowledged that he felt so bad about the failure of the meeting that it was difficult for him to do anything. He even soliloquized gloomily, "It seems as if Satan was about to hold undisputed sway here." [29]

While Roberts had run up against some snags in his revival services, a "glorious revival" [30] had been held in the St. John's Church in the city, an account of which was printed in the *Buffalo Christian Advocate*. "There is," stated this local Journal

a glorious revival in and around its walls once more. From thirty to forty are at the altar for prayers every night and still the interest increases. We have prayer meetings in the afternoon at the private houses, which are owned and blessed of the Lord. A few days since, at one of these, a German expressed his feelings somewhat as follows: 'My bredren, sometimes I tink I got him, and den I tink I no got him; but I get him soon, I tink.' It would

have done your heart good to have been there. You would have seen the old grey headed sinner pleading for mercy; the backslider at the foot of the cross pleading for mercy, saying, 'Save, Lord, or I perish.'[\[31\]](#)

But a revival in some other church did not satisfy Roberts with reference to his own church. He recalled that they had formerly enjoyed powerful revivals of religion, and a few years before his pastorate, under the labors of the Rev. Eleazer Thomas, the standard of holiness had been raised, and many of the members had entered into the enjoyment of this blessing. But for a few years immediately preceding his labors there, a different tone of piety had been inculcated. Few of the members at the time of his pastorate made a definite profession of holiness, and he thought a system of "worldly policy" had been partially inaugurated.[\[32\]](#)

5. Conference Religion Attacked and Defended

Perhaps the failure of the Buffalo revival effort accentuated in Mr. Roberts a sense of spiritual lack, not only in the Niagara Street Church, but came to include the Conference also. On February eleventh, he had written an article, an original copy of which has been preserved among the papers and letters of the Roberts family. On the outside of this folded copy are written the words, "Sent to N. A. Feb. 11. 1853." The article was published in the February 16, 1853 [\[33\]](#) issue of the *Northern Advocate*. On February 20th, he wrote in his Journal, "Finished and sent my second article to the *Northern Independent* on the state of the Conference. My first called forth some sneering remarks in the *Buffalo Advocate*."[\[34\]](#) Those two articles were the first publications which brought the young pastor into conflict with his ministerial brethren.

The gist of that article is necessary in order to understand clearly the developing situation. After detailing the rapidly increasing wealth of the region in which "splendid mansions. elegantly furnished, reared their proud fronts" where but a few years before "stood the humble log house of the hardy pioneer," and speaking of the change from "the fierce howlings of the wolf" to the "iron horse" which bounded along with his chariot over fertile meadows,[\[35\]](#) Mr. Roberts referred to the high ground which the Genesee Conference had taken in its financial matters, the good parsonages, the splendid school at Lima, which he rated second to none in the Union. This commendatory approach, however, was followed by an attempt to show that they were failing in the very object for which the ministry was instituted. He quoted figures from the minutes indicating a loss of 1,139 members in the ten years previous, although if they had but grown with the population, a 25 per cent increase, they would have shown a total of 15,541 members instead of 11,312 members and probationers, or a relative loss of 4,269 if they had maintained their ground. He then pressed upon his readers the thought that even this gain would not have comprehended their duty, since Christianity is aggressive and every disciple of Christ is bound to gather with Him. He then drew the conclusion that this declension was to be taken as evidence that their spiritual condition was not very good, and that there was a great lack of the power, and even of the form of godliness. He then specifically judged that not one half of the members enjoyed justifying grace, that the Discipline was a dead letter, and that Biblical injunctions against fashionable sins and "duties irksome to the carnal heart"[\[36\]](#) had been virtually repealed, and that a tide of worldliness was threatening to sweep away the

boundaries between the Church and the world After promoting to continue his theme, he closed by stating "I would naught exaggerate naught extenuate and set down naught in malice.[\[37\]](#)

This article did not please at least one man in the Conference and one may suppose the majority in the light of future events R. L. Waite, a minister of the Genesee Conference answered the article published February 16th. and stated his regret that Mr. Roberts should have felt himself called upon to give publicity to the sentiments expressed in that paper. passing as his judgment that it would injure both him and the people of the church injure him, by increasing the morbid state of his mind, and creating prejudice against him; and injure others by inducing the belief that the ministry did not appreciate the efforts and sacrifices of the people in the cause of God, and by putting into the hands of their adversaries a weapon which they would not fail to use against them. That already Mr. Roberts had created some prejudice against himself is indicated by the tone of Mr. Waite 5 following words:

It is, however, matter of gratitude that amid the general defection, there is one true man remaining one true amid many false' who, 'having no fear but the fear of God before his eyes, dares to reprove the general apathy and like Luther and Wesley, strives to awaken the slumbering church.[\[38\]](#)

Mr. Waite then proceeded to show that the Millerite excitement, discovery of gold in California, the railroad boom which brought in a large Catholic element, might create conditions so that in a particular locality the population "might outrun the church for a time."[\[39\]](#) He then continued to counter what Mr. Roberts affirmed that the discipline was a dead letter, that the Bible, when it forbids fashionable vices, was virtually repealed and that in many, perhaps most of our charges, probably not one half of our members enjoy justifying grace. He then asked this question, "How does Br. Roberts know this? What have been his opportunities for forming an intelligent opinion concerning the spiritual condition of the ninety circuits and stations within our bounds?"[\[40\]](#) He then classified Mr. Roberts as a junior preacher, having been connected with the Conference a little more than four years, and he supposed that he must have itinerated widely in that time, for his article inferred that he must be acquainted with "most of the charges."[\[41\]](#) He concluded, "How preposterous, then to indulge in these wholesale denunciations of the Church, concerning whose condition he knows so little."[\[42\]](#) After a paragraph in which Mr. Waite endeavored to show that Mr. Roberts, in admitting the material increases, disproved his assumptions, he addressed the editor of the paper thus: "The truth is, Bro. Hosmer, this hue and cry about declension and apostasy is all moonshine. The Genesee Conference is sound to the core."[\[43\]](#) Some weight may be given to Roberts' arguments, however, from statistical statements of C. C. Goss, showing that while the Genesee Conference was declining numerically, the Methodist Episcopal Church in the North was actually increasing in numbers, with the secession of the M. E. Church South in 1845 being taken into consideration.[\[44\]](#) It may be that Roberts' judgments were somewhat weighted with his Buffalo revival disappointment, and that R. L. Waite's classification of Genesee as the "Banner Conference in several respects"[\[45\]](#) was a statement of passionate Conference loyalty directed against a "young upstart."

Enough has been given to show that a war was on in the Methodist press. The second article of Mr. Roberts answered the objection of undue increase during the Millerite delusion, with the result of a

consequent falling away, by quoting a statement of Dr. Bangs in *The Prospects of the M. E. Church* to the effect "that about the same proportion of those received during that excitement have stood fast, as is usual among the probationers we receive."[\[46\]](#) He then proceeded to assert that the true reason of the decline in the Conference was "the want of personal holiness in the ministry"[\[47\]](#) and stated that because the ministers did not find the experience of holiness the flock also failed to follow. The church, he declared, had been down where worldly weapons had reached her and wounded her sore. Splendid houses, parties of pleasure, ornaments of gold, and costly apparel, had been offered her, and the offer had been accepted. Her sons and daughters had fallen by the hand of the destroyer. Accredited ambassadors of Him who enjoined self-denial upon all his followers, had assured their members that "they need not give up any of the elegancies of life,"[\[48\]](#) even to aid in carrying on that mighty work of the redemption of the world. After drawing a parallel of Hannibal's destruction through ease, when, by vigorous discipline, success could have been his, he closed his article with a specific charge laid at the feet of the ministry, in the following words:

So we as ministers have allowed the church to rest in winter quarters amid the blandishments of ease, when we should have sounded the clarion and led her on to battle and to triumph. Desertions have been frequent. A love of ease has become prevalent. Only a very few are willing to perform the stern duties of a soldier of Christ. We have been enjoying the spoils before the campaign was ended. We have been raising monuments to the victories of our fathers when we should have been achieving still greater conquests. For this my brethren we are responsible. With a deeper experience ourselves, our example would have told with greater effect, our words would have been accompanied with greater power, and God would have worked mightily by us.[\[49\]](#)

In June of 1853, Mrs. Lane wrote to Mrs. Roberts: "I see that Mr. Roberts is assailed on the right, and left, for his plain truth. I think it is wise in him to be silent."[\[50\]](#) She called attention to the fact that some of his articles had been republished in the *Western Advocate* with approbation, but reminded the Roberts that "plain dealing is so out of fashion in these days of improvement that people will not bear it. The church is too much like the world to bear it,"[\[51\]](#) and then uttered an ejaculatory prayer that the Lord might have mercy on the church.

Some felt called on to defend Mr. Roberts. The Rev. J. H. Wallace, a minister of the Genesee Conference, wrote in the *Northern Christian Advocate* that he would stand by the truth. He declared that he knew such facts existed, and that he would not lie for the honor of the M. E. Church, nor to escape the prejudice and hate of all men. He expressed a hope to share in all the castigations to which Roberts was doomed for his faithful warnings, and protested that though his locks were gray, and his vigor broken, his courage for God and truth was unfaltering.[\[52\]](#)

There seems to be some evidence that certain conditions not in harmony with the teachings of Methodism did exist. An article under title of "Professing Christians Dancing" had been published the preceding year in the *Buffalo Christian Advocate*. The writer declared that many of their excellent church members in Buffalo had adopted a new method to serve God and promote religion. Instead of praying

and watching over their outward conduct, they had caught the spirit of the theater and the ball room, and had gone to dancing. "And why not dance? say they. And why not? we answer. Your pleasure seeking soul and worldly heart are adapted to it. What business has your minister to interfere with your frolics? They do not. Some of them dare not!"[\[53\]](#)

Mrs. George Lane wrote in July of 1853 that she felt no sort of fellowship with Buffalo Methodists and certified that when she went to church there, she felt like shaking off the dust of her feet and turning away from them, "as old Father Moore used to say, 'There was not a breath of prayers seemed to come from the hearts or mouths of any of them!'"[\[54\]](#)She judged them thus because of their manner of sitting up during prayer and looking around in every direction, and justified her conclusions thus: "I of course made my observations and formed conclusions about them as I do in most places. I try always to find out what manner of spirit the people are of with whom I mingle."[\[55\]](#)

However, there was a note of optimism sounded by Mr. Stiles, pastor of the Pearl Street M. E. Church in Buffalo, about the time of the beginning of these difficulties. At that time, speaking from the text, "Watchman, what of the night?"[\[56\]](#) he discoursed about the wonderful influence of Christianity in the world. Mr. Robie, Editor of the *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, reported that he had listened to a discourse of "happy and earnest delivery,"[\[57\]](#) from the Rev. Mr. Stiles, pastor of the Pearl Street M. E. Church. Mr. Stiles had not yet been projected into the midst of the conflict in which the young pastor of the Niagara Street Church had become embroiled.

6. Free Seats Advocated

The matter of free seats in public worship became a question of great importance to Mr. Roberts during his Buffalo pastorate, doubtless because the Niagara Street Church was a stock church. Concerning free seats, Roberts wrote years later that when he lived in Buffalo, he held meetings in a place which was as near hell as any place he ever saw. Almost every house was a saloon, and it was made of the worst class of people on earth. When the room was crowded full he declared he had seen them all melted to tears and bowing in prayer. Some of the hardest of them were converted and lived converted lives. He believed that the love of God goes to the lowest and the most forsaken of earth, and so strong was his conviction that he made the statement that lie could just as soon help build a gambling house as a pewed church. "It is an insult to God and humanity. God's house should be as free as his grace."[\[58\]](#)

Of that same period, he wrote at another time, that while in Buffalo, his attention had been drawn to the evils of the pew system. He saw that the house of God must be free for all who chose to attend, if the masses would be reached and saved. He then began to write and preach upon the subject. The Niagara Street Church was in debt, and he offered to see the debt paid off if they would make the house free, but the offer was declined.[\[59\]](#) When this effort failed, he turned his attention to the establishment of a free church in the city. On March 29th he recorded in his diary, "Went to see about getting a church lot. I fear that our trustees will neither do nor let be done. We need a free Methodist Church here very much."[\[60\]](#) That expression "free Methodist Church" is prophetic inasmuch as that became the name chosen for the

new church whose existence was yet some years in the future. The only change was from the small fin "free" to a capital F.

On June 5th of that same year his *Journal* records the fact that he had preached in his church in the morning on missions, on the anniversary of the F. M. S. and in the afternoon on church building, in which he endeavored to show that the pewed system was unscriptural. He felt he had a good time preaching and that a good impression had been made. On the following day he called a Society Meeting in the evening to consider the propriety of building a free church. The attendance was very good, and after a number had spoken in favor of a free church, a vote was taken and the free church issue was passed. [61] Roberts said that even Robie thought the current was running strongly in favor of a free church. Since the poor were not permitted to have a place in the more expensive edifices, there ought to be free churches for the poor. [62] Some of the more costly churches did have a pauper's seat at the rear for the poor who could not afford a pew, but to sit there was to acknowledge poverty, so not many poor attended. Roberts' early friend, the Rev. Eleazer Thomas, also made a speech in favor of the free church plan. The trustees, a portion of whom were present, did not say much. Mr. Wormwood, though, sweetly took ground in favor of the new enterprise and made a good speech.

The Rev. Thomas Carlton, who was later in agreement with Mr. Robie, was on the other side of the proposal here. He told those opposed to the paid pew system that the free seat system did not work well in New York, and they were getting out of it fast as they could. He said they had lately repaired Allen Street Church, New York, and he believed they had made it a stock church. This statement, it was asserted later in a bill of charges against Mr. Carlton, drawn up but never preferred, was contrary to fact. [63]

However, Mr. Roberts was not alone on the side of this question. Others in the past had been concerned. Mr. A. Kent wrote a series of articles on the subject of free seats in the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, taking his position against stock churches, and relating that Bishop Asbury had been much opposed to the procedure of buying pews. He also said that a number of influential preachers, who might be appointed to principal stations, signed a paper requesting the bishop not to appoint them in any place where they paid the preacher by legal tax, and he assured them he would not. [64]

For a time the method of paid pews had carried because of expediency, but the pendulum was to swing the other way. At the close of the conference year, Roberts wrote his father:

I believe the people are looking with more and more favor upon the principles I feel compelled to advocate. Yesterday I preached a sermon on the duty of the church to spread Christianity in this city which I should judge produced a deep impression. The Lord graciously assisted me. I have no doubt but that the church and congregation with the exception of perhaps half a dozen are anxious that we should return. Still I should be unwilling to, unless a different policy can be pursued. Till our exclusive church system is abolished in this city we cannot do much towards infusing the Spirit of Christianity among the masses. [65]

7. Missionary Interest

During that year Mr. Roberts offered himself for missionary service in Bulgaria, and he wrote to Bishop Waugh with reference to it.[\[66\]](#) The offer was not accepted because of the ill health of his wife.

Evidently he later offered himself to the Missionary Board for India or Turkey. Relative to the second offer, Mrs. Lane wrote that she supposed Mr. Roberts would feel greatly troubled that he could not go to India now, or to Turkey, and expressed the hope that they would not feel it their duty to start to any foreign mission. She affirmed that if it were Mr. Roberts' field of labor, the Lord would make his way plain before him, and that there would not be any serious obstacles in the way.[\[67\]](#)

Each time he was turned back to the laborious round of the daily task, but the lure of the green fields far away did not cease to exist, and all through life, his interest in missions persisted.

8. Slavery Injected into the Picture

The rising tide of interest in the slave came up that year in Mr. Roberts' life. On November 14, 1852, shortly after going to Buffalo, he recorded that he had taken a collection of seventeen dollars for a "Bro. Basil Hall" who had bought himself of his owners in Washington, and that he was then raising funds to buy his wife and two children.[\[68\]](#)

The 30th of May, 1853, he noted that he had attended the Presbyterian General Assembly where he heard a very interesting discussion of the subject of slavery. His opinion was that "most of the speakers are apparently apologists for slavery."[\[69\]](#)

9. Summary of the Year at Buffalo

That year's pastorate gives a glimpse of the man fasting and praying, studying "as usual"[\[70\]](#) in the mornings, reading Irving's *Life of Mohammed* and commenting, "The style is too diffusive to suit me";[\[71\]](#) attending a lecture on gesture by Mr. Taverer, another on elocution; calling on his members, laboring in the jail and occasionally at the hydraulics; preaching in his stock church and working for a free church; writing for the church paper to correct what he considered current errors; encouraged and discouraged; denounced and lauded; having little to get along on and yet buying a house which afterward became the means for the first free church in Buffalo.

B. CONFERENCE AT BATAVIA AND A NEW PASTORATE

1. Conference Problems

September, 1853 found Mr. Roberts once more at the session of the Annual Conference, that year held in

Batavia, New York. Roberts wrote to his wife who had remained at home that Dr. Kidder, Abel Stevens, and Thomas Carlton were at the seat of Conference. Abel Stevens had presented the Tract Cause in his usual way but with a great deal more of denominational zeal, which had carried most of the preachers completely away, so that most of them had pledged to raise from five to twenty-five dollars. Roberts did not seem to be moved by the appeal, and asserted, "But I made no pledge, and intend to make none. Is not that wonderful?"^[72] It may have been that his knowledge that one of his opponents, Fuller, was striving for the Tract Agency which influenced him to his decision not to pledge. He wrote, "Fuller is striving hard for the Tract Agency and will perhaps obtain it. I felt confident one while that he would not succeed. But management accomplishes most everything."^[73]

At that Conference, his placement evidently constituted a most perplexing problem. The Rev. Eleazer Thomas, his presiding elder, talked with him, but seemed puzzled as to what to do. Roberts expressed the opinion that "he, I believe, likes me, and my principles, and my unbending course, but he wants to please."^[74] Mr. Thomas asked him what he would do with the men who opposed him if he were returned to Buffalo, and he replied that he would turn them out of the church. "So," Mr. Roberts wrote his wife, "you may judge what the probabilities are of our returning."^[75] Three days later he wrote again, "They seem afraid to send me away, and afraid to send me back."^[76] One of the vital questions at issue was Mr. Roberts position on a "free Church" as opposed to a "stock Church." A trip was made back to Buffalo by the presiding elder and Mr. Canton to see if they could arrange for the formation of a new stock church, and thus make it possible to return Roberts to Niagara Street to build a free church. Evidently the arrangements Thomas and Carlton hoped to make did not work out, and so certain was Roberts that he would be moved that he asked his wife to put a "To Rent" sign on their house and specified that she should ask \$130.00 a year for the same.

In the whole question of placement, one can trace the various elements external and internal that go to make up the appointive system. A Mr. and Mrs. Olmstead and George Burden desired him to go to Caryville, promising to do well by them and to furnish the parsonage. This urge of friendship and promise of material things inclined him to state, "I do not know but it will be best for us to go there but may the will of the Lord be done."^[77] Then came Eli and Mrs. Wood to urge them to go back to Rushford; yet scenes of that former pastorate did not seem to hold so strong an attraction and he opined, "Yet somehow, I do not feel drawn that way."^[78] Informed by Presiding Elder Thomas that his name was down for Perry, he discovered in himself a strong reluctance to go there, which he stated to his presiding officer. Then he wrote, "Bro. Thomas feels tried with me for my opposition to his measures but I cannot help that. When there is so much managing I feel free to express my opinion when it is called for."^[79] During these days of uncertainty as to his future, he was prompted to say, "I never felt more quiet about my appointment than this year and I never felt more drawn out to pray that the will of the Lord might be done."^[80]

Mr. Roberts was not too much disturbed about his appointment to enjoy thoroughly the preaching of Bishop Simpson who presided at that session of the Annual Conference. The oratory of the Bishop has been described as persuasive rather than instructive, but which was at times overwhelming. Roberts mentioned that "Bishop Simpson preached yesterday afternoon one of the best and most powerful

sermons I ever heard."[\[81\]](#) Everybody was carried away with the sermon. Whether there had come one of those great demonstrations which sometimes occurred under his preaching in which the congregation would rise, "throw up their hands and shout wildly," was not told.[\[82\]](#) This much is known that Roberts classified him as "after the style of our old preachers,"[\[83\]](#) and that he impressed Mr. Roberts by both his preaching ability and his great tact and dignity in presiding at the business sessions.

At that Conference, certain charges were drawn up against the Rev. Thomas Carlton and handed to Eleazer Thomas, the presiding elder by order of J. H. Wallace. Among the papers of Roberts is preserved what seems to be a copy of these charges, in which Mr. Carlton was accused of falsehood in making certain statements about stock churches in the East. What their full character was is not known now. Suffice it to say that when handed to Mr. Thomas, he suppressed them, probably realizing the futility of presenting them, inasmuch as Mr. Carlton had already been elected head of the Book Concern of the Church.

One cannot but come to the conclusion that the difficulties of the previous year had not put Roberts in the best light with some of the men, particularly those with whom he had differed. A letter from Mrs. Lane to Mrs. Roberts implied that very thing most strongly. It read:

Harvey and Marie stopped at Mr. Knowles while Mrs. Carlton was there. She told them that Mrs. Roberts was liked by the people where they were stationed, said she was liked as a Lady and as a Christian, everywhere. It is well you stand so high.[\[84\]](#)

Roberts' *Journal* of September 15th told the story of their move. He remarked that Conference had adjourned about half past twelve and succinctly stated that he was appointed to Brockport and that H. R. Smith succeeded him to Niagara Street. At the close, he could say of his appointment, "I receive it gratefully as from the Lord."[\[85\]](#)

Niagara Street Church, that had turned down the offer of Mr. Roberts to clear the church of debt if they would make it free, had a "short but hectic history," according to Mr. Roberts. Redfield had left the revival that year, telling them that Ichabod would be written on their walls, and the sentiment had been echoed by Roberts.[\[86\]](#) In the *Buffalo Christian Advocate* of January 1, 1857, appeared the notation, "The Niagara Street M. E. Church will probably be rebuilt, and will present one of the most ornamental buildings in town. The plans in the hands of Mr. Wilcox are exceedingly tasteful and rich."[\[87\]](#) This plan of improvement was carried out and thousands of dollars were expended in making the building a more imposing church edifice. Though the church was a substantial stone structure, it was given a new front, and was further enhanced within by a large organ in the gallery, and tall gothic chairs in the pulpit. The church was by that time so deeply involved in debt that every expedient was used, such as reselling the pews, holding fairs and festivals, giving popular lectures, and taxing the members to the utmost of their ability in order to "save the church."[\[88\]](#) One of the largest liquor dealers in the city was made both a trustee and the treasurer. The "Clam Bake and Chowder Entertainment" seemed to climax all endeavors at money-raising, and Mr. Roberts regretfully stated that one of the most godly women he had ever known was induced to preside at one of the tables. In the end, the church had to be sold and was

purchased for a Jewish synagogue.[\[89\]](#)

The Buffalo Church which was to see such misfortune in the future, passed into the hands of Mr. H. R. Smith and Mr. Roberts went on to Brockport.

In the year 1828, Mr. Loring Grant, presiding elder of the Erie District wrote, "In the village of Brockport a very commodious, well finished brick church has recently been erected."[\[90\]](#) Brockport had a good beginning and providence had smiled upon it. A quarter of a century had passed, however, before Mr. Roberts was sent there as pastor.

2. Roberts' Reception at the New Church

A letter of Mrs. Roberts stated: "The people of our (Buffalo) church manifested a great deal of feeling at our leaving and the sisters expressed a great deal of sympathy for me and were very kind."[\[91\]](#) Although Mrs. Roberts found these people far more congenial than elsewhere, she left Buffalo with scarcely a regret.[\[92\]](#) Two hours of traveling by railroad found them in the city of Brockport. One of the men of the church was waiting at the depot to give them transportation and to convey them to his home next door to the parsonage. Much to their delight, the "sisters"[\[93\]](#) had cleaned the parsonage, and when their goods arrived, the "brethren"[\[94\]](#) aided in unpacking. A pleasant picture was given of parishioners busily helping their new pastor and wife to become settled in the parsonage. "The sisters washed and put up the dishes, put down two carpets and corded two bedsteads that evening."[\[95\]](#) The next day sundry culinary supplies came in, bread, biscuits, butter, milk, cake, pie, peaches, grapes, etc., so that it became possible to take possession of their new home and eat their first meal that Saturday afternoon, although it had been only on Wednesday noon that they had eaten their last meal in their Buffalo home. One week saw them comfortably settled. They had, they said, "never met with so much kindness . . . and so much cordiality."[\[96\]](#)

Here in Brockport was the finest parsonage they had ever lived in, and there was a good garden spot to delight the soul of Mr. Roberts. A shade of disappointment is discovered in Mrs. Roberts' letter that though the town abounded in shade and fruit trees, their house, "parsonage-like"[\[97\]](#) had not the sign of one about it, just two lilac bushes. Inside the parsonage there was some furniture, and the Roberts hoped the society would buy some more. Till such time, they would do the best they could.

Close to the time of moving was the birth of Benson Howard, the son who was probably nearest to them in subsequent years. Mr. Roberts wrote his father, "Ellen has been very sick since we came here, but is now very much better and is in fair way to recovery."[\[98\]](#) After mentioning the birth of the child, he stated, "The little child seems naturally strong and healthy An excellent sister near by has taken him home to keep till his mother gets better. The sisters here are very kind, omitting nothing for our comfort"[\[99\]](#)

3. Attitudes and Beginnings in Brockport

Mrs. Lane wrote to the Roberts shortly after they moved to Brockport, "I suppose that you will like this place better than Buffalo." [100] There was every reason for them to do so; a fine parsonage was furnished free, most of the furniture was purchased new after their arrival, with a "claim they fixed at their own suggestion at five hundred dollars and the house rent," [101] together with the knowledge that living costs there would be less than in Buffalo. These considerations were sufficient to bring the decided statement, "We like it here very much." [102]

From the happy beginnings of their work at Brockport, it would not be hard to predict some initial success. Early in the year Roberts reported that the interest was increasing. Many of the members were by that time, to use his peculiar expression, getting "broken down." [103] But soon Roberts thought characteristically that the condition of the membership, spiritually, was the worst he had ever known. Besides a general declension, there were quarrels of long standing. Despite seasons of discouragement, he saw what he believed to be the workings of the Lord, and he set his hope on seeing "an extensive revival of religion." [104] At the beginning of special revival meetings which were scheduled, Roberts wrote to his father that there was a good prospect for an extensive and deep work of God, and that at the time of writing there was quite a bit of conviction among the impenitent. He planned for Fay Purdy, the lawyer evangelist, to be with them, and he wanted his father to hear him. [105] Twelve days later, following the visit of Mr. Purdy, he wrote that they were enjoying a revival of the old Methodist stamp. He estimated that over twenty had passed from death to life, many of them heads of families. At first some of the members did not like the noise, many of them never having witnessed anything like it, but he said that "all agreed" that God was at work among them in great power. [106] Mr. Roberts wrote that twenty had knelt at the altar for prayer the night before. Meetings were then in progress both afternoon and evening. Mr. William Cusick, who later became a preacher in Ohio, Michigan, and the West, became a Christian in that meeting. Frank Smith and his wife, Emeline, were helped spiritually, and afterwards entered mission work and were employed in the Water Street Mission in New York, which numbers Jerry McCauley among its converts. [107]

By March of that year, 1854, the meeting was over and although the congregations were large, Mr. Roberts described the going as "horrible." [108] On March 13th, he reported, "I had a very good time preaching in the morning and in the afternoon and a very poor time in the evening." New seekers were going forward for prayer. He noted that five more had joined the church on probation, making a total of fifty-four, and all but sixteen were heads of families. [109]

4. Evaluation of First Year at Brockport

His estimate of his work at Brockport for that year was a mixture of good and ill. He reported a very excellent class meeting, and that the Lord was still at work in the hearts of the people. However, he felt that he was serving a hard place since the church had been down so long that they had lost the confidence of the community. He judged that if the influence of the church had been better, they would have realized

much greater results.[\[110\]](#)

5. Conference Matters

By September of that year, matters pertaining to the Annual Conference became pressing. In checking up, Roberts learned that of the sixty-six who had joined the church on probation during the year, only ten had to be dropped. On Sunday, September 3rd, his *Journal* records that eighteen were that day received into full connection.[\[111\]](#)

In answer to a complaint about the pastor at Gowanda, Roberts gave his father some disciplinary citations of what could be done, and the promise, "I will do what I can to help you at Gowanda with the right kind of man another year."[\[112\]](#) Of his own disposition at Conference he said, "I think it probable that we shall return here another year. The people desire it and it may be best."[\[113\]](#) Conference convened at Warsaw, and Mr. Roberts wrote to his wife of a number of items that indicated the temper of the times. Some of the preachers had to go out three miles from the seat of Conference for their entertainment, and it caused a considerable amount of complaint. Roberts thought Conference never should have gone to Warsaw. He thought there was no possibility of Brother Wallace "or any other decided man" being appointed Presiding Elder. "Someone without a backbone" would be preferred, in his thought.[\[114\]](#) He believed he had never been in a church that seemed colder than the Warsaw church. "The old ship Zion appears to be ice bound," he informed his wife.[\[115\]](#) The Rev. Eleazer Thomas was there and made "quite a dashing appearance in his white vest."[\[116\]](#) Roberts commented that he was afraid that every year he was getting farther away.

On September 9th, Mr. Roberts sent another communication home in which he confided that during that season he heard but little about the appointments. He thought that Thomas and Kingsley had turned the cold shoulder to the appointment of Wallace as presiding elder in the hope that the more radical group would lend their support to get one of them on the district, but Roberts thought they were mistaken in their hope, adding, "If we cannot have a thorough going Methodist let them send us who they please, Parsons, or Fuller or any good Mason or Odd Fellow."[\[117\]](#)

The Conference moved on uneventfully, and only a few distinguished men were present at that session. The Rev. Abel Stevens and the Rev. Pease were mentioned. Charges were preferred against a Brother May for evil speaking. The Reverend Thomas Carlton had brought from the Lanes in New York a package for Mrs. Roberts which was delivered to her husband at the conference. The curiosity of Mr. Roberts was great enough to cause him to open the package and he reported to his wife that he had found "a shawl and one or two other small articles."[\[118\]](#) Surely insufficient explanation to satisfy her curiosity!

In a letter dated September 11th, he informed his wife of the great crowd on Sunday. Such was the rush to hear Bishop Janes that Roberts went to hear Dr. Cummings, and stated that he preached a very good sermon in his way, but not with much unction. He heard Dr. Daniel Steele at 1:30 P. M and liked him

better. At 2:30 P. M. he heard Dr. John Price Durbin at the Methodist Episcopal Church. Roberts commented, "He preached with more unction and power than at any time before when I have heard him."[\[119\]](#)

The final estimate of the Conference and its doings were recorded by Roberts in a letter to his father, in which he informed him that they were to stay at Brockport for another year. The people all seemed well pleased with the appointment, he wrote. The Reverend Eleazer Thomas was the presiding elder. Roberts mentioned that the presiding elder on the district where his father lived was a fair kind of a man who would not make any great stir, or do any special harm. He continued:

'Safe men' happen to be all the rage now. The great question seems to be not what is right but what is 'expedient.' Odd Fellowship and worldly policy bore sway at the last session of our conference. You could see it in everything.. Out of thirty preachers who were stationed to board out from one to four miles from the town there was but a single Odd-Fellow, and he was not known as such.[\[120\]](#)

Mr. Roberts was one of the more favored group who were placed in the village for entertainment.

It is quite evident from the above accounts that J. H. Wallace was favored by Roberts for presiding elder, and that he believed Eleazer Thomas, the new presiding elder, who had been classed as their former leader, was growing cold to the cause. There is very clear evidence from Roberts' own pen that what had been dubbed "Nazaritism," with which he had identified himself, was not faring well in the official gatherings of their annual Conference. Loren Stiles, who was not yet identified with the movement, was just coming into prominence in the eyes of the Conference. *The Buffalo Advocate* had printed articles which gave scathing publicity to these promoters of "old time Methodism." Stirrings were felt back home with reference to appointments indicating that Roberts was becoming an object of attack.

Conable reported of this conference that "in 1854 the Genesee District was strongly manned."[\[121\]](#) After naming the twenty-six men stationed there, including both Roberts and Kendall, he then commented:

Besides the constitutional and natural peculiarities of these men, there were beginning to be more and more manifest among them differences as to their tastes, prejudices, and preferences concerning questions of Church polity and Conference administration; touching methods of conducting revival meetings, and many matters of expediency and propriety in promoting the cause of Christian holiness; all claiming to be Methodists, to be sure.[\[122\]](#)

[C. SECOND YEAR AT BROCKPORT](#)

The work at Brockport went forward without any remarkable success during the early part of the second year. The Reverend William Kendall and also Seth Woodruff helped Mr. Roberts some during an

October meeting and although there were several conversions, matters moved on slowly. He did have some success in Holley where he preached and conducted revival services. He carried on the work of calling on his members and extending the revivals by taking the gospel to the homes.

1. The Growing Partisan Feeling

As Roberts came to the close of another Conference year, he was a man spotted and, by many, opposed. Mrs. Lane wrote on June 19th that one of the sisters had asked if Mr. Roberts did not preach "scandalous."[\[123\]](#) In spite of ill reports, Roberts determined to do what he could to maintain what he termed "old line Methodism." He was beginning to enter somewhat actively into the politics of the Conference, especially in view of the coming General Conference, for which delegates must be elected at the ensuing Annual Conference. He wrote to his father asking him to see Father Everetts and have him go to Conference and help them carry out old line Methodism. He declared, "Carlton and Co. will put forth every effort to elect pro-slavery, Odd Fellow, formalist delegate."[\[124\]](#) He said they wanted to elect men who were in favor of the life and power of godliness; of returning to the old paths, and of getting slavery out of the church. He stated that they had most of the old men and young men with them, and believed they could safely count on from eight to ten majority. He reported that Fuller was going around the Conference saying that they had formed a secret society to put down Odd Fellowship in the Conference, but Roberts said, "This is not true."[\[125\]](#) He made the statement, however, that under "the Odd Fellow reign" if a minister were true to his vows and endeavored to carry out the Discipline, he was crushed.[\[126\]](#) He, with his friends, was determined that this should not be so in the future. and that they would do their duty to make the changes they deemed necessary. The Odd Fellow candidates for the General Conference were Carlton, Parsons, H. R. Smith, Fuller and Waite. Those agreed upon by the other party were Abel, Kingsley, Burlingham and B. T. Roberts, the fifth not then decided upon, but probably one of the old men. Then he reminded his father that Kingsley and he were the only two men of the Conference who stood up to help get Father Everetts his claim, and had succeeded in getting part of it, and that it was now his turn to help.[\[127\]](#)

2. The Nazarites

About that time, there appeared an article in the *Buffalo Advocate* entitled, "Another Secret Society the Nazarites."[\[128\]](#) The editor, Mr. Robie, in this article accused the disfavored group with being a secret society, though, he added, the investigation of "Nazaritism" had been occasioned by papers being put into his hand which Mr. McCreery had drawn up. Mr. McCreery prepared those papers ostensibly to meet what he considered an emergency, the union of Secret Society men in the Conference. The papers contained an expression of a determination to work according to the Discipline and usages of the church and did at least contemplate a formal organization. It came out in the examination that no more than two or three persons favored such a union, even though they did favor the propositions advanced in the paper which are recorded as being:

1. I will observe and enforce the Rules of the Methodist Episcopal Church to the best of my ability, and under all practicable circumstances.

2. I will steadfastly resist all departures from them, or from the religious customs derived therefrom.
3. I will steadfastly oppose the introduction or continuance of any religious practice or custom, or of any institution foreign to, or at variance with, the Discipline of the church.
4. And I will encourage and sustain in the disciplinary execution of the above purpose, in preference to all others, those covenanting together in this obligation.

PRACTICAL PROPOSITIONS

1. To restore the observance of the Rules requiring attendance on class.
2. To restore the observance of the Rules requiring family prayer.
3. To restore the observance of the Rules requiring quarterly fasts.
4. To restore the observance of the Rules requiring singing by the congregation.
5. To restore the custom, in part, of free seats in our houses of worship.
6. To restore the custom of attendance from abroad upon our love-feasts.
7. To restore the custom of camp meetings more fully among us.
8. To restore, generally, simplicity and spirituality in our worship.[\[129\]](#)

These "practical propositions" were followed by a general argument showing the necessity of such a union, and by a series of "Lamentations and Recommendations," in which the "practical propositions" were discussed.[\[130\]](#)

These so called "Nazarite papers" had been circulated by McCreery during the year, printed in the *Buffalo Advocate*, and were read before the Conference, together with charges made in connection with those papers, especially in the part of McCreery's paper called "The General Argument." Official judgment fell upon McCreery and upon the heads of the "Nazarites." McCreery had written:

And it is lamentable to know, and shameful to record, that the most efficient opponents to the discipline in our midst are these very men who have been solemnly constituted its guardians, who in the presence of God and the Conference have publicly and voluntarily taken upon them special vows of adherence to it.[\[131\]](#)

This was followed by a direct charge against the Secret Society men as being the "leaders in the path of retrogression from the discipline and usages of the Church."[\[132\]](#) These direct charges, plus the representations made in the *Buffalo Advocate* in the above mentioned article, created a strong reaction against the publishers of it. After spending two days of the Conference in the discussion of the same, a resolution was passed as follows:

Resolved, that while we doubt not that there is much room for improvement among us in spiritual religion, and in observance of our beloved institution, we regret that, in view of such deficiencies as may exist, and with the ostensible purpose of returning to first

principles, any of our members should have associated together, as we find they have done, under the name of "Nazarite Band," or other similar appellations, with some forms of secrecy, and with the claim to be peculiar in this respect; and we pass our disapprobation upon such associations, and hereby express our full expectation, that it will be abandoned by all members of this Conference. We especially but effectually condemn the calumnious expressions read in relation to the Methodist Church, and her Ministers within our bounds; and we do hereby submit these views, to the special consideration of all who are concerned in this matter, and expect them hereafter, to govern themselves accordingly.[\[133\]](#)

A complete picture of Conference reaction cannot be given without referring once again to the article, "Another Secret Society the Nazarites," published in the *Buffalo Advocate*. Robie's article attacked the men of the opposition in no uncertain terms. He accused them of having formed a "secret religious organization" termed "The Nazarite Band." This had a "ludicrous aspect" because of their "blazing hostility" to secret societies, having been especially concerned "in giving both lay and clerical Odd Fellows and Masons 'particular jesse.'" He described the Nazarites as a "compound of sanctity and slander, of pompous humility and humble pride, of peccability and perfection," whose professions reached to heaven. He more particularly specified the Rev. Joseph McCreery, the author of the papers which had been the basis for the alleged secret society, as being noted for "eccentric stupidity and brilliant folly" which some had mistaken for genius, but which were really attributes of the "genus donkey." He said he might pay more particular attention sometime later to this "dark, sepulchral and owlish gentlemen." Mr. Robie warned this "delectable Band" of Nazarites to be prepared to "face the music" rather than try to evade the consequences of their "abortive jealousy and spleen." A desire was expressed that the leaders of the movement would bring the matter to so ripe a head that the people, plagued by their "mischievous propensities," would pass upon them the verdict which their "temerity and folly" so richly deserved. He concluded, "Religious Jesuits are awful beings."[\[134\]](#) A few days after the appearance of that article, Roberts wrote to his father calling particular attention to it, and commented, "The editor of this *Christian Journal* appears to be in a very pious mood. He is said to belong to four secret societies."[\[135\]](#) He requested his father to show the article to Brother Newton and Father Everetts, adding, "It will help on our cause very much. Bro. McCreery (Bani who is particularly specified, is one of our most devoted and successful ministers."[\[136\]](#) He felt that such "gross abuse and slander"[\[137\]](#) would hurt most those it was designed to benefit. He closed his letter by adding, "You can tell Father Everetts there is no secret society, as that article alleges. We are simply agreed in trying to return to the old paths."[\[138\]](#) In another letter closely following the one just quoted, Mr. Roberts told his father, "Bro. McCreery will probably prosecute Robie for libel; though perhaps not till after Conference. Two of our best lawyers here say it is clearly a libel."[\[139\]](#) He expressed the belief that perhaps this was not the best course to pursue.

About the same time, there was an indication by letter that there was some feeling on the part of Fuller against Roberts. Roberts wrote his father that there had always been a good understanding between him and Fuller personally, but that Fuller thought Roberts stood in his way. He believed that Roberts had hindered his election as presiding elder, and also that he would not be sent as a delegate to the General Conference on that ground. Fuller began to circulate this article, "Another Secret Society the Nazarites."

Roberts gave as his opinion that he thought that this charge against them was out of character for men who belonged to Masons, Odd-Fellows, etc.

At this juncture Roberts was sensing most keenly what the cost of this whole procedure would mean to him, but in the face of the ignominy and disrepute which had already begun to come his way, he asserted, "The Lord helping me, I mean to go straight, let it cost what it will."[\[140\]](#)

In the light of the Reverend Mr. McCreery's positive testimony denying that any vow had ever been administered and that they did not organize, and in view of a subsequent statement by seventeen of their leaders that there was no such union perfected as the Nazarite Band, such testimony being published both in *The Northern Independent* and in fly sheet form, as well as the personal letter of Roberts to his father which has been quoted, the truth of the matter seems to be that these men did act together in concert in order to preserve what they considered old line Methodism, but without organization. The coincidence of the publication of the Nazarite Documents by Mr. McCreery and their circulation, together with the knowledge that there was a solidarity in the accomplishment of their ends, probably produced the conviction in the Conference that such an organization did exist. The direct charge that they had found this association to exist, followed by a positive prohibition against it, joined with the knowledge that as far back as 1848 the Conference had virtually been instructed to do nothing to stir up the Secrecy issue when Mr. Burlingham had made specific charges against it that year in the Conference, indicated the general trend of opinion with reference to this matter among the ministers, and the temper of the Conference.

A part of the whole proceedings of the 1855 Conference, added to that of the documents Mr. McCreery produced, were the charges which were brought against Mr. McCreery for certain erratic statements he had made on his Lyndonville circuit. One of them, presented by Dr. Chamberlain, a superannuate preacher residing on that charge, read as follows:

Some of the younger boys have taken my mother, the Methodist Church, in her old age, painted her face and curled her hair, hooped her, and flounced her, and fixed her up, until I could hardly tell her from a woman of the world. Now when I have taken the old lady, and washed her face, and straightened out her hair, and dressed her up in modest apparel, so that she looks like herself again, they make a great hue and cry and call it abusing mother.[\[141\]](#)

After Mr. McCreery had read to the Conference the "Nazarite Documents," his character was passed, subject to an examination before his presiding elder. When the above charges were presented by Mr. Chamberlain, and referred to Mr. Stiles, one of the newly elected presiding elders of the Conference, he ordered the trial to be held at Lyndonville, where the alleged offenses were committed, and where the witnesses lived, although it was outside the bounds of his district. At the opening of the trial, Mr. Roberts recounted, the prosecution objected to the ruling of the chairman, and refusing to go on, the trial was abruptly brought to a close. Repercussions from this were soon felt, and at the next session of the Annual Conference in 1856, Mr. Stiles was charged with maladministration. B. T. Roberts acted as his defense

attorney, and Mr. Stiles was acquitted. Doubtless this trouble had much to do with the decision of Mr. Stiles at that Conference session to withdraw to another Conference.

The "Nazarite" party was definitely in disfavor with the majority of the Conference; their efforts to elect their delegates as a slate were defeated, and Roberts, who shared the defeat with his brethren, went to his new appointment at Albion with the knowledge that there were difficult times ahead. Why he was sent to Albion where his friend, William Kendall, had been stationed and where such active opposition had arisen to his measures, is to be explained only in the divided sentiment of the times.

D. AT ALBION, NEW YORK

The Albion Church was one of the stronger churches of the Conference. In this appointment, Roberts fared better than his friend Kendall, whom he succeeded. Kendall went to Chili where the opposition to his measures and methods was to increase, and Roberts went to the former scene of Kendall's labors. Spiritual conditions in Albion were much better, so Mr. Roberts thought, upon his arrival than when Mr. Kendall had been sent there.

Home conditions for the Roberts family were quite propitious. Writing to his father shortly after their move to Albion, Mr. Roberts said, "We are getting nicely settled in our new home. We find things more pleasant about the parsonage than usually falls to the lot of the itinerant." [\[142\]](#) He felt the need of a horse for travel and asked his father to send him his horse and he would send payment as soon as possible.

1. State of Party Feeling

Leadership of the so called Nazarite group seemed at that time to pass into the hands of the young man, Roberts. Before this time, he had never been considered the leader of the "old line Methodists." The Reverend Eleazer Thomas, who had been the acknowledged leader of the "Nazarites" was sent to California, where he became the editor of a church paper and afterward was killed by the Modoc Indians. Dr. Samuel Luckey had succeeded him as presiding elder on the Genesee District and had lent his influence to forwarding the "salvation movement" that was then on. He had been succeeded by Mr. Loren Stiles in 1855.

Mr. Roberts described Stiles as a young man who had been graduated from the Methodist Theological Seminary at Concord, New Hampshire. He had at that early age become celebrated in western New York as a pulpit orator. "Amiable in his disposition, pleasing in his manners, and a thorough gentleman in all his bearings," it seemed to be taken for granted that he would instinctively recoil from what was branded as the "coarse fanaticism" prevalent in the district. It was supposed, so Mr. Roberts affirmed, that he would win the hearts of the people, and gradually turn them, without friction, back to "the respectable quiet of spiritual death." [\[143\]](#) But Stiles, whose prejudices were based wholly on what he had heard and read, soon felt that what he saw on the district was the work of God. He saw, so Roberts affirmed, that many had a spiritual power he did not possess. He sought it at once, and he used all his influence from

that time on to forward the work of holiness. Mr. Roberts said Quarterly Meetings of Mr. Stiles were thronged, and many of the people consecrated themselves wholly to God.[\[144\]](#)

At the same time, the Rev. Isaac C. Kingsley, a former Presbyterian, was serving as presiding elder on the Niagara District. After making a careful survey of what was branded as "fanaticism" he had decided, Mr. Roberts reported, that this was the kind of religion he had desired when he left his old church and came with the Methodists. He also, contrary to expectation, gave this whole matter his cordial support. The Rev. Charles D. Burlingham pushed the work forward on the Olean District "with a hearty zeal and abundant success,"[\[145\]](#) according to report.

The Secret Society faction of the Conference, affirmed Mr. Roberts, styled "The Regency" by Mr. Stiles at the Olean Conference, realizing that the presiding elders of their choice were going along with the "Nazarites" began to make direct attacks through the columns of the *Buffalo Advocate*. Even Bishop Hamline was not exempt from criticism, when he was accused falsely of not having given \$25,000.00 to found Hamline University at Red Wing, Minnesota in 1854.[\[146\]](#) When the editor of the *Buffalo Advocate* had been corrected he replied, "Noble man! he shall have all our praise, if it will do him any good."[\[147\]](#) Attacks and counterattacks seemed to be the custom of the day, and even the good bishop did not escape his share of it.

At that time there was another article in the *Buffalo Advocate* on the "Nazarite Association" claiming to have evidence to prove the existence of a secret religious organization. This evidence related to the papers of "The Nazarite Band," concerning which it had been asserted by the accused that no such organization had ever been formed. Secrecy had been the charge against the so-called "Regency," and now the counter charge of secrecy was being made against the "Nazarites." At that early date, some were beginning to feel a sense of futility in the fight against what they believed to be a hopeless defection from old time Methodism. Among these was the evangelist, Dr. J. W. Redfield. A letter from Redfield, directed to the Kendalls, breathed the spirit of the times from beginning to end. It declared that the "pilgrims" would yet have to organize a new church, for there was no hope except in a new organization.[\[148\]](#) In another letter sent to Kendall, he declared that although he was no prophet, yet he felt they would never succeed in "cleansing the church." He continued in the following manner, stating that some ministers had never been converted and others had back-slidden. None of them could ever be brought to appreciate what many felt to be right until they were converted. God himself could not make them love and sustain a cause at which their nature revolted. He said there were two distinct and totally opposite elements in the church which could never harmonize till one gave way to the other and that there seemed to him no possibility of that. "As God lives," he declared, "there is no rational hope but in separation; and yet I would by no means hoist the banner of separation."[\[149\]](#) He believed that if the brethren would persistently hold on to their plan of resuscitating Methodist usages, and keep the central idea of Jesus and a full salvation before the people. they would yet see the day when the masses would be saved and go with them, and formalists would compel the separation. He told them they had the right men for their leaders, and that they had more sympathizers than they realized.[\[150\]](#)

[2. Roberts aware of Opposition](#)

Roberts was by that time becoming fully aware of the ecclesiastical war that was on and of the charges made against him and those who held the same views. In a letter to his father written in November, 1855, he invited him to a General Quarterly Meeting in which he expected the "pilgrims"[\[151\]](#) present from all over the district, and then added, "Come out and see and hear for yourself what these 'fanatical' Methodists are."[\[152\]](#) He carried forward the work of the church and although the weather had not been good for special meetings, he reported that they still had a good revival influence in the church, and that he received about thirty on probation. He expressed the hope to see the work continue all summer.[\[153\]](#)

3. Bergen Camp Meeting Difficulties

Camp meetings seemed not to be the order of the day, but were held if promoted by some individual or group of individuals. Such evidently was the case of the Bergen Camp Meeting. This camp was sponsored by B. T. Roberts and those who were interested in the promotion of camp meetings as a means of spiritual blessing. This camp site, which became in the terms of some, the "very hot bed of fanaticism," was purchased that summer. B. T. Roberts and Loren Stiles took a contract for the land, May 8th, 1856, and on July 18th, it was deeded by absolute conveyance to Asa Abel, Benjamin T. Roberts, and Asa Allis. Mr. Roberts and Mr. Stiles gave their personal note for it. With some assistance, they raised the money to pay for it by contribution and by loan. In the following winter Roberts drew up an act of incorporation, or charter, under the name Genesee Camp Ground Association. Mr. Roberts went to Albany and had it passed by the legislature. Expecting always to remain in the Methodist Church, Mr. Roberts put a clause in the charter, placing the camp meeting and ground under the jurisdiction of the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and another clause permitting none but members of the M. E. Church to vote for trustees.[\[154\]](#) At the next session of the Genesee Annual Conference, Loren Stiles proposed that the Conference should take charge of the camp meetings, but the Conference refused to do so. The special clauses inserted in the charter resulted eventually in the loss of the camp ground to the men who were responsible for its purchase.

About that time Mr. Roberts, in a communication to his father, stated that they were expecting to have a camp meeting to commence the 12th of June. It was to be in Bergen where it had been held two years before and on a beautiful twenty-five acre woodland plot which they had recently purchased, to be used for a permanent camp site. They had already sent on for one of the bishops to come and dedicate the ground the first day of the camp.[\[155\]](#)

4. Conference Matters

Soon the Bergen Camp, with its emphasis on holiness, was over, and Conference was once again imminent. Some of the preachers went not knowing what should befall them. In testimony taken at the following Conference at Leroy, it was quite evident that secret meetings were held at that Conference by the so-called "Regency" group.

It was alleged that the Regency held private meetings for the purpose of determining policy and creating pressures wherever it was expedient for them to do so. Both Rev. Sanford Hunt and the Rev. Thomas Canton testified that they had attended such meetings at this Conference. Carlton testified, "I attended three of the meetings at the house of John Ryan during the session of the Medina Conference."[\[156\]](#) The Reverend William Barrett testified at the next Conference that he saw at the Medina Conference a petition asking for the removal of Stiles and Kingsley from the office of presiding elder. He said he could not state the exact wording of the petition, but understood it to be a statement of refusal to take work if Stiles and Kingsley were continued in the office of presiding elder.[\[157\]](#) Mr. Roberts wrote that Rev. J. M. Fuller testified also that he had stated that he would not take work under either Stiles or Kingsley, and when asked if he had heard anyone else say the same, replied that he had heard others say what would amount to about the same thing.[\[158\]](#) This resulted in the voluntary withdrawal of both Kingsley and Stiles, who, sensing that one or both of them would be removed from the Cabinet, asked for a transfer to the Cincinnati Conference, which was unhesitatingly granted.[\[159\]](#)

With Kingsley and Stiles withdrawn, the Cabinet (Superintendents) was then left in the hands of "Regency" men. It is charged by Roberts that they took precautions against increasing the power of the opposition party by keeping out of the Conference young men who were sympathetic with the "Nazarites." Roberts declared that several young men of good abilities, education, and of deep piety, who professed and preached holiness, were compelled to go to other Conferences.[\[160\]](#)

The *Buffalo Advocate* said of that Conference:

Hotheads, and fanatics, from any quarter, will find it hereafter difficult soil on which to produce any of their mischief or scandal. Some attempted to gain admittance to the Conference at its last session, but were repulsed at the threshold, and passed away, disgusted with the forebodings of order and manliness, which a kind Providence permits shall govern hereafter. These, with their sympathizers in and out of the body, are the agencies employed in writing scandal of those who now hold the reins, and who mean to live and govern for God and holiness and respectable position.[\[161\]](#)

ENDNOTES

[\[1\]](#) B. T. Roberts, *Why Another Sect*, (Rochester. New York: The Earnest Christian Office, 1879), p. 104.

[\[2\]](#) George Peck. *Early Methodism Within the Bounds of the Genesee Conference from 1788 to 1828*, (New York: Canton and Porter, 1860). p.342.

[\[3\]](#) *Ibid.*, p. 352.

- [4] B. T. Roberts. *Why Another Sect*, (Rochester, New York: The Earnest Christian Office, 1179), pp. 104, 105.
- [5] Letter of B. T. Roberts. Buffalo. to Mrs. Roberts. Gowanda, 1812. Found among letters of the Roberts family.
- [6] Ibid.
- [7] Ibid.
- [8] Letter from Mrs. Roberts. Gowanda, to Mr. Roberts, Buffalo, undated, but writ ten in October, 1852. Found among letters of Roberts family.
- [9] Ibid.
- [10] Ibid.
- [11] Ibid.
- [12] Ibid.
- [13] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his father, November 8.1852.
- [14] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (January. 1865), 8.
- [15] Letter from Dr. John Wesley Redfield, Henrietta, to Mr. Hicks. Syracuse, November 11,1852. Found among letters of Roberts.
- [16] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (January, 1365). 6.
- [17] B. T. Roberts, *Why Another Sect*, (Rochester, New York: The Earnest Christian Office, 1879). p. 105.
- [18] John A. Roche. *The Life of John Price Durbin*, (5th ed.; New York: Eaton and Mains, 1889), Preface.
- [19] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 23, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.71.
- [20] A. B. Hyde, *The Story, of Methodism*, (Greenfield, Mass.: Wiley and Company, 1887), p. 361.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 23, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p. 71.

[23] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, vii, (February, 1864).

[24] Ibid.

[25] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 23, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p. 71.

[26] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 29, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p. 71.

[27] James 2.10.

[28] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 30, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p. 72.

[29] Diary of B. T. Roberts, February 1, 2, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. Benjamin Titus Roberts, p. 72.

[30] *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, (February 12, 1852), 25.

[31] Ibid.

[32] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (February, 1864). 38.

[33] B. T. Roberts. original copy of the article published in the *Northern Advocate*, (February 16, 1853)
Found among personal papers of the Roberts family.

[34] Diary of B. T. Roberts, February 20, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts. p. 73.

[35] Quoted from copy of the article published in the *Northern Advocate*, (February 16, 1853).

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] R. L. Waite, *North Christian Advocate*, XIII (April 16, 1853), 1.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] C. C. Gas,, Statistical History of the First Century of American Methodism, (New York: Canton and Porter, 1866), p. 110.

[45] E. L. Waite, op. cit., p.1.

[46] B. T. Roberts, Original copy of the Article Published In Northern Christian Advocate, (1853) Found among personal papers.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Letter from Mrs. George Lane, Mt. Holly, New Jersey, to Mrs. Roberts. Buffalo. June 2.1853. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[51] Ibid.

[52] J. H. Wallace, Northern Christian Advocate, XIII, No. 19, (May 11.1853), 1.

[53] Buffalo Christian Advocate, III, No. 15, (1852), 58.

[54] Letter from Mrs. Lane, Mt. Holly to Mrs. Roberts, Buffalo, July 19, 1953.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Isa. 21:11.

[57] John Robie, Buffalo Christian Advocate, III, No. 46, (November 11, 1852), 180.

[58] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (January, 1891),7.

[59] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (January, 1885), 6.

[60] Diary of B. T. Roberts, March 29,1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.75.

[61] Diary of B. T. Roberts, June 5,6, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.77.

[62] Diary of B. T. Roberts, June 7,1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.77.

[63] Bill of charges against Thomas Canton, signed by the Rev. J. H. Wallace. Found among the personal papers of the Roberts family.

[64] A. Kent, *Christian Advocate and Journal*. XXVIII. (February 10.1853), 24.

[65] Letter from H. T. Roberts to his father. August 8, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.78.

[66] Diary of B. T. Roberts, March 12, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.74.

[67] Letter from Mrs. George Lane. Mt. Holly. to Mrs. Roberts. Buffalo. June 20. 1813. Found among letters of the Roberts family.

[68] Diary of B. T. Roberts. November 14.1852. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.68.

[69] Diary of B. T. Roberts, May 30,1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. Benjamin Titus Roberts, p. 76.

[70] Diary of B. T. Roberts, March 30.1853. quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.75.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Letter from B. T. Roberts. Batavia Annual Conference, to Mrs. Roberts. Buffalo. September 9, 1853. Among Roberts' letters.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Letter from B. T. Roberts. Batavia Annual Conference, to Mrs. Roberts, Buffalo, September 9, 1853. Among Roberts' letters.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Batavia Annual Conference, to Mrs. Roberts, Buffalo. September 12, 1853. Among Roberts' letters.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Letter from Roberts, Batavia Annual Conference, to Mrs. Roberts, Buffalo, September 12, 1853. Found among Roberts' letters.

[82] A. B. Hyde. op. cit., p.363.

[83] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Batavia, to Mrs. Roberts, Buffalo, September 12, 1853. Found among letters of Roberts family.

[84] Letter from Mrs. George Lane. Mt. Holly, to Mrs. Roberts. Buffalo, 1853. Found among personal letters of Roberts.

[85] Diary of B. T. Roberts, September 15, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p. 79.

[86] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 28, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p. 71.

[87] Buffalo Christian Advocate, VIII, (January 1, 1857), 6.

[88] B. T. Roberts. Why Another Sect, (Rochester, New York: The Earnest Christian Office, 1879), pp. 105, its.

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[90] George Peck. Early Methodism within the Bounds of the Genesee Conference from 1788 to 1828. (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1860), p.471.

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[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Brockport, to his father, October 18, 1853. Found among letters of the Roberts family.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Letter from Mrs. Lane, Mt. Holly, New Jersey, to Mrs. Roberts. Brockport, September 25, 1853. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

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[102] Ibid.

[103] Letter from B. T. Roberts. November 28, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.84.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his father, January 10, 1854. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. Benjamin Titus Roberts, pp. 88.87.

[106] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his father, January 22, 1854. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.87.

[107] B. H. Roberts. Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.85.

[108] Letter from B. T. Roberts, to his wife, March 13,1854. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.88.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Letter from B. T. Roberts, to his father. Titus Roberts, Gowanda, New York, 1854. Found among personal letters of Robert,.

[111] Diary of B. T. Roberts, September 3.1854. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.97.

[112] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Brockport, to his father, Gowanda, August 17, 1854. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[113] Ibid.

[114] B. T. Roberts' letter to his wife at Brockport, September 7,1854. Found among personal letters of Roberts.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.

[117] B. T. Roberts' letter to his wife. Brockport, September 9, 1854. Found among personal letters of Roberts.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Letter from Roberts to his wife. written from Warsaw, September 11, 1854. Among personal letters of Roberts.

[120] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his father, September 18, 1854. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 98, 99.

[121] F. W. Conable, op. cit., p.618.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Letter from Mrs. Lane to Mrs. Roberts, Brockport, June 19, 1855. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[124] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Brockport, to his father, Gowanda, July 3, 1855. Found among Roberts' personal letters.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid.

[128] John Robie, "Another Secret Society the Nazarites," Buffalo Advocate, VI, (July 19, 1853).

[129] Joseph McCreery "Nazarite Papers." Quoted by J. G. Terrill, "Genesee Conference Difficulties," The Free Methodist, XXIII, (August 6, 1890). 4.8.

[130] Ibid.

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[132] Ibid.

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[134] John Robie, "Another Secret Society the Nazarites." Buffalo Christian Advocate, VI. (July 19. 1855).

[135] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Brockport, to his father, Gowanda, July 24, 1855. Among Roberts' letters and papers.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his father, Gowanda, July 31.1865. Found among personal letters of

Roberts.

[140] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Brockport, to his father, Gowanda, July 31. 1855. Found among personal letters of Roberts.

[141] Quoted by B. T. Roberts, *Why Another Sect*, (Rochester. New York: The Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1879), pp. 141, 142.

[142] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his father, written from Albion, New York, September 17, 1855. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[143] B. T. Roberts. *Why Another Sect*, (Rochester. New York: The Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1879). pp. 56, 57.

[144] *Ibid.*, p.57.

[145] *Ibid.*

[146] George L. Curtis, *Manuel of M. E. Church History*, (New York: Hurt and Eaton. 1893), p. 204.

[147] John Robie, *Buffalo Advocate*. (July 19,1855). Quoted by B. T. Roberts. *Why Another Sect*, (Rochester, New York: The Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1879). p.58.

[148] Letter from J. W. Redfield, to Mr. and Mrs. Kendall. June 2, 1858. Quoted by J. G. Terrill, *Life of John Wesley Redfield*, M. D. (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House. 1899). p. 310.

[149] *Ibid.*, pp. 311, 312.

[150] *Ibid.*, p.312.

[151] Letter from Roberts to his father. Gowanda. November 14, 1855, written from Albion. Found among personal letters of Roberts.

[152] *Ibid.*

[153] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his father. written April 17.1858. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.110.

[154] Paper found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[155] Letter from Roberts, Albion to his father, Gowanda, May 9, 1856. Found among personal letters of Roberts.

[156] Quoted by B. T. Roberts. Why Another Sect, (Rochester. New York: The Earnest Christian Publishing House. 1879). p.66.

[157] Ibid., p. 68.

[158] Ibid., pp. 68, 89.

[159] S. K. J. Chesbrough, Defense of Roberts, (Buffalo: Clapp. Mathews and Co.'s Steam Printing House. 1858), p.5.

[160] B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, (Rochester, New York: The Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1879), p.69.

[161] The Buffalo Advocate. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p.70.

EARNEST CHRISTIAN

CHAPTER IV

THE PERIOD OF ROBERTS' MOST CONTROVERSIAL WRITING AND ITS RESULTS

A. SECOND YEAR AT ALBION

1. Roberts' Letter to Bishop Morris
2. Comments of Redfield on Late Annual Conference
3. Opposition .
4. New School Methodism
5. A Doctrinal Issue
6. Roberts Saw Persecution as a Protective Measure
7. The Leroy Conference

B. APPOINTMENT TO PEKIN

1. Reactions of Kendall to Conference
2. The Slavery Issue
3. Reception at Peking
4. Other Events at Peking
5. Death of Kendall
6. Decision of S. K. J. Chesbrough
7. Visits of Stiles and Redfield

C. REPUBLICATION OF "NEW SCHOOL METHODISM"

1. Views on the Publication
2. Conference Difficulties Increase
3. The Trial Proper
4. Reactions to Trial and Expulsion
5. Attitudes of the Conference Majority

6. Conclusion

A. SECOND YEAR AT ALBION

1. Roberts' Letter to Bishop Morris

By Conference appointment, Mr. Roberts was returned to Albion for his second year and William Kendall was returned to Chili, which was a definite demotion. Mr. Roberts, however, was not content to let things pass as they had transpired and so wrote to Bishop T. A. Morris. The initial draft of the epistle written by Mr. Roberts in reply to Bishop Morris, and dated November 15, 1856, was found among the personal letters and papers of the Roberts family, and has never before been published. * He addressed the Bishop as "Dear Father." He referred to a previous request pertaining to the retransfer of Loren Stiles to the Genesee Conference with its denial, and admitted that no doubt as in all his official duties, so also in this, he had been actuated by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the welfare of the church. He did not write to complain of this decision but did say that present appearance indicated that it would not be "promotive of either the peace of this Conference or the prosperity of the district."^[1]

In answer to the opinion expressed by the Bishop that matters had been satisfactorily adjusted, he pointed out the fact that two distinct parties existed, with one or the other of which every preacher was in sympathy. He believed that personal animosities did not form the basis for the division, but asserted that the preachers had "brotherly love." Though secrecy no doubt did accentuate the issue, he believed that the real difficulties were so deep that only the Holy Spirit could bring them together. After outlining the differences as being essentially between a changing concept and benevolent form of religion which was theirs, and his own belief in the religion of the fathers, he stated, "What we call religion they call fanaticism; what they denominate Christianity, we consider formalism." He noted that differences in method necessarily follow the varying views of religion. The majority group advocated stock churches, entertainment features with instrumental music and professional singers, while the group he represented believed in "free churches, congregational singing, and spirituality, simplicity and fervency in worship." He spoke also of differences with reference to nonconformity to the world, and varying methods of raising money. Signs in the general church indicated that these differences were more widespread than in their own Genesee Conference, and to substantiate the assertion he mentioned particularly the change of rule in the 1852 General Conference with reference to the building of plain churches and free seats, and the modification of the rule respecting dress in the 1856 General Conference. These gradual changes, which did not excite too much attention, were to him "none the less alarming." The "fundamental" differences which existed could not be cured by Conference resolutions and "committees of pacification and adjustment." He added, "Nothing short of the Almighty power of the Holy Spirit can ever bring us together. He alone can give us that unanimity of views without which unanimity of action cannot long prevail." This letter, although quite extended, gives a view of the conception of the conference difficulties held by Mr. Roberts, which view he continued to hold to the end.

2. Comments of Redfield on the Late Annual Conference

In 1856, Mr. Roberts had not arrived at the conclusions of his evangelistic friend. In December, 1856, Redfield wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Kendall and commented upon the incidents of the 1856 Annual Conference. He confessed that his heart almost sank when he heard that "the tried and true" were being driven from the field (Stiles and Kingsley), and weakening the little band who stood "for the right." He asked, "Shall the enemy yet triumph?"^[2] He then asserted, "I am more and more confirmed in the opinion I expressed long ago that an amputation alone will save vital piety."^[3] He then called upon them to take a common sense view of the facts. In contending for the right, some would weary of the conflict and for the sake of peace would leave the field. Every instance of that kind would, he said, give fresh courage to the opponents of spiritual religion. Others would become dispirited and would call for a cessation of the fight, and when the little band had been reduced small enough. they would be surrounded and made an easy prey. He concluded, "To be in a minority is to be rebellious, while to be in the majority is to be loyal."^[4] No doubt these remarks of Redfield, though not sent to Mr. Roberts, would eventually reach him through his friend Kendall. However, Mr. Roberts appeared to have been a loyal Methodist. So far as can be determined, he was then unready to accept the verdict of his friend, Dr. Redfield.

3. Opposition

Mr. Roberts said in later years that if any man had his heart filled with "Gospel light, love and power," and then, realizing the moral deficiency in the church, would labor directly to bring it up to a higher standard of piety, he would soon find a decided lack of sympathy, and a tide of opposition in the church; and while he might labor wisely and carry the conviction of the church with him, he would find "all the depravity" of the church arrayed against him, since human depravity is always opposed to holiness.^[5] He believed that to be faithful to God and to point out the faults of the church was not an evidence of being her enemy.^[6]

Accusations against the "Nazarites" became more frequent. One of these articles was published in the *Medina Tribune* of September 11, 1856, in connection with the late Annual Conference and was signed by one "Junius." In this article the Nazarites were accused of "mistaking a desire to do something grand, for a call to a great undertaking; and a wish to be known to fame, for a prophetic intimation of some splendid achievement," thus directly accusing their leaders of ambition.^[7] They were further said to go forth before the world "putting on strange and uncouth airs, which they expect everybody will regard as proof of the 'divine fury' with which they are possessed;"^[8] and of "repeating nonsensical and clap-trap phrases, which they have mistakenly selected as the watchwords of the reformatory movement."^[9] Perhaps the strongest assertions against them centered in the fact of their preaching against pride. The above writer, "Junius," said they made religion "a system of outward symbols. of material ceremonies and corporal manifestations, of animal influence and nervous sensations,"^[10] closing with the charge that they considered plainness in dress of greater moment than uprightness of character. He asserted that an ornamental ribbon or flower upon a lady's bonnet was, in their eyes, an enormity greater than the sin of lying; and that wearing a ring or bracelet they thought was more dangerous and damning than covetousness or slander; and generally they preached with more powerful vehemence against superfluity of outward apparel, than against the breach of the Ten Commandments. With them "a broad-brimmed,

bell-crowned hat is equivalent to 'the helmet of salvation,' and a shad-bellied coat to the robe of righteousness." [\[11\]](#) About the same time, the *Buffalo Advocate* published an article, informing the public, that "the leaders were a class of misguided men, mere visionists, who have already received too much consideration from the conference." [\[12\]](#) He stated that the party was far from being as large as was generally thought, that there might be half-a-dozen who were openly identified with it, and obligated members, but beyond these he doubted whether the other members of the conference would like to be classified with these extremists in church matters and service. [\[13\]](#)

4. New School Methodism

The attacks against these adherents to what they believed to be "old time Methodism" were mainly of the above character, centering more directly in their practices rather than in their doctrine or belief. Mr. Roberts, on the other hand, thought the real difficulty lay deeper, as he had written to Bishop Morris. Hence, when he saw an article entitled "Old and New School Methodism" published in the *Buffalo Advocate* of May 21st, 1857, which followed others entitled, "Creed Tests of Orthodox Piety" in the April 16th issue of the same paper, and "Christianity a Religion of Beneficence Rather Than of Devotion" in the May 14, 1857 issue of the above mentioned periodical, he was stirred to answer in an article which appeared in the columns of *The Northern Independent*, of which he was at that time an associate editor. "Old and New School Methodism" in the May 21, 1857 issue of the *Buffalo Advocate* furnished him with the title. This last article was a direct attack against the alleged fanaticism of the "Nazarite" movement in terms of Mr. Wesley's attitude toward fanatics of his day. Mr. Roberts seemed not to consider this accusation of sufficient importance to answer. He rather went to doctrinal differences which he discovered in the above articles. This article of April 16th had inveighed against making creed the test of piety and had asserted that in so doing the progress of religious knowledge and evolution of Christian truth would be stayed, for creeds admitted no change. The writer of the same article, "Creed Tests of Orthodox Piety" also said that "Catechisms, Creed-books, and Standard Writers in divinity, are thus made to take the place of the Bible and what these teach is more frequently quoted and more implicitly relied upon, than the words of the Sacred Text." [\[14\]](#) And so, he continued, the teachings of Paul were eclipsed by the theories of Calvin, and the writings of John Wesley were held in higher veneration than the inspired words of St. John. Let none suppose, he asserted, that all the sublime and comprehensive truths of Christianity can be compressed into any little seven by nine Creed that man ever made, or ever can make. There might be somewhat of truth in every system of denominational theology but there would be somewhat of error too, since it would certainly not embrace the whole sum of inspired truth. The author closed with the appeal, "May God hasten the time when the principles of love shall take the place of doctrinal formulas, and when the doing good to man shall become the accredited test of 'Orthodox Piety.'" [\[15\]](#)

The author of "Christianity a Religion of Beneficence Rather Than of Devotion" had laid down the proposition that "the characteristic idea of this system (of Christianity) is Benevolence; and its practical realization is achieved in beneficence." [\[16\]](#) Religion consecrated the principle of charity, and instructed its votaries to regard good works as the holiest sacrifice, and the most acceptable which they could bring to the Almighty. It charged those who made devotion central to their thinking, of making sounding

professions of holiness and of putting on sanctimonious airs. The worship of God was, indeed, a high and holy duty, which no Christian could intermit without falling into condemnation and a snare; but it should be used as a means, and not pursued as an end. He should pray in order that he might be empowered to follow the example of Christ, who devoted his life to relieving the wants and woes of men and in going about doing good.[\[17\]](#)

Mr. Roberts, feeling that the Nazarite group was being misrepresented to the public, decided the time had come to set the people straight "on what they believed, taught and practiced." That he endeavored to do in an article entitled "New School Methodism," published in *The Northern Independent* over his "well-known signature."[\[18\]](#) Probably the whole of such a highly controversial article should be presented here, but since it has already appeared in published form a number of times, any interested reader is referred to the *History of the Free Methodist Church*.[\[19\]](#) "New School Methodism" not only charged a defection in the church from that of the fathers of Methodism in doctrine, but also alleged a departure in terms of method, a failure to promote revivals deep and thorough and a substitution of stock churches for free, and the innovation of parties of pleasure, oyster suppers, fairs, grab bags, festivals and lotteries. Mr. Roberts concluded:

In short, the Old School Methodists (among whom he classed himself) rely for the spread of the gospel upon the agency of the Holy Ghost, and the purity of the Church. The New School Methodists appear to depend upon the patronage of the worldly, the favor of the proud and aspiring; and the various artifices of worldly policy.[\[20\]](#)

Without doubt he greatly aggravated the opposing party by relating at the beginning of his article that during the recent session of the Annual Conference, the Regency group had held several secret meetings, in which they concerted a plan to carry out their measures and to spread their doctrines.[\[21\]](#) He further antagonized Mr. Robie, editor of the *Buffalo Advocate*, who had published denunciations of the "Nazarites" by reminding him that the word "Christian" had appropriately been dropped from the name of his paper. Said Mr. Roberts:

This omission is full of meaning. It is, however, highly proper, as we shall see when we examine its new theory of religion. We commend the editor for this instance of honesty. It is now simply "The Advocate," that is, the *only* Advocate of the tenets it defends.[\[22\]](#)

Air. Roberts, in his article, charged the opposing group with liberalism as great in degree as that of Theodore Parker and Mr. Newman and blaming it on the sects whose watchword is a creed in a manner not unworthy of Alexander Campbell himself. He directly countered the idea that benevolence was central to Christianity and argued that to adore the divine character was the most imperative obligation resting upon human beings, that he who worships God rightly would, as a necessary consequence, possess all social and moral virtues; that the Gospel did not leave its votaries to choose, if they pleased, the degrading rites of heathenism, or the superstitious abominations of Popery; but prescribed prayer and praise and the observance of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper "as particular modes for paying homage to the Deity;"[\[23\]](#) and that there was no necessity for antagonism, as infidels and

Universalists were wont to affirm, between spiritual worship and the forms of worship instituted by Christ.

The following statement was characterized by Roberts "as not unworthy of Thomas Paine himself":

It (Christianity) in no wise gives countenance to the supposition, that the Great Jehovah is so affected with the infirmity of vanity, as to receive with peculiarly grateful emotions the attentions and offerings which poor human creatures may pay directly to Him in worship. [\[24\]](#)

Mr. Roberts criticized that article for making benevolence the root rather than the fruit of the Christian system, and of making love to man central rather than love to God, and for substituting good works for repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. That writer said the object of Christianity was not so much to direct men in the cultivation of pious emotions, as to enable them to cherish holy affections; not so much to teach men how to worship God as to mould them into the divine image, and thus cause them to act like God. [\[25\]](#) Mr. Roberts, with his training as a lawyer, had seized characteristically upon the weak points of the opponent's argument. The similarity in parts of "New School Methodism" to the letter written to Bishop Morris indicated that the article grew out of the thinking which dictated the contents of that letter, plus the development which was incidental to the reply to these specific articles.

This brochure served the purpose of further dividing the sentiment of the Genesee Conference and of bringing to a head the issues which already had been brought before the Conference in the previous two annual sessions. Dr. F. G. Hibbard, then editor of the *Northern Christian Advocate*, to whom Mr. Roberts first sent his article for publication, returned the article with the comment that it would involve him (Hibbard) in hopeless controversy, and then added that he did not speak this against the article considered by itself, but of the controversy which the article would occasion. "Your article," he said, "appears to me to be written in as mild and candid a tone as such facts can be stated in." [\[26\]](#) He assured Mr. Roberts, as a "dear Brother" that in the doctrine of holiness, in the life and power of religion, in the integrity and spirit of Methodism he had a deep and lively interest. He labored to promote them, but he could not feel justified in taking sides in the question that now unhappily divided the Genesee Conference. [\[27\]](#) Mr. Hibbard's position as an editor is easily understandable yet Mr. Roberts asserted that after it was clear that he was in the minority, Dr. Hibbard wrote against him with a great zeal, and as he thought, with unfairness, seemingly without regard to his position as an editor. [\[28\]](#)

With the express action of the Conference in 1855, instructing its members not to carry on this program of "stigmatizing" its members, it is not surprising that the author of "New School Methodism" had action brought against him. From Mr. Roberts' viewpoint, he was defending the truth; from the standpoint of the Conference majority, he was furthering the divisive spirit which they had been ineffectually trying to suppress.

[5. A Doctrinal Issue](#)

That the issue of doctrine was clearly before them is evident from a letter which the Reverend William Kendall wrote to a "Brother Phelps" shortly before the Leroy Conference of 1857, dated August 21st. He stated that he had been at two camp meetings, on the Niagara District and at Wyoming. At the former, he said the doctrine that we are entirely sanctified at conversion was boldly proclaimed. The Rev. William Cooley had requested that Mr. Kendall exhort in his place, and set the matter right. Mr. Kendall spoke forty-five minutes in trying to do so, "while Regency preachers" he said "prayed God to have mercy on me."[\[29\]](#) At the Wyoming Camp Meeting, he preached on the same subject. The Rev. Asa Abell arose, as soon as Mr. Kendall had finished, and backed what he had said. The presiding elder and two preachers, Kendall recorded, then exhorted against him, after which Bro. Gorham, editor of *The Guide to Holiness* stood by him, for which the presiding elder took him off into the woods as soon as the service closed. Mr. Kendall continued, "Some of the preachers rear against me like the 'bulls of Bashan.' I know not but that they will gore me, tear the ground, or something at the Conference."[\[30\]](#) Kendall went to Conference, not expecting his return to Chili, nor knowing just what would befall him, nor did he trouble himself at all. "Naught can harm us while we abide in Christ,"[\[31\]](#) he said.

The two men, Roberts and Kendall, had taken their position against those in the majority, and therefore in authority; Roberts by having brought to public attention the actions of the Regency ministers in their private sessions at the last Conference, and Kendall by publicly taking the stand at refutation in open conflict with a presiding elder. That the question was doctrinal is evident, but that there was more than doctrine involved is inferred from the statement of F. G. Hibbard, editor of the *Northern Christian Advocate*. That the church was divided on the question of demonstration and worldliness is certain, but that they were united in its condemnation is hardly supported. In April of that same year, in the *Buffalo Advocate*, which later berated the "Nazarites," is found this paragraph, showing that the Methodist Church did not condemn all physical demonstration:

'I believe in religion, but I do not believe in making such an ado about it. And this noisy religion, this loud praying and preaching, and shouting, I detest.' You do? But are you sure that this noisy religion is not of God? You have no right to disapprove what God approves. If you do, how can he look with approbation upon you? He cannot. It becomes you, therefore, to be exceedingly careful that you do not find yourself fighting against God in this matter.[\[32\]](#)

This was printed just previous to the Conference where the difficulties came to a climax in the accusations against Mr. Roberts. Neither can the judgment of Mr. Robie, editor of the *Buffalo Advocate*, be sustained that the party which was termed Nazarites were so few that they might be listed as small as the number six when we face the fact that fifteen hundred people signed a petition for the retransfer of Stiles and Kingsley from the Cincinnati Conference to the Genesee Conference. The petition was granted, and the two men were returned to Genesee Conference once more.

6. Roberts Saw Persecution as a Protective Measure

Roberts interpreted the rising ire of the Regency group, following the return of the two former presiding

elders, as the desperation of men who had been charged at the previous Conference with attempt to defraud a certain Enoch Pease of one thousand dollars, and of a ruse to cheat a Mr. White of five hundred dollars. Roberts had made complaint of the latter, but the matter had been laid on the table. Mr. Stiles had informed the Conference that he had letters written by men of good standing in the community, two of them members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, calling in question the business integrity and honesty of a member of the Conference, and asked for a Committee to be appointed, but Roberts said the Conference refused the request for a Committee, or even to hear the letters.[\[33\]](#) Roberts conclusion was that

they saw that something must be done to cripple our influence, or they were still in danger of being called to account for their misdeeds.[\[34\]](#)

7. The Leroy Conference

In 1857 the Genesee Conference convened at Leroy, New York, and once again the Regency ministers met in private session, so Mr. Roberts affirmed, and this was confirmed subsequently by testimony in the course of the trial which ensued. Certain members of the Conference, according to Mr. Roberts' account, rented a hall, and without ever being suspected, held secret meetings at night. At that time the presiding elders all stood with the majority group, and by letting the young and the unacceptable preachers understand that their appointments depended upon which party in the Conference they identified themselves with, they succeeded, he stated, in getting a majority of the Conference into the meetings. Then they voted, Roberts asserted, in this secret meeting which was composed of the very men who were to sit upon the jury, and whose votes were relied upon in advance to secure conviction, to bring charges against him and W. C. Kendall.[\[35\]](#)

Thomas Carlton, Head of the Methodist Book Concern, testified at the ensuing trial:

I attended some of the select meetings at Leroy; not all. I should think there might have been sixty at one of the meetings, at another about forty; they ranged from thirty to sixty.[\[36\]](#)

Rev. F. D. Parsons testified: "I was chairman of these meetings held at Leroy. There was a person who kept brief minutes of the meetings."[\[37\]](#) To B. T. Roberts were handed the original minutes of one of their meetings which he read before the Annual Conference during his trial:

Leroy, September 3, 1857.

Meeting convened according to adjournment; Brother Parsons in the chair. Prayer, by Brother Fuller. Brethren present pledged themselves by rising, to keep to themselves the proceedings of this meeting.

Resolved, That we will not allow the character of Rev. B. T. Roberts to pass until he has had a fair trial. Passed. Moved that we will not pass the character of Rev. W. C. Kendall, until he has had a fair trial. Passed, Moved, That Brother Canton be added to the committee on Brother Kendal's case. Passed. [\[38\]](#)[\[39\]](#)[\[40\]](#)

In the light of the testimony, there evidently was concerted action by the majority of the ministers of the Genesee Conference against both Mr. Roberts and Mr. Kendall, and though phrased in the language of justice, in the light of subsequent events, was ostensibly for the purpose of arresting their characters. The charges against Mr. Roberts were based on his article which has been reviewed, entitled "New School Methodism." The several points are listed and signed by Reuben C. Foote, dated September 1, 1857, and preceded by the words, "I hereby charge Rev. B. T. Roberts with unchristian and immoral conduct." [\[41\]](#) The nine charges brought against him, based on the above mentioned article, center in Mr. Roberts' reference to the action of about thirty of their number as an associate body, whose teachings were very different from the fathers of Methodism; that this difference was so vital as to involve nothing less than the nature of Christianity itself; that their liberalism was as great in degree as that of Theodore Parker and Mr. Newman; that a certain statement, which Mr. Roberts said was broadened in the charge, was a sneer not unworthy of Thomas Paine and fell below the dignity of Voltaire; that they were unorthodox on the subject of holiness according to Wesley and Fletcher; that they acknowledged that their doctrines were not those of the church and that they were attempting to correct its standard authors; that they were substituting the lodge for the class meeting and love feast, and the social party for the prayer meeting; that their revivals were superficial, and that all professions of deep religious experience were treated with distrust.

Mr. Roberts arose in the Conference session and stated that he had no intention of misrepresenting any one. He said he thought that the men referred to held just the opinions he said they did, but if they did not, he would be glad to be corrected. If they would say they were not properly represented, he would take their word for it, make his humble confession, and, as far as possible, repair the wrong that he had done. [\[42\]](#) He offered to publish in *The Northern Independent*, where his article had appeared, and in all the church papers they desired him to, from Maine to California, that he had misrepresented them. But, Mr. Roberts recorded that no one said they had been misrepresented.

Mr. Roberts, in his defense, endeavored to show that they had not set down the exact language of his specifications, and that in all the important specifications they had perverted his meaning. Mr. Roberts, being a law trained man, might have made more of this point than was warranted. He had charged them, as has been previously noted, with being heterodox in doctrine and wrong in practice. The Regency had enough votes to declare him guilty of "unchristian and immoral conduct" for this writing which, more than any other one factor, indicated the animus of those who framed the charge. Every charge and specification against Mr. Roberts was for libel, based upon statements in his article, but the conviction was for "unchristian and immoral conduct," even though there was not brought against him a single charge for the latter. This very statement indicated the strength of feeling against him, and the strong prejudice which alienated those men from the spirit of justice.

The vote to sustain the conviction on the grounds of unchristian and immoral conduct for writing and publishing those strictures on "New School Methodism" was fifty-two to forty-three, a majority of nine. Several members of the Conference were absent and several did not vote. With reference to this trial on one specification, and conviction for another, the Rev. C. D. Burlingham remarked, "Why not try them for promoting disorder and fanaticism?"^[43] His answer was his personal conviction, "Because the failure of such an effort to convict would have been the certain result."^[44] Mr. Roberts was sentenced to be reproofed by the chair. He received the reproof and appealed to the General Conference. When summoned late in the evening for this ecclesiastical censure, he had already retired for the night, but he arose and obeyed the behest, thus proving clearly, declared Fuller, one of his chief opponents, "that he was a fanatic," for "none but a fanatic would rise from his bed to receive a reproof."^[45] The Rev. C. D. Burlingham, in a review of the trial commented that instead of being expelled, as should have been done if the charges that had been sustained by a party vote were true, Mr. Roberts was simply reproofed by the chair and was sent out again as a fellow laborer in the Gospel, being thus endorsed by his accusers.^[46]

B. APPOINTMENT TO PEKIN

At the Leroy Conference, following his reproof, Mr. Roberts was demoted from a larger appointment of the Genesee Conference to Pekin, a country charge. Mr. Kendall was sent to West Falls, one of the poor circuits in the Conference. There was insufficient time to prosecute the charges against Kendall, but he was told that his case would come up at the next session of the Conference.

1. Kendal's Reactions to Conference

Shortly after Conference, Kendall wrote to Roberts telling him the state of things on his new charge and declaring that the starvation system was in full effect in his case, but stating that he expected to have a good year if he had any year. He contemplated opening meetings in Buffalo, since he was only ten miles distant, supposing that God might have placed him within easy access of it so that He might pour out "a vial of wrath or mercy on the seat of the beast."^[47] He expressed a fear that Roberts might be discouraged over the state of things, but in spite of the fact that the Regency had pressed him hard, it was not Mr. Roberts they were after, but the "blessed Jesus." He further maintained that he had never realized the corrupt state of the Conference until they had voted on Roberts' case. "Such a combination to crush a brother," he wrote, "I did not suppose could be with us."^[48] After referring to Mr. Roberts' statement on the Conference floor, "Some of us will die hard,"^[49] he exhorted him, "Don't be discouraged. brother; we have not suffered much yet. As you said to me on the night of your sentence and execution, 'It is an honor to be denounced by those men.'"^[50] Kendall told Roberts that a Mr. Colton, evidently a layman, said on the Monday following Conference that he thought Kendall and Roberts should go throughout the Conference holding meetings. Kendall said lie had almost been persuaded to locate himself so that he would be free to go everywhere preaching Jesus, and then offered this suggestion, "We must circulate, as much as possible, among the people. God will give us this land yet."^[51]

2. The Slavery Issue

Before passing to a consideration of the events at Pekin, it is only fair to the minds of all concerned to interject another cause for the strong feeling evidenced in the opposing factions of the Genesee Conference. In the matter of slavery, the members of the Methodist Church were divided in opinion by the controversy. Mr. Roberts, even before his school days at Middletown, had been actively antislavery. Following his graduation, although the exact date is not known, he had for a short time identified himself with the Know-Nothing Party which was formed about 1852 and finally culminated in the formation of the Republican Party. It was given its name because it was a secret, oath-bound fraternity, regarding whose purposes and cognomen its members always answered when questioned, "I don't know." "Americans must rule America!" was its rallying cry. It evidenced relentless hostility to the increasing power of the Roman Catholic Church, and demanded the extension of the qualification for naturalization to a residence of twenty-one years.^[52] It was a strong antislavery party. The platform of free and liberal educational institutions for all sects and classes, with the Bible, God's Holy Word, as a universal textbook, was doubtless attractive to Mr. Roberts. Mr. Roberts had withdrawn from the party before the rise of the conference difficulties, and by that time, the party itself was rapidly disintegrating.

In a defense published in the columns of *The Northern Independent*, Mr. Roberts referred to the secret meetings of the Regency at the Medina Conference in 1856, and then declared that Mr. Hibbard, editor of the *Northern Christian Advocate*, had charged "one of the foremost leaders" of the Nazarites with having belonged to the Know-Nothing Party, while "at the same time he appeared before the public as a champion against secret societies."^[53] Mr. Roberts averred that he had but little to say about secret societies as such; but he did protest against their being used to control the affairs of the church. As to the charge of having been a "Know-Nothing" he plead guilty, with the following as his explanation. At the time he joined the party, he supposed it embodied his political principles. While in it, he said he did battle to the best of his ability for human freedom. When he felt that he was losing spiritual power, he withdrew from the whole concern altogether. When leaving, he said he did not even take a card that would admit him to any council he might choose to enter, but left for good; and publicly made his confession. The gentlemen with whom he had been associated in the party gave him a regular dismissal, which was accompanied by a letter from his principal officer, expressing their confidence in his integrity, and their admiration for his straightforward course while among them. He asked the question if, while the Regency were endeavoring to compass his ruin, it were gentlemanly in Mr. Hibbard to bring up a closed matter in order to excite prejudice against him. He asked, "Would Mr. Hibbard imitate our frankness, and tell us about his relation to the East Genesee Conference division of the Sacred Shield?"^[54]

Both the question of secrecy and slavery were joined in that particular ecclesiastical skirmish, but underlying the whole seemed to be the slavery issue, with *The Northern Independent* as its organ. In 1859, Mr. Roberts wrote concerning the Conference of 1857 that in that year it had been his misfortune to come within two votes of being elected secretary of the Annual Conference. His position on the slavery question was well known to be antagonistic to that of the leader of the Regency, a candidate for Episcopal honors. The destruction of his influence, so Roberts thought, became necessary to that man's success. The presiding elder and Book Room influence had been put into requisition, he said, secret meetings were held and a heavy blow was resolved upon, namely, arresting his character and that of Mr.

Kendall. That slavery was one large issue is not only admitted by Mr. Roberts but asserted by the editor of the *Northern Independent*. Mr. Hosmer, the editor, stated that it was well known that Mr. McCreery's plan of a Nazarite Union had been abandoned in the fall of 1855 and that no organization had ever been effected. Repeatedly the men concerned, who are stigmatized as Nazarites, had repudiated the existence of any such thing whatsoever; yet, Hosmer said, "pertinaciously as ever do the 'Nobles' continue to bark." [55] The same preachers whom McCreery consulted about the advisability of such a Band preached boldly against slavery as well as all other sins. "There's the rub," declared Mr. Hosmer. "If we had not had a strong pro-slavery party here, we never should have heard this interminable uproar about 'Nazarites.'" [56] Something must be done to check the influence of earnest men, and this was thought to be as effectual a mode as any." [57] This statement was made by a man who was a Methodist minister, and who never had any connection with the formation of either Nazarite Bands or a new church. He remained a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Because the *Northern Christian Advocate* and the *Buffalo Advocate* refused the right of publication to any of the minority group, Mr. Hosmer did open the columns of his paper for the publications of the minority group out of what he considered journalistic fairness, and the right of defense.

3. Reception at Pekin

With the unhappy affairs of the Conference just behind him, and a new circuit just before him, it can only be imagined with what misgivings Roberts moved his family to the little country village, Pekin, New York. When the account of his trial and reproof under the charge of "immoral conduct" was published without explanation in the *Buffalo Advocate*, the people were, of course, hardly willing to receive Mr. Roberts. Some felt quite alarmed, as they might well have done, when they heard that a preacher had been sent to them who had been convicted before the Conference of immorality and crime. Roberts doubted if any itinerant ever had a colder reception. [58] Even Father Isaac Chesbrough, whom Roberts delineated as "one of the noblest of men, and staunchest and most loyal of Methodists," at first thought he would not even go to hear him preach. "What have we done," he exclaimed, "that a man convicted of immoral conduct should be sent to us as our preacher?" When the first Sabbath morning of Roberts' pastorate came, Mr. Chesbrough, who always attended church, concluded to go, saying, "It can do no hurt to hear him once, anyway." His son later reported, "Returning from church, he rode in silence over a mile and then said, 'Well, Sam, I know nothing about the man, but I do know that what we have heard today is Methodism as I used to hear it in the old Baltimore Conference, and as I have not heard it preached in western New York.'" [59] However, the sentiment soon changed when they learned that their pastor's conviction had been on the basis of the articles in *The Northern Independent*, and the people gave the Roberts a hearty welcome. Mr. Chesbrough's son afterwards said of Mrs. Roberts that he was impressed by her neat and plain attire, as well as by the meek and quiet spirit she manifested. He compared her in dress and appearance to his mother; each bore the stamp, he thought, of a "true Baltimore Methodist." [60]

Mrs. Roberts was not so well impressed with Pekin. She recorded that it was a very small, ill-looking town, but even so, the home looked very pleasant. Mr. Roberts spoke better of it than she. He wrote to his father that they had a good parsonage, a good new church, and strong membership. It was composed

mostly of substantial farmers. The people received them cordially, and he was trusting for a good year.^[61] The harrowing experiences of the late Conference did not long affect his spirit, probably due to the fact that he felt so strongly that he was justified in his course. He told his father in the letter just quoted that he had not felt better following a Conference for three years than he had done since the last session, that he had tried to do his duty faithfully, and the Lord blessed him in it, and blessed him since.^[62]

4. Other Events at Pekin

The judgment of Mr. Roberts with reference to the spirituality of his church was expressed to his wife, "These people do not understand what is meant by giving up the world and being thoroughly saved."^[63] Since a Quarterly Meeting was drawing near, the pastor and wife agreed to invite in some of the Brockport and Syracuse Methodists who would be a witness and example of what religion would and could do. The burden of entertainment fell on the lady of the parsonage and her husband. "Bed ticks" were made out of a whole pieces of cotton cloth and were filled with straw. These were laid on the floor of the largest room of the parsonage and in a short time sleeping places for the men were thus provided. A powerful revival of religion broke out, Roberts wrote, which, notwithstanding the marked indifference of the presiding elder and the open opposition of two or three of the official members, "swept on with increasing power" throughout the year. One of the stewards, becoming dissatisfied because the young converts were laying aside their "jewelry and finery," began having prayer meetings in his house across the street from the church at the same time the revivals were in progress. Mr. Roberts said that he did nothing to oppose the meetings and they soon ceased. Many of the ladies, members of the church, "under Methodist vows to plainness of dress," went to church with "their silk gowns so distended with crinoline that their dresses would reach across the aisle; and the high, poke bonnets, then in vogue, were veritable flower gardens, the enormous spaces were so filled with artificial flowers." Under the revival preaching which included plainness of attire, the seekers ceased to come.^[64]

George Washington Carl and his wife were two of the converts that year. There were twenty-five or thirty conversions in the meeting. Through the influence of Mr. Carl, a meeting was scheduled at the Stone Schoolhouse, and thirty or forty were converted in that meeting. Mr. Carl said, "We remember one special night, when Brother Roberts preached but could not stay for the altar service, about six were converted. It was a glorious time. Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists were all blessed together and shouted the praises of God."^[65] Many Lutherans claimed conversion in that meeting. It was the haying season and they came from miles around riding on their hayracks. When the schoolhouse was filled, they would drive up to the open window and listen.^[66]

Another meeting was held, called the district camp meeting, just three miles from Pekin, and although the presiding elder never mentioned the meeting to Roberts, Mr. Roberts attended and had one of the largest tents on the ground. For three days, Mr. Roberts said, there was given no opportunity for testimony, but finally, "the tide of salvation began to run."^[67] In the interval of meetings at the stand, Mr. Roberts would invite to his tent those who were in need of prayer, and he witnessed that many were there converted and sanctified of God.^[68]

5. Death of Kendall

An event of deep significance to Roberts was the sickness and death of one of his most devoted friends since college days. On January 28, 1858, they heard that William Kendall was ill and not expected to live, and on February 2nd they heard that he was gone. Mrs. Roberts recorded in her diary, "What a blow!"^[69] Probably no one was nearer in spirit to Roberts than Kendall. They had worked together and were closely joined in what they both believed to be a battle for truth. At the previous Annual Conference, two bills of charges had been brought against Kendall, but there had been insufficient time to try him. He was sent to one of the smallest circuits of the Conference. The people had been told by their presiding elder prior to Conference, that he "doubted whether there was a man in the Conference small enough for them."^[70] When he was appointed to West Falls, his presiding elder informed him that if he pleased the people, they might board him and his wife around, from house to house, but they would not be able to support him if he kept house.^[71] Roberts asserted that he was a man capable of filling with credit any Christian pulpit. Mr. Roberts was chosen to preach the funeral sermon, but it is told of that service, that so great were his feelings he was not able to preach much. The text he chose was, "Who are these that are arrayed in white robes?"^[72] The congregation was deeply moved; some wept; some shouted.^[73] Mrs. Kendall shouted several times!^[74] Mrs. Roberts said, "It seemed like triumph rather than death It did seem as if it were the verge of heaven."^[75] They sang, "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand," and "Heaven, Sweet Heaven."

6. Decision of S. K. J. Chesbrough

That the Pekin church members were divided in sentiment with reference to the preaching and procedure of Mr. Roberts is evident from an incident told by S. K. J. Chesbrough, who at that meeting identified himself with Mr. Roberts and the Nazarites. Preaching at Humbolt Park Church, Chicago, in later life, Mr. Chesbrough related:

It is just as vivid to me as though it happened but yesterday, yet it is nearly forty years ago, over forty, when Brother Roberts was in the old church. There was a church of one hundred twenty-five members, I think. There were thirty that knelt around the altar seeking for purity and for pardon and nearly every member of that church was sitting bolt upright in the seat; none bowed, at least but very few. I remember when he said, 'Who are willing to come into this altar and take his position beside me to press this work on? Let them come in here and labor and pray with souls.' When I arose from my seat, half way down the church, I felt every friend was gone. But by the grace of God I deliberately walked down the aisle, and took my place by Brother Roberts. Two others came with me. There we were, three out of that church. That hour sealed the matter with me.^[76]

This procedure, as can be readily seen, forced a line of demarcation upon the people, and created a sense of the division which was already rending the Conference. Doubtless, many did not wish to become

embroiled in the difficulties by identifying themselves with either faction and so chose to remain in their seats, although by so doing, according to the question put by Roberts, they were arraying themselves against him.

The opposition in his own church had evidently increased. Mrs. Lane wrote to Mrs. Roberts, "Oh, how troubled and sad (I am) to learn that you are still passing through the 'furnace fires!' "[77] Those fires were growing hotter and were soon to be felt anew officially. Mr. Roberts continued his revival efforts, though it seems evident he was being strongly opposed. He wrote to his father about the numerous conversions, and told of the remarkable increase in attendance at the class meetings, "where six to twelve attended when we came, some forty or fifty were present." [78] He said he was trying "to put the plough in deep," and commented that he felt the Lord was helping him and he had no fears for the results. [79] Ten days later, he wrote again to his father that they were having meetings every night, with from ten to twenty forward each night for prayer. He told his father he had calls to go to Attica, Lancaster, Yates, Caryville, to the Congregational Church at Leroy and other places, but he was trying hard to plant Methodism on his charge. [80]

7. Visits of Stiles and Redfield

Two close friends of Mr. Roberts visited him that year. One was the visit of Mr. Loren Stiles, who was the young presiding elder who had been transferred to the Cincinnati Conference and later returned to the Genesee through the large petition circulated among the people. He had been a close friend of B. T. Roberts since his days in Lima in 1845, when both were students in the Seminary. Mr. Stiles was a graduate of the Methodist Theological Seminary at Concord, New Hampshire. His discourses were esteemed by many as spiritual and edifying, and it seemed that he had by that time established for himself a reputation as a pulpit orator. It is probable that the death of their mutual friend, Kendall, drew them more closely together.

Dr. Redfield also visited the Roberts home that year. His name had been identified with the "Nazarite" group, as one of its foremost leaders and promoters. It is most probable that Dr. Redfield, during this visit, discussed his attitudes as to the necessity of separation from the mother church. His visit came at the time of a general quarterly meeting held at Pekin, the first meeting of its kind he had ever attended. These general quarterly meetings had been originated by Mr. Stiles during the period of his presiding eldership. Here is found the first reference to band work. Mr. Terrill recorded: "He found that the work had been kept alive in some places, by the organization of bands, made up of those who enjoyed perfect love and were contending earnestly for real Methodism." [81] The band work was to be stimulated by the events of succeeding days until, like the class meetings of John Wesley, they finally formed the nucleus for a new organization. He was convinced that one of two things would result from the state of affairs he found; either they would win a sufficient number of people to their beliefs that opposition to them would cease, or they would be finally excluded from the church. [82]

Dr. Redfield had been working extensively in Illinois, where conditions were heading up much as they were in the Genesee Conference. Right after his visit to the Roberts home, he had written to Mrs.

Kendall, "I am accused of 'splitting churches.' I confess that is my object, to split them off from the world." [83] He added that many good people, and some of the preachers in Illinois were very much prejudiced against the Nazarites. A "Brother Woodward," formerly from the Genesee Conference said he could not believe that all was right among the "pilgrims" when such men as Fillmore, and Church, and De Puy, and Bowman represented them as they do. [84] Mr. Bowman was to become one of the main witnesses against Mr. Roberts in his second trial.

As the 1858 Conference drew near, S. K. J. Chesbrough, one of the members of the Pekin circuit who had taken his position with Mr. Roberts, wrote a report of the year at Pekin. He referred to the fact that Mr. Roberts had been branded with immorality before he had appeared at Pekin, and that the *Advocate* had at frequent intervals since published articles against him, but he believed that the shafts hurled at Mr. Roberts fell "far below him." He answered the accusation that his pastor had been moved from the Niagara Street Church in Buffalo because of unfitness by stating that this accusation would do well enough among those who had not all the facts from Mr. Thomas, the presiding elder during the pastorate of Mr. Roberts at Buffalo. Mr. Chesbrough presented as the ultimate criterion whether the church had prospered under the ministry of Mr. Roberts, and answered it by saying that God had honored his labors. Fifty or sixty had professed conversion, over forty had joined on probation. A goodly number had professed the experience of entire sanctification. He declared that without an exception every aged member in the church had publicly endorsed the preaching and the work that had been going on as a return of Wesleyan Methodism with its uncompromising and earnest spirit. He stated that when Mr. Roberts had first come among them, their Sunday noon class had numbered about fifteen; at the close of the year they were having an average of seventy-five to eighty. They were holding a meeting each night at some point on the charge, and their prayer and class meetings had been better sustained through "haying and harvesting" and had been more interesting than for years past. Their Sunday School was at an all time high. Scores in the church, he thought, thanked God for the presence of Mr. Roberts among them. [85]

C. REPUBLICATION OF "NEW SCHOOL METHODISM"

1. Views on the Publication

The event of greatest significance during that year was the republication of the article on "New School Methodism" in pamphlet form by George W. Estes, a prominent lay member of the Methodist Episcopal Church on the Clarkson circuit. Mr. Roberts estimated that he was a man of intelligence and of influence in the community in which he resided. He had been a worker in the revival meetings Mr. Roberts had held at Brockport. Mr. Estes felt that the Conference had done wrong by publishing what he termed the vague, insinuating reports of the offense for which Mr. Roberts was convicted, and had printed an account of the trial in connection with the pamphlet on "New School Methodism."

The crux of the whole question of the justice of the proceedings of the 1858 session of the Genesee Conference hinged on the truthfulness of the following assertion of Mr. Roberts:

Mr. Estes, without my knowledge even, published over his own name, and at his own expense, in pamphlet form, my article on 'New School Methodism' and a short account of my trial.[\[86\]](#)

The words of Mr. Estes appended to the article of Mr. Roberts were of great consequence to the future disposition of the case of Mr. Roberts. Mr. Estes denounced the element of secrecy in connection with the trial; accused the opposition of sacrificing annually a human victim at the several annual Conferences past; declared that they had reproved and condemned Roberts for "unchristian and immoral conduct" for writing an article while at the same time the Conference had re-admitted a brother from around Buffalo for "the service performed of kissing a young lady in the vestibule" while the trial was in progress;[\[87\]](#) that they were wreaking their vengeance upon *The Northern Independent* for its antislavery position by putting out one acknowledged above all others in the Conference as "the people's man";[\[88\]](#) declared that since they had appealed to the Bishop in numbers and yet had received nothing but a stereotyped reply, that he was resolved not to pay another cent to any of the preachers associated with the so-called Regency faction, even to the withholding of his money from the superannuate fund, which was by them controlled.[\[89\]](#)

Mr. Roberts stated that he never saw this article until sometime after it was published, and he was in no wise responsible for its publication, but that Mr. Estes, a man of means, and an exhorter in the M. E. Church, was responsible, and like a man, had assumed the full responsibility. When, at the last Quarterly Conference preceding the Annual Conference, the question of the renewal of Mr. Estes' license came up, the presiding elder had asked Mr. Estes if he were the author of the pamphlet. He replied that he was. Without a word of objection, said Mr. Roberts, the presiding elder had renewed the license as an exhorter, and soon after went to Conference and cast his vote to expel Mr. Roberts from the Conference and Church, on the charge of publishing that very pamphlet.[\[90\]](#)

2. Conference Difficulties Increase

The republication of that pamphlet became the main problem of the Conference, and was a precursor of serious consequences to Roberts. Mrs. Roberts recorded in her diary, July, 1858, "In the love feast the Lord let me see the second time that there were some severe trials ahead, and it was connected with my husband. I thought he was going to die."[\[91\]](#) Later while spending two days at the Hamburg Camp Meeting, under what she felt was an unusual sense of the divine afflatus, she wrote, "Again I saw the trial ahead and it seemed as though my dear husband was going to die."[\[92\]](#) On August 29th, she wrote of taking tea at "Sister Cushing's" and of going to "Brother Rose's" to meeting where they had a good service, but it seemed like a farewell meeting. Mrs. Roberts could not refrain from tears. They sang at the close, "That will be joyful to meet to part no more."[\[93\]](#) October 1st, Mrs. Roberts recorded was fast day to pray for Conference, but few were out. "I never saw such a time when God seemed so near. All led in prayer twice. What power we had in praying for my dear companion! We all felt God would go with him and the Red Sea would be divided."[\[94\]](#)

On October 3rd, Mr. Roberts presided at his own church, arose and gave out the hymn, "Jesus, my Strength and Righteousness." So great was his emotional strain he could hardly speak. He and his wife scarcely understood what all this meant.[\[95\]](#) Mr. Roberts left the next day for Conference, and a meeting was held that day in Pekin. Mrs. Roberts prayed that the cross might be consumed, and that she was willing to be placed in the furnace that the "gold without the cross" might be given her. She said in a talk to the people that they would find fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, to all intents and purposes if they would forsake all.[\[96\]](#)

On October 8th, Mrs. Roberts left for the Conference at Perry, New York. One of the first pieces of information from the Conference from Mr. Roberts was that they had refused to receive into membership two ministers, Warner and Foster; the first because of inviting people to seek holiness, and the second for stating at one time that he was glad that there was no presiding elder present to steady the ark.[\[97\]](#) On October 9th, Mr. Roberts read the Scripture, "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."[\[98\]](#) Mrs. Roberts awoke that morning saying, "Soldiers of Christ, arise and put your armour on."[\[99\]](#)

On October 11th, a bill of charges was handed to Mr. Roberts, containing the charges of contumacy and republishing and circulating "the Estes Pamphlet." Mrs. Roberts confessed, "When they first took up Mr. Roberts' case it seemed as if I could not stand it."[\[100\]](#) This was no doubt due to the fact that they refused his request for a trial committee, the fact they would not accept B. I. Ives of the Oneida Conference as his counsel, nor would they permit him to be transferred to another Conference to be tried by "impartial" men. At that stage, Mrs. Roberts began to look into the future and wonder what would be the results if he should be expelled, for it then seemed probable that he would.[\[101\]](#)

Mr. Roberts arose in his own defense in all of these matters. On the change of venue which he requested, he quoted to them the provision of civil law that a venue could be changed to another county when the defendant conceived that he could not have a fair trial in the county where the venue was laid. He showed them that not one man of the majority would be permitted to sit in a civil court if twenty-five cents only were at issue. He quoted Hobart's *Report* to the effect that a man to sit in judgment upon his own cause was contrary to natural equity, and should be void for "jura naturae sunt immutabilia; they are leges legum. Natural rights are immutable. They are the laws of laws."[\[102\]](#) Mr. Roberts felt that where things dearer than his own life, his professional reputation and standing were at stake, that an impartial trial was necessary. When he was refused a change of venue, he requested a committee small enough that each one sitting on the committee would feel a sense of personal responsibility for the decision. He felt that if tried before the entire Conference, it would be easy for one to hide behind another in avoiding responsibility for the decision. He believed that it would be easier for the Conference to do in the name of a body what the men would scorn to do in their own name. He noted that the larger the assembly the higher the passions would rise, and quoted a saying of Socrates that if everyone in Athens were a philosopher, an Athenian assembly would be little better than a mob.[\[103\]](#) Once again, in this request, Mr. Roberts was denied what he considered to be necessary to a fair and impartial trial.

3. The Trial Proper

The trial was held before the entire Conference assembly. Mr. Roberts thought two pieces of evidence only appeared to be of striking importance; first, that pertaining to Rev. John Bowman, and second, the testimony of George Estes. Bowman testified that Roberts had given him a packet of the papers written by Estes, and thus supported the assertion that Roberts had circulated the same. Mr. Terrill referred to an alleged confession of Dr. Bowman subsequent to this that his position had been wrong.[\[104\]](#) The second witness testified that he alone had been responsible for the publication of the article and the account of the first trial, and that he had not asked the permission of Mr. Roberts with reference to the same. The exact testimony of all the men who took part in the trial is available in Wilson T. Hogue's *History of the Free Methodist Church*, taken essentially from B. T. Roberts' book *Why Another Sect*, and from the *Defence of Rev. B. T. Roberts, A. M. before the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* by S. K. J. Chesbrough, a small book of sixty-nine pages. Little of its detailed testimony can be given. The Rev. Thomas Carlton and the Rev. James M. Fuller, prominent ministers of the Conference, acted as prosecuting counsel, while Loren Stiles, Roberts' close friend for many years, spoke in his defense. In the last mentioned work, we have the plea of Mr. Stiles, and the closing plea of Mr. Roberts in full. Mr. Roberts' plea is phrased in the characteristic manner of a law trained man. Roberts showed that the trial of the present Conference grew out of the trial of the past year. He reviewed the whole set of circumstances, referred to their reproof and conviction the previous year, and called attention to what he judged the rather unusual fact that these same men who voted him guilty of immoral conduct, voted to pass his character, and sent him forth once more to preach the Gospel.[\[105\]](#) He then pressed his conclusion:

I must believe, then, that they voted me guilty when they did not believe this to be the case; or, it is their deliberate judgment expressed in the most solemn manner, that immorality does not unfit a man for being a Minister of Jesus Christ.[\[106\]](#)

After reviewing the character of "New School Methodism," he proceeded to argue that there was not only an utter absence of proof that he published or assisted in publishing the document so offensive to them, but the proof he asserted was positive, that he had nothing to do with it whatsoever.[\[107\]](#) Then Roberts came to what he considered the crucial point, asserting that the only foundation that remained on which to rest the heavy charges of "immoral and unchristian conduct" was the alleged circulation of this document. Even if the proof of circulation were ever so conclusive, this would constitute no reason, he argued, why he should be put on trial for immoral conduct, as though some great crime had been committed. Had time permitted, he asserted that he could have shown that there were but few preachers in the Conference who had not circulated it more or less. After citing a particular case in point, he asked concerning that man, "Is he immoral? Is every one immoral that has circulated that pamphlet?"[\[108\]](#)

Mr. Roberts then elaborated the thought that although George Estes had made some sharp statements in the part of the pamphlet which gave an account of the trial, that they were not as severe as many charges that Wesley had made in his day. Then he came to the further conclusion that even if, instead of having had nothing to do whatsoever with the publication of the offending document, he had actually written it,

no just ground would have existed for this "partizan trial."[\[109\]](#) This conclusion was preceded by a very strong accusation in which Mr. Roberts declared that the spirit that dictated the prosecution of last year and this, would have much more befitted a "narrow-minded monk of the middle ages" than a Protestant minister in the latter half of the nineteenth century.[\[110\]](#)

Mr. Roberts endeavored to narrow down the evidence to show that there was only one real witness against him, Mr. Bowman, to prove that he had actually circulated the pamphlet. and that the testimony of Mr. Bowman as a reliable witness had been impeached. Coming to the close of his defense he stated:

The counsel has dwelt long and earnestly upon the aggravated nature of the offence charged. If the accusation had been for the most atrocious crime, it could not have been urged with greater vehemence and zeal. Libel is an offence that may or may not involve moral delinquency. Some of the best men in our church have been convicted of libel, not before a partizan tribunal, but by a civil court, and mulcted in damages. The venerated Bishops Emory and Waugh, and Dr. Bangs, were brought in, by an impartial jury, guilty of libeling a business man, and yet they suffered no loss of confidence on that account. But here the most strenuous exertions are put forth to make out that in the long catalogue of crime, there is none of quite so deep a dye, as the handing, to a supposed friend, a package of pamphlets, which contain some animadversions upon a party of men, which they are pleased to consider libelous.[\[111\]](#)

Many who heard his closing appeal were probably not unmoved at his statement of church loyalty:

Finally, brethren, allow me to say that I do not affect indifference as to the results of this investigation. I have an ardent attachment to the Church of my choice. I love her doctrines, her usages, and her aggressive spirit. If I have erred at all, it has been occasioned by loving the Church too much, rather than too little. Any departure from the landmarks of Methodism has awakened jealous solicitude and called forth whatever influence I possessed, to persuade people to 'ask for the old paths, that they might walk therein.' It has been my offence not to have labored altogether in vain. We have been favored by the Great Head of the Church, with revivals, deep and powerful, such as have given to our beloved Zion her present position among the Churches of the land.

It would be our delight to continue to toil in the same blessed work, with what little ability and energy the Lord has been pleased to endow us with. This, above all others, is the service that I delight in, and to which I feel that God has specially called and commissioned me from on high. I do not feel that my work is done, nor my commission from the Lord revoked. I love the Methodist Episcopal Church; no one has ever heard me say aught against her; and I should esteem it my highest privilege to be permitted to put forth mightier efforts than I have ever done, to build up her walls and enlarge her borders.

We are hastening to a great impartial tribunal, before which all actions must pass in

review, and all secrets be revealed. There the deliberations of this hour, and the motives by which we are governed, will be disclosed before an assembled universe. Remember it is written: 'With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again.'[\[112\]](#)

Of the last day at the trial, Mrs. Roberts recorded in her diary that Mr. Fuller, the prosecuting attorney, made his speech, and while he was talking, Mrs. Brainard opened her Bible to the fifty-second Psalm and read, and that it seemed very appropriate. In the afternoon, Loren Stiles made his summing up in the defense, and in the evening, her husband made his plea. She felt that God was with him, and that there was conviction of his innocence all through the house. They did not dare to reply and take the vote that night, Mrs. Roberts thought, but adjournment was called for at the close of Mr. Roberts' plea and all retired early.[\[113\]](#) Mr. Roberts was of the same opinion that "the leaders of the opposition did not dare to take the vote that evening. They feared that they could not secure a conviction, so they adjourned, held their secret meeting and worked their courage up to the point where they could come into the Conference the next morning and vote the specifications, and the charge sustained."[\[114\]](#)

Mrs. Roberts recorded the proceedings of the next morning, stating that Mr. Fuller made another speech before the vote was taken. Then he moved Mr. Roberts' expulsion from the Church and Conference, which was carried by a vote of 54 to 34, although this vote did not include all the members of the Conference.[\[115\]](#) Mrs. Roberts said she had to pray every moment, while she felt that honor rested upon her husband, and that confusion and shame rested upon some men on that Conference floor from that hour. As soon as the vote was taken, the preachers and friends who were sympathetic left the house, some in silence, some in tears. Mrs. Roberts said she had no tears to shed, though she had some strange feelings. She recorded: "It seemed as if we were turned out on a great common where the fences were all down and I had a lost feeling until Jesus told me He would be a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night."[\[116\]](#) They went to a "Brother Handley's" and had a season of prayer after dinner. They stayed at "Brother Stanton's" that night, and as she went to rest, she admitted, "My feelings overcame me. I wept before the Lord."[\[117\]](#)

The next day, the Rev. Joseph McCreery, who had formulated the documents for a proposed Nazarite Union, was tried and expelled with a much shorter trial than Mr. Roberts' had been. At the beginning of the Conference session, one of the preachers began by reading the twelfth chapter of Hebrews till he came to the sixteenth verse, and, as Mrs. Roberts recorded in her diary, "then shut the book evidently greatly confused. There was much uneasiness among the preachers while he was reading."[\[118\]](#) That day, the pastoral address, which was based on the background of the Conference difficulties, was read, and fitted into the proceedings of the day. Mr. Stiles published three months later a full page article in *The Northern Independent*, endeavoring to expose what he considered the injustice of it.[\[119\]](#)

[4. Reactions to the Trial and Expulsion](#)

The Rev. C. D. Burlingham wrote up a history of Mr. Roberts' trial and expulsion and circulated it. It

gives his insight into the reactions of the Conference. Mr. Burlingham stated that it was a notorious fact that these verdicts were not based on testimony proving criminal acts or words. Several who voted with, and others who sympathized with the majority, had said that even if the charges were not sustained by sufficient proof, still the Conference had served these men right, for they were great agitators and promoters of disorder and fanaticism. "There you have it," said Mr. Burlingham. "Men tried for one thing and condemned for another!" He ejaculated, "What iniquitous jurisprudence will not such a principle cover?" Then followed another question, "Why not try them for promoting disorder and fanaticism?" to which he replied, "Because the failure of such an effort to convict would have been the certain result."[\[120\]](#)

The expulsions did not seem to end the argument. The editor of the *Buffalo Advocate*, Mr. John Robie, published an article in his paper which stated that some ten years before the Conference had seen fit to put into leading positions in the Conference a group of men who had been occupying the best positions and circuits, and under their care the work had prospered both spiritually and financially. Mr. Robie said that their successful work inflamed the jealousy of a few men in the Conference, of whom Mr. Roberts and Mr. McCreery were among the chief, and that these men had resolved to overthrow the men of whom they had been so long jealous, and to occupy their positions. Accordingly, to accomplish their purposes they had begun to slander these leading men who were in official position, especially among the young men who were entering the Conference. They had, the author charged, perfected a secret organization to overthrow these men, and had furthermore written and circulated letters containing the basest libels against many of the best members of the Conference, and had proposed plans by which they could be deposed. It was asserted that they had also bribed two presiding officers who formerly had no affinity with them, and so had obtained an influence in the Cabinet. In order to carry forward their aims the better, they professed and preached "entire holiness" and under its guise countenanced practices which were a disgrace to a civilized community. Mr. Hosmer, editor of *The Northern Independent*, who never identified himself with the minority group except to print their side of the story when access to the columns of the regular church papers was denied them, reviewed the above article from Robie's paper, and then declared that the history was overdone, and that the dose was too big for even the readers of the *Advocate* to swallow. He said the people knew too well the true history of the parties to believe that Abell, Hard, Roberts, McCreery, Stiles, etc., were "incarnate devils," and Carlton, Robie, Fuller, Wentworth and Company were "angels of light." He expressed the opinion that if anything half as slanderous as that article had been proved against the expelled ministers, their expulsion would have been richly merited.[\[121\]](#)

The Rev. Elias Bowen was a minister of the Oneida Conference, in high standing among all his ministerial brethren. For twenty-four years he filled the office of presiding elder, seven times was delegate from his Conference to the General Conference of the M. E. Church, and was the author of the three hundred and seventeen page book on *Slavery in the Methodist Episcopal Church*. Dr. Bowen took up his pen in defense of Mr. Roberts and his associates before he was personally acquainted with some of them. He stated years later that he believed himself better qualified to judge with reference to the validity of the accusation of fanaticism and enthusiasm than those who brought the accusation. He attended the camp meetings and General Quarterly Meetings against which a special outcry had been made as "hot beds of fanaticism," and had sat under the preaching of some of the men year after year. He said he knew

what Methodism was, since some of the men among whom he was numbered had been converted and joined the church under the labors of her honored pioneers. We speak advisedly," he commented, "when we say that the charge brought against Roberts and McCreery, and the class of preachers denominated 'Nazarites,' of promoting fanaticism, is utterly false and groundless. They were simply trying to get others in earnest to gain heaven. They were not attacking the church but were its defenders."[\[122\]](#) Dr. Bowen declared that they preached the doctrines of the Methodist Church which he had heard preached years before. He said the Regency ministers professed to preach the doctrine of holiness, but they had yet to hear of the first person who had, in recent years, experienced this blessing through their instrumentality. It was his opinion that they had lowered the standard of justification below what the Scriptures and Methodism warranted.[\[123\]](#)

There seems to be little doubt that Mr. Roberts and his associates believed that they were taking their position for the truth, that their opponents in the Conference were of a liberal stamp, and that they themselves were suffering the inevitable persecution that comes to those who stand for the truth.

5. Attitudes of the Conference Majority

On the other hand, there were accusations of various kinds which were brought against this group in the minority. The editor of the Advocate published a statement to the effect that it was one of the merest shams which had ever been perpetrated on any people to represent and to seek to convince others that the Genesee Conference, just out of spite to spiritual religion, Christian holiness, old-fashioned Methodism, or any such like truth or feeling, pursued, persecuted and expelled from its body two of its members. Had they done so, from any such cause or motive, they would have deserved the reprobation of enlightened people either in the church or out of it. But the case was otherwise in all respects. The Conference had been slandered time and again by the two leaders of "the notorious party," and one of them had been publicly reproved by the Bishop for his misdemeanor, but still had persisted in his accustomed course of defamation and scandal until the Conference could bear with his impunity no longer, and therefore expelled him, as they did, also, his most intimate associate in guilt. He was surprised that even a few among the membership were so easily led to place a false construction on the doings of the Conference, and attribute to it motives which never had existence either in thought or feeling.[\[124\]](#)

It is interesting to read and evaluate a statement of the account in Conable's *History*, remembering that Conable was one of the "Regency" men and as such, opposed to the Nazarites. His history of the Genesee Conference was given official status by a vote of the Conference. Mr. Conable recounted that Naziritism assumed that the great body of the Conference and a large portion of the membership of the church had backslidden from the spirit of essential Methodism; that the Discipline of the church had become a dead letter; that on the subject of "Scriptural holiness," understood in the Wesleyan sense, many had become heterodox, and many more were grievously derelict; and that general worldliness, extravagance and vanity had spoiled and made desolate the once fair heritage of Zion. They seemed to make no allowance whatever he said for any change in the modes of thinking, customs, or circumstances of society within the last fifty years, and to quite overlook the difference between what was essential and what was merely incidental to Methodism and Christian experience. They seemed to regard every change as necessarily an

evil. They proposed to bring Methodism back to those accidental as well as essential peculiarities which marked its earliest years. In relation to the rules of discipline requiring attendance on class, requiring family prayer, quarterly fasts, and singing by the congregation, and in relation to the custom of free seats in their houses of worship, attendance from abroad upon love feasts, camp meetings, and simplicity and spirituality generally In Worship, Naziritism represented the Genesee ministers and members generally as so far fallen away that extraordinary measures must speedily be instituted in order to secure the restoration of such observances and customs or all would be lost. The leading men of the Conference in high positions, and the majority of the body, the Nazarites thought must be reformed, and the membership of the church generally. At that point, the historian betrayed something of feeling when he said, ". . . . these were the men, of all others, to comprehend the situation, and with supernatural courage and 'audacious hope' to undertake the mighty work. Were not these the true sons of John Wesley?" [\[125\]](#) Conable commented further that as the views and representations of Naziritism became known they were regarded by the body of the ministry and the better part of the membership as in some particulars extreme and also slanderous. The policy instituted in order to accomplish the "great reform," even conceding the representations to be truthful, were looked upon as extra-disciplinary and unwarrantable. He admitted that the ministers were not as entirely devoted to their work as they ought to be; that many of them were more or less delinquent in duty and wanting in spirituality and living in conformity to the world, that there was occasion for solicitude in the state of the church and the tendencies of the times, and a pressing need of urging the people in the way of Methodistic holy living. He concluded:

But was there really less rational piety in the Church than ever before? And were the backslidings of young converts and of old professors more grievous than ever in our history? Men of God, self-sacrificing, long tried, and honored watchmen upon the walls of our Zion, whose names are too deeply inwritten in our memories and hearts to require specification, where were ye then? [\[126\]](#)

Mr. Conable further stated that although there were two extreme groups, those whose specialty was "entire holiness" and who emphasized plainness in dress, and those who were living in the very tip of fashion, loaded with superfluous ornaments and who were very far from holiness, yet there was a third class who were eminent for intelligent piety who made up the strength of the church. He accused this Nazirite organization of choosing a former Mason for their first president, and of making a chivalrous attack on such articles of dress as were not common in the church half a century ago. He said that they were also guilty of physical manifestations of a violent character, so that scenes often occurred which were a disgrace to a civilized community, to say nothing of the refinements of a pure religion. [\[127\]](#)

Mr. Conable continued his account with a direct accusation against them as policy men, manipulating for place. He said the leaders of the minority faction took advantage of the deep interest felt by many on the subject of holiness, and the opposition of some to secret societies, and the antislavery agitation, somewhat sectional as to the Conference territory These men, he asserted, were endeavoring to gain for themselves, and for some who were just coming into the Conference, the special favor of the people and the positions which those who were in the Conference long before them had so fairly earned, and were still occupying efficiently and successfully. "And surely it was stupendous nonsense to suppose that

these factitious characters were superior examples of Methodistic piety, purity, and philanthropy."[\[128\]](#) The tide of feeling evidently ran so high that doubtful aspersions in writing are found of which Mr. Conable's is an example. It is necessary to an impartial conclusion that the viewpoint of each group be considered and the salient facts from each be weighed.

6. Conclusion

When word of Mr. Roberts' expulsion reached Mrs. Lane, whose husband had been for so many years in charge of Methodist publications, she wrote to the Roberts a letter which might form the basis for further study and evaluation. She first encouraged the Roberts by saying, "Grace, almighty grace will sustain you, but grace will not prevent you from feeling as you have never before felt."[\[129\]](#) Other words of encouragement followed, but the part of her epistle which seemed particularly pertinent continues:

It is dreadful to me to harbor the thought that the Church is corrupt, and then the question comes up, what has Mr. Roberts done, that he should be so injured. I love the Church and feel we all owe much to the Church, and I have asked the question mentally, would the Bishops and all the Church turn against Mr. Roberts and suffer his usefulness to be hindered, and himself and family thrown upon the world without support, when he has tried to do good, and to build up the waste places of Zion. If the 'fly sheet' (New School Methodism) was the trouble, was it not before the world nearly two years since, and if Mr. Roberts was unfit to be in the Church, why was the matter left for so long a time? and why was he chosen to preach Bro. Kendal's funeral sermon (at Conference, on the eve of his expulsion), and that unanimously, if he was unfit even for Church membership?[\[130\]](#)

She concluded by exhorting the Roberts to "cleave to the Church though it has smitten you." She continued, "Mr. Roberts must come back, and stand on Zion's walls, and there do battle for God and souls."[\[131\]](#) She urged him not to think of an independent organization because it would do harm. She exhorted him to wait quietly and see the salvation of God. In Mrs. Lane's advice to "quietly wait" she was probably thinking of the appeal which Mr. Roberts had made to the General Conference which was less than two years away. Mrs. Lane felt keenly the struggle between loyalty to the organization, hardly supposing that the Church with its bishops could go wrong, and yet wondering from what she knew of the problem why such an action would be taken.

This is the initial quandary to which the human mind comes in weighing the evidence presented by both sides of the controversy. If one reads the *Northern Independent*, it was an "inquisition;" if one reads the *Northern Christian Advocate*, it was a matter of necessary church administration. Final conclusions will have to grow out of a consideration of all the factors involved in this seeming impasse.

ENDNOTES

[\[*\]](#) See Appendix. ([Go to The Appendix](#))

- [1] Letter from B. T. Roberts to Bishop T. A. Morris, written from Albion, New York, November 15, 1856. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [2] Letter from Dr. J. W. Redfield, Jefferson, Wisconsin, to William Kendall and wife, December 20, 1856. Recorded in J. G. Terrill's *Life of Rev. John W. Redfield*. M. D. (Chicago, Illinois: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1899), pp. 313.314.
- [3] Ibid.
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] B. T. Roberts, *Holiness Teachings*. compiled from editorial writings, by B. H. Roberts (North Chili, New York: Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1893). pp. 199, 200.
- [6] Ibid.. p.197.
- [7] Quoted by B. T. Roberts, *Why Another Sect*, (Rochester, New York: The Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1879). pp. 114, 115, 116, 117. Copied from the *Medina Tribune*, (September 11, 1856).
- [8] Ibid., p.114.
- [9] Ibid.
- [10] Ibid.
- [11] Ibid.
- [12] John Robie, *Buffalo Advocate*, (September 11, 1856), p.2.
- [13] Ibid.
- [14] "Creed Tests of Orthodox Piety," *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, (April 16, 1857), p.2 (No signature).
- [15] Ibid.
- [16] "Christianity a Religion of Beneficence Rather Than of Devotion." *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, (May 14, 1857), p.2 (No signature).

[17] Ibid.

[18] B. T. Roberts, "New School Methodism," Northern Independent. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, Why, Another Sect. pp. 85-96.

[19] B. T. Roberts. "New School Methodism." Quoted by Wilson T. Rogue, History of the Free Methodist Church, (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1915). I, 98102.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] "Christianity a Religion of Beneficence Rather than of Devotion," Buffalo Christian Advocate, (May 14, 1857), p. 2.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Letter from H. G. Hibbard. Quoted by B. '3'. Roberts In Why, Another' Sect. Rochester, New York: The Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1879), p.97.

[27] Ibid.

[28] B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, (Rochester. New York: The Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1879). p.98.

[29] Letter from w. C. Kendall, The Earnest Christian, (July, 1867), pp. 7, 8.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Buffalo Advocate, (April 18, 1857).

[33] B T. Roberts, Why Another Sect. (Rochester, New York.' The Earnest Christian Publishing House,

1879), p.147.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., p.148.

[36] Ibid., p.66; also Elias Bowen. D. D., History of the Origin of the Free Methodist Church, (Rochester, New York. 1871). p.52.

[37] B. T. Roberts, Why Another, Sect, p.67.

[38] Ibid., p.68

[39] S. K. 3. Chesbrough, "Defense of Rev. B. T. Roberts, A.M.. before the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church," (From notes and testimony taken at trial). (Buffalo: Clapp, Matthews and Co.'s Steam Printing House. 1858), p.15.

[40] Bliss Bowen, D. D., History' of the Origin of the Free Methodist Church. p.52.

[41] Ibid., p.148.

[42] Elias Bowen, D. D., History of the Origin of the Free Methodist Church, (Rochester. New York; 1871), p.299.

[43] C. D. Burlingham. Outline History, p.40. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. Why Another Sect, p.177.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Statement of James Fuller. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.138.

[46] Ibid., p.138.

[47] Letter from Kendall to Roberts. Quoted by J. G. Terrill, Life of John Wesley Redfield, M. D.. (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1899). p.324.

[48] Ibid., p.325.

[49] Ibid., p. 325.

[50] Ibid., p.325.

[51] Ibid., p.328.

[52] "The Know-Nothing Party." Americana Encyclopedia, Vol. 18, 1941 edition.

[53] B. T. Roberts. Northern Independent, Vol. 13, (January 20, 1859), pp. 94, 95.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Northern Independent, Vol. III, (June 20, 1859), p.2.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, (Rochester, New York: The Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1879), p. 155.

[59] Ibid.

[60] S. K. J. Chesbrough. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter. Ellen Lois Roberts, Life and Writings, (Chicago: Woman's Missionary Society, Free Methodist Church, 1926), p. 51.

[61] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his father, October 1.1857. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.142.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Statement of B. T. Robert,, to his, wife. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, Benjamin Titus Roberts, p.143.

[64] B. H. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 143, 144.

[65] G. W. Carl, The Free Methodist, (August 9, 1910), pp. 504,505.

[66] B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.144.

[67] B. T. Roberts. Why Another Sect, (Rochester, New York: The Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1879), p.156.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, February 2, 1851. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit., p.56.

[70] B. T. Roberts. Why Another Sect. (Rochester, New York: The Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1879). p.76.

[71] Ibid., p.76; also "William C. Kendall, A.M.," The Earnest Christian, (December, 1861), 374.

[72] Rev. 7:13.

[73] Diary of Mrs. Roberts. February 10, 1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit.. p.56.

[74] Ibid. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit., p.57.

[75] Ibid. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit., p.57.

[76] 5. K. J. Chesbrough, The Free Methodist, (February 20, 1900), p.2. Speech reported by Hannah Jacobson, stenographer.

[77] Letter from Mrs. George Lane to Mrs. Roberts. April 21, 1867. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[78] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his father, March 1, 1858. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit.. pp. 145, 146.

[79] Ibid.. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.146.

[80] Ibid.

[81] J. G. Terrill, Life of John W. Redfield, M. D., (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1899), p.343.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Letter from Dr. Redfield to Mrs. Kendall, August 25, 1858. Quoted by J. G. Terrill, op. cit., p.344.

[84] Ibid.

- [85] S. K. J. Chesbrough, "Pekin, Genesee Conference," Northern Independent, vol. III. (October 14, 1858), 9.
- [86] B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect. p.100.
- [87] Estes Pamphlet. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p.182.
- [88] Ibid. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p.186.
- [89] Ibid. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p.168.
- [90] B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p.168.
- [91] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, July, 1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit., p.62.
- [92] Ibid.
- [93] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, August 29.1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit., p. 62.
- [94] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, October 1, 1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit., p.83.
- [95] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, October 3.1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit., p.83.
- [96] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, October 4, 1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit., p.63.
- [97] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, October 8, 1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter. op. cit., p.63.
- [98] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, October 9, 1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit., p.64. Scripture verse: II Tim. 2:3.
- [99] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, October 9.1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter. op. cit., p.64.
- [100] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, October 11, 1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter. op. cit.. p. 64.
- [101] Ibid.
- [102] B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p.171. (Quoted from Hobart's Report, page 87. Day vs. Savage.)

[103] Personal Papers by Roberts, found among the letters and papers of the Roberts family.

[104] J. G. Terrill, The Life of Rev. John W. Redfield, M. D., (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1899), p.344, (footnote).

[105] S. K. J. Chesbrough, Defence of Rev. B. T. Roberts, A. M. before the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, p.44.

[106] Ibid., p.45.

[107] Ibid., p.40.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., p.51.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

[112] S. K. J. Chesbrough. Defence of Rev. B. T. Roberts, A. M., before the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. (Notes and Testimony taken at the trial). (Buffalo: Clapp. Matthews and Co.'s Steam Printing House, 1858), pp. 54, 55.

[113] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, October 20.1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit., p.66.

[114] B. T. Roberts. Why Another Sect, p.176.

[115] Official Minutes of the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, (1858), p.189.

[116] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, October 21, 1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit., p.86.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, October 22,1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit.. p.67.

[119] Loren Stiles. Northern Independent, Vol. III, (February 3. 1859), 1.

[120] C. D. Burlingham, Outline History, p. 40, sec. 21. (Quoted In Why Another Sect, p.177).

[121] John Robie, Buffalo Advocate. Reviewed and Quoted by William Hoamer. Northern Independent, Vol. III, (November 18. 1858), 58. To be found at Garrett Biblical Institute. Evanston. Illinois.

[122] Elias Bowen, D. D., Origin of the Free Methodist Church, p.185.

[123] Ibid.

[124] John Roble, "Nazarites," Buffalo Advocate, (January 15, 1859), p.2.

[125] F. W. Conable, op. cit., p. 637.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Letter from Mrs. George Lane, Wilkes Barre to Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, October 28, 1858. Among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid.

EARNEST CHRISTIAN

APPENDIX

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LETTER FROM B. T. ROBERTS TO THE REVEREND T. A. MORRIS,
BISHOP OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Albion, New York November 15, 1856
Rev. T. A. Morris Bishop of the M. E. Church

Dear Father,

Your very kind letter, assigning the reasons why you could not retransfer Rev. L. Stiles to this Conference, and reappoint him to the Genesee District was duly received. We are satisfied that in this, as in all your official actions, you were actuated by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the welfare of the Church over which a kind Providence has given you with your worthy colleagues the superintendence. I do not write to complain of this decision. It may have been the best that could have been made, though present appearance indicates that it will not be promotive of either the peace of this Conference or the prosperity of the district. You seem to think that the difficulties of our Conference are satisfactorily adjusted. Permit me to say that, in my opinion they were never greater or more serious than at the present time. The Conference is divided. Two distinct parties exist. With the one or the other every preacher is in sympathy. A few individuals may affect to stand aloof, and serenely looking down from their imaginary Olympus may assume to act the part of arbiters between the contending factions. These assumptions are too glaring to impose on any save those who make them. The division is not a personal one. It has no personal animosities for its basis. On the contrary, there exists, in the main, a good understanding between those who are found arranged on opposite sides. With few exceptions I believe the preachers cherish mutually confidence and brotherly love.

Nor is this disagreement occasioned wholly by the connection of some with secret societies. Such connection may and doubtless does tend to produce alienation of feeling. Those bound together by the extra ties of a secret brotherhood with its peculiar interests, its attractive mysteries, and its special recognitions, will, according to the inflexible laws which govern the affections, feel a stronger sympathy for each other, than for those to whom they are bound only by the common ties that unite together ministers and men of the same communion. They may not be aware of the existence of this partiality, or if they are, they may struggle against it. But here, as elsewhere, the law of affinity will prevail. This connection with secret societies, I regard both as an effect and a cause of the division among us. Were it not for Masonry and Odd Fellowship the party leaning on these societies for support would be too insignificant in numbers to effect much mischief. And, on the other hand, many by belonging to these

societies are drawn into measures which, if left alone, they would never tolerate. Still, if nothing else kept us apart we might come together. The conviction of the necessity of union in order to promote the cause of Christ, is so deeply felt, that, if it could be purchased by a total and eternal separation from all secular societies, there are but few among us who would not be willing to make the sacrifice. But the REAL DIFFICULTY LIES DEEPER. It is far more perplexing. Conference resolutions cannot reach it. Committees of adjustment and pacification cannot come near it. Nothing short of the Almighty power of the Holy Spirit can ever bring us together. He alone can give us that unanimity of views without which unanimity of action cannot long prevail.

The difference among us is fundamental. It does not relate to things indifferent but to those of the most vital importance. It involves nothing less than the nature itself of Christianity. Our brethren from whom we differ, have a theory of religion as yet clearly defined in the minds of but a few, and therefore not generally under-stood. Some who are laboring to carry it out hardly know themselves what they are aiming at. They may honestly doubt whether their leaders hold to such views of religion as I believe they do. This theory is to the effect, that Christianity changes, that we are not to expect it to present the same manifestations now that it did in a less refined age, that we are in the habit of laying too much stress upon mere experience, that it is now in a transition state, and is about to assume the benevolent form. According to this view, the model Christian is one who leads a moral, respectable and fashionable life, and contributes liberally to the various objects of benevolence. Any ado about the salvation of souls is not to be tolerated. What we call religion they call fanaticism; what they denominate Christianity, we consider formalism.

Differing thus in our views of religion, we necessarily differ in our measures for its promotion. They build stock churches and furnish them with pews to accommodate select congregations, and with organs, melodions, violins and professional singers to execute difficult pieces of music for the entertainment of fashionable audiences. We favor free churches, congregational singing, and spirituality, simplicity and fervency in worship. We endeavor to promote revivals, such as we remember to have seen in the days of our childhood, under the labors of the fathers; such as have made Methodism the leading denomination of the land. Their most talented men I have never known guilty of any such irregularity as being responsible for a revival. We inculcate upon all the necessity of self-denial, non-conformity to the world, purity of heart and holiness of life: they ridicule singularity, encourage by their silence, and in some cases by their own example, and that of their wives and daughters "the putting on of gold and costly apparel," and treat with distrust all professions of deep Christian experience. When we desire to raise money for the benefit of the church we appeal to the love the people bear to Christ; they for this purpose have recourse to the sale of pews to the highest bidder, to parties of pleasure, oyster suppers, fairs, grab bags and lotteries. In short we rely practically upon the agency of the Holy Spirit for the building up of the Church of God; they appear to us to depend upon the favor of Secret Societies, the patronage of the worldly and the various artifices of human policy.

If this diversity of opinion and of practice among the ministers of our denomination, were confined to this Conference, it would be comparatively unimportant. But unmistakable indications show that prosperity is producing upon us, as a denomination, the same intoxicating effect that it too often does upon individuals and societies. The change by the General Conference of 1852 in the rule of Discipline

requiring that "All our Houses of Worship should be built plain and with free seats," and that of the last General Conference, in the rule respecting dress, show that there are already too many among us, who would take down the barriers that have hitherto separated us from the world. The fact that the removal is gradual, so as not to excite too much attention and commotion, renders it none the less alarming. [\[1\]](#)

[1](#) Letter from B. T. Roberts to Bishop T. A. Morris of the Methodist Episcopal Church, written from Albion, New York, November 15, 1856. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family and never before published.

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EARNEST CHRISTIAN

CHAPTER V

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A. ROBERTS' DECISION AFTER CONFERENCE OF 1858

1. Joined Methodist Church on Probation

After the expulsion of Mr. Roberts from the Conference and Church, he was left to a choice of awaiting his appeal to the General Conference, almost two years away, or of continuing his preaching activities. The personal appeal of Mrs. Lane to wait quietly was averse to his judgment. Believing that as a minister of Jesus Christ he should not remain in idleness, he decided to take such a course as would give some validity to his ministry. Years later he stated his predicament thus:

Each of us (McCreery and himself) gave notice of an appeal to the General Conference. But what should we do in the mean while? We were both twenty years younger than we are now, full of life, and energy, and anxious to save our own souls and as many others as we could. We did not doubt that the General Conference would make things right. But we did not like to stand idly waiting two long years. We took advice of men of age and experience, in whom we had confidence.[\[1\]](#)

The Rev. Amos Hard wrote to Roberts that Bishop Janes had answered a question he had propounded to him at the Genesee Annual Conference of 1858, "Would it affect his appeal if an expelled member should join our church on probation?"[\[2\]](#) Bishop Janes replied, "I do not think it would."[\[3\]](#) The Rev. William Reddy, a presiding elder in the Oneida Conference advised Mr. Roberts not to join the church on probation, but did advise him to

go on and preach and labor for souls, and promote the work of the Lord, under the avowed declaration that you do it, not as by the authority of the M. E. Church, but by virtue of your divine call.[\[4\]](#)

He thought Roberts should not exercise the functions of a minister, such as performing marriages or baptizing, for that implied church authority and order, but that he should keep himself from appearing to set himself in array against the authority and order of the M. E. Church, while he claimed the constitutional rights of an expelled member.

But because others advised an opposite course with reference to church membership, and because he thought this course would indicate his loyalty to the church and at the same time shield him from censure as he continued to preach, and because he accepted Bishop Baker's construction of the law which allowed an expelled member to be received on trial if the society became convinced of the innocence of the expelled member, Mr. Roberts had his name entered at Pekin as a probationer. He said, "The society at Pekin, which I served last, were convinced of my innocence, and unanimously received me on trial . . ."[\[5\]](#) Mr. McCreery was received on probation, also unanimously, by the society at Spencerport. Then another action, later contested, followed. Each of these men received from the societies which they had respectively joined, a license to exhort.

Mrs. Roberts did not agree with her husband's course in joining the church again on probation. She stated in her diary, "Mr. Roberts is away. He joined the church on probation which seemed like child's play to me. I doubt whether the Lord was pleased with it."[\[6\]](#)

2. Course of Roberts Determined by Church Law

Bishop Baker, who was considered an authority on church law, wrote in part as follows to the Rev. C. D. Burlingham:

Most of the Bishops present expressed, in substance, the sentiment, that the proper course for an expelled member who had taken an appeal was, to remain as he was, until the appellate Court had acted on his case. My private opinion is, that the action of the Pekin society was not in harmony with our usage. Brother R. has appealed to the General Conference, the only body competent to examine the case and reverse or confirm the decision. Now for a society to act without a legal hearing of the case, or any new facts developed, strikes one as very unusual. I think it would have been better to let the matter take the disciplinary course. I think also that the office which Brother R. holds, according to your exposition of it, is an unauthorized one by the discipline and usage of the church. An exhorter who is not a member of the Quarterly Conference is an anomaly as I judge. And the relation of a probationer who is requested to speak to the members in class, in a private church capacity is not analogous to giving a probationer a license to hold public meetings, where or when the church is held responsible for those meetings. At least so it seems to me. May divine wisdom guide us.[\[7\]](#)

The question of church membership for Mr. Roberts was settled by the decision of Bishop Baker, and in accordance with it, Mr. Roberts published in the Northern Independent of March, 1859 the following statement:

It seems to be a question among the doctors, whether I belong to the church or not. I did the best I could to stay in; and when I was thrust out without my fault, I tried to get back, and really thought I had accomplished it, but the president of a recent church trial, which trials, by and by, are becoming quite numerous in the Genesee Conference, decided that I was not a member even on 'probation.' As this was a 'judicial decision,' and 'act of administration,' of course it settles the question. But in or out, I trust I may still be permitted to entertain a 'desire to flee from the wrath to come.' Our excellent discipline specifies as among the fruits of this desire, 'instructing, reproving, and exhorting all we have any intercourse with.' This, then, is what I am doing. The Lord has opened a wide door, into which I have entered. I disclaim all authority from man, but simply 'instruct, reprove, and exhort,' because I believe he has called me to it, and he blesses me in it. Everywhere we go, large and attentive congregations listen to the word with apparently deep interest.[\[8\]](#)

A letter written to his father previous to the time that he joined the church on probation, indicates that Roberts was weighing the matter of procedure. He told his father that he had received the letter from the Rev. William Reddy advising him not to join on probation, acknowledged that Reddy was a leading man in the church, enjoying a high degree of confidence with the bishops, and was regarded as a safe counselor. He then added

I wish to act safely, and judiciously; and if I take a little time to make up my mind what to do, it will be better than to make a misstep. I am seeking the wisdom that comes from above I believe God will overrule all to His glory and my good.[\[9\]](#)

Whatever judgment may be formed of the wisdom of his course, it would appear he wanted to do the thing that would reinstate him in the Church and Conference.

B. HOME ADJUSTMENTS

1. Various Offers

Going back to the predicament of facing a future with no home, among the several alternatives that came to them, Mrs. Lane offered them her home in Mt. Holly, New Jersey. Writing to his father concerning their plight, Mr. Roberts said, "One evidence I have that this has come upon us because we have tried to walk in the narrow way ourselves, and to get others to do the same, is that He puts it into the hearts of His people to be so very kind to us."[\[10\]](#) He went on to say they were overwhelmed with kindness. A "Brother Bascom," a merchant in Allegheny, and his wife wrote them urging them to go there, and offering to give them the best house in the village to live in, not as a gift but rent-free. He also mentioned an "affectionate letter" from Mrs. Lane, offering their home and furniture, but the people in Pekin "will not listen to our going away."[\[11\]](#) He mentioned that the Chesbroughs wanted them to take part of their house for the winter at least, but they decided to store their belongings for the present at the Chesbrough home and then wait until they felt they knew the will of the Lord for them.[\[12\]](#)

Mrs. Roberts wrote to her father-in-law on November 13th that they were "indeed pilgrims and sojourners;"[\[13\]](#) that they had placed their goods in Chesbrough's barn, and that their little family was scattered among the people. They had not yet decided she said, where the Lord would have them pitch their tent. "If we knew where to go," she mourned, "we have no furniture, and as yet nothing to buy any with."[\[14\]](#) It will be remembered that in those days, the parsonages were furnished, and when the Roberts did occasionally buy some furniture to complement what was already in the house, it was sold before they moved to the following circuit. Then, they decided to live for a time in part of the Chesbrough home. She confided some of her own reactions to her father-in-law thus:

I have felt convinced, for the last year especially, that the Lord was preparing Benjamin to work for Him as he had never done before. I have felt assured the Spirit of God was urging him to stand boldly in the front ranks in defence of the whole Gospel of Christ, and if he

follows on in the Divine order he will have a closer contest with the enemy, more glorious victory, more souls, and more scandal and reproach, but in the end a more abundant entrance, a brighter crown, and a place nearer the throne. A fire is being kindled that is going to burn on, a stone set in motion that will roll on.[\[15\]](#)

She mentioned the fact that Mr. Roberts had joined the church on probation and had been given an exhorter's license. She recorded that when her husband had been in Buffalo that week, he had met some of the preachers in the book store, told them what he had done and said that if they wanted to hold a protracted meeting on their charge he was ready to go and hold one.[\[16\]](#) On October 22nd, Mrs. Roberts had written in her diary, "These words have been ringing in my ears, 'care of all the churches.' I do not know what it meant, but I am sure it meant something."[\[17\]](#) From this Journal entry, and the letter written to her father-in-law, it would appear that Mrs. Roberts had a sense of "divine guidance" which, so far as can be learned, was not at that time shared by her husband.

While the Roberts were preparing to move into the rooms offered by Mr. Chesbrough, endeavoring to lay a carpet, one of the sons of Mr. Chesbrough was badly injured by a horse and brought to the house unconscious. The physician instructed them that he must have absolute quiet. The carpet was never laid. They prayed and felt that possibly the Lord would not have them remain there. Soon thereafter, Father Chesbrough told them he thought they should go to Buffalo.[\[18\]](#) They had been feeling the same way but they had not been willing to admit it easily, since Buffalo was the center of much of their opposition, and was also the place where the most severe attacks against them had been published in the Buffalo Advocate.

2. Active Service in Interim of Decision

Even while they were pondering a move to Buffalo, a request came to Mr. Roberts inviting him to Brockport, to go and stay two or three, or four weeks and as much longer as he could. If he could go before they moved, to go on right away, but if he would rather wait until after they had moved, so he would not feel in a hurry to close the meeting, that would be all right.[\[19\]](#) During the period when they were trying to come to a decision with reference to their future home, Mr. Roberts engaged in active service. The month of October alone found him at Perry's stone schoolhouse, Yates, Albion, Benton's Corners, Bear Ridge, Brockport and Clarkson. In December he preached at sixteen points, doing most of the traveling on his own horse.[\[20\]](#)

Mrs. Roberts in her diary of November 20 added this bit of information:

We went over with some preparations toward living here, but my heart was not in it. As noise hurts 'Ike' I told Mr. Roberts I thought I had better do no more at present, but go to Albion next week. He thought the same, and light once more began to break into my soul. The load was gone. So I began to see it is not God's will for us to settle here.[\[21\]](#)

Two days later, she recorded in her diary:

Yesterday we went to Bear Ridge. Oh, how good it seemed to hear my husband talk once more, the first time I've heard him since Conference. The Lord let me see, as I thought, where He would have us live.[\[22\]](#)

3. Decision for Buffalo

When Buffalo appeared before her mind's eye, Mrs. Roberts cried, "How could we live there; we've nothing to live on?"[\[23\]](#) The answer came, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."[\[24\]](#) Finally, arrangements were made, and once again they were back in the city where Mr. Roberts had waged an unsuccessful warfare against stock churches.

C. FIRST LAY CONVENTION

During this interim period, when the decision with reference to their home was pending with the Roberts family, the first of the laymen's conventions, which were to become increasingly frequent in different parts of the country, was called. It appears that many had been excited over the expulsions of the late Conference, and Official Boards and Quarterly Conferences in some places passed resolutions, as well as some local papers, both religious and secular, protesting the action.[\[25\]](#)

1. Convention Suggested by Isaac Chesbrough

Finally Mr. Isaac Chesbrough, father of S. K. J. Chesbrough, in whose home the Roberts had been invited to stay, suggested the holding of a convention of representative laymen within the bounds of the Genesee Conference. This man, located at the scene of the last labors of Mr. Roberts in the M. E. Church, was a man of fifty years standing. B. T. Roberts, C. D. Burlingham and S. K. J. Chesbrough discussed in the home of Isaac Chesbrough the advisability of calling that convention.[\[26\]](#)

2. The Session Proper

The proposal for a Laymen's Convention met with favor by a goodly number, and "a call for a convention was made, signed by over one hundred of the leading men of twenty-two circuits and stations. In answer to the call, one hundred and ninety-five leading men, from forty-seven circuits and stations, met at Albion, December 1st, 1858,"[\[27\]](#) in Kingsland Hall. The laymen proceeded to organize, choosing Hon. Abner J. Wood as President, electing seven vice-presidents, and three secretaries. Among the vice-presidents was Isaac Chesbrough, and one of the three secretaries was his son, S. K. J. Chesbrough. The latter was also chairman of a committee of seven on resolutions, among whom one finds the name of George W. Estes. who had reprinted "New School Methodism" with an account of the trial of Roberts, for which Roberts had been expelled. The first session of the Convention was taken up mainly with addresses, and a love-feast followed in the evening. Mrs. Roberts entered in her diary for

that day, "The Laymen's Convention met. A love-feast in the evening; glorious time; God was in our midst."[\[28\]](#)

The second session of the Laymen's Convention the next day set before the entire group the call which had brought them together, in which they charged "a disposition among certain members of the Genesee Conference, to put down, under the name of fanaticism, and other approbrious epithets, what we consider the life and power of our holy Christianity."[\[29\]](#) They protested the expulsion of Roberts and McCreery, for no other reason, as they conceived it, than that they were active and zealous ministers of Christ, and were in favor with the people, and were contending earnestly for those peculiarities in Methodism which have hitherto been essential for their success as a denomination.[\[30\]](#) The "Call" also specified that Isaac C. Kingsley and Loren Stiles, Jr., at the Medina Conference, and C. D. Burlingham at the last Conference, had all been removed from the Cabinet by the machinations of the Regency group. They also charged that many of the laymen had been removed from official relation for no other reason than that they approved the principles advocated by the minority faction.[\[31\]](#)

When the Committee on Resolutions brought in their report, it contained a very decided statement of their conviction of the innocence of the expelled. They regarded the expulsion of Roberts and McCreery as "an act of wicked persecution, calling for the strongest condemnation,"[\[32\]](#) and declared it was a clear violation of "that freedom of speech and of the press, which is guaranteed to all by our free institutions."[\[33\]](#) They also took the position "that the charge brought against Brothers Roberts and McCreery, and the class of preachers denominated 'Nazarites,' of promoting fanaticism, is utterly false and groundless."[\[34\]](#) They furthermore charged the dominant party of keeping out of the Conference young men on probation in the Conference who were not willing to become their tools.[\[35\]](#)

3. The Crux of the Matter

However, the crux of the opposition was not so much in the above declaration, but rather in the position expressed in the report adopted by the Convention:

One patent remedy is within our reach, the power to withhold our supplies. We are satisfied that no matter how strongly we may condemn the course of the Regency faction they will not mend so long as they are sustained. Besides, we cannot in conscience give our money to put down the work of the Lord. Therefore, we wish it distinctly understood, that we cannot pay one farthing to preacher or presiding elder who voted for the expulsion of Brothers Roberts and McCreery, only upon 'contrition, confession, and satisfactory reformation.'[\[36\]](#)

Their theoretic support, from authorities on Methodist Church law, for exercising this monetary check upon the preachers, argued by them there, and by Mr. Roberts later in his book, *Why Another Sect*, did not lessen the impact of this revolutionary action. S. K. J. Chesbrough's report with reference to the framing and formulation of those resolutions is editorially told. He remembered having sat up one night

until three o'clock the next morning discussing them, not knowing what the results would be. lie said, "It was not done in a moment; it was not done in the heat of passion, but there was solemn thought and prayer and understanding."[\[37\]](#) These words came from the man who was secretary of the Laymen's Convention, and as such, read the resolutions.

Probably the encouragement given to Roberts and McCreery by this lay movement, expressing the utmost confidence in them and ranking them as among the "most pure and able ministers of the New Testament,"[\[38\]](#) strengthened them in the pursuit of what seemed to their opposing brethren as an independent ministry. Moreover, giving official sanction of the Laymen's Convention to these two men by recommending that they "travel at large" and "labor as opportunity presents, for the promoting of the work of God and the salvation of souls"[\[39\]](#) gave weight to their ministry among the laity of the Conference which they could not have otherwise had.

4. Repercussions in the Press

Repercussions from the above Convention came through the editorial pages of the Northern Christian Advocate, as is evidenced from an article Mr. Roberts published in the Northern. Independent. Mr. Roberts argued that in support of the mode of redress adopted by the Laymen's Convention, as they endeavored to show from their quotations on church law, they had "Church authority" on their side. He asked if the editor of the Northern Christian Advocate wished to be understood as opposing their Church polity? Dr. Stevens, for whose wisdom he had such profound respect, had said the people ought to have a check upon the whole machinery. And this check, Dr. Stevens affirmed they had, in their "power" of withholding "pecuniary supplies."[\[40\]](#) And now, Roberts continued, because the people had used that power, that editor had read them out of the Church, and had stated that "they belong to a Convention and not to the M. E. Church!"[\[41\]](#) Then Mr. Roberts pressed the point, made by the editor of the Northern Christian Advocate that those laymen were no longer Methodists but members of a Convention, on the basis of the affiliation of the ministers with secret societies, by asking what seemed to him a pertinent question:

What then of the preachers who meet in secret societies? Who receive their support, in part, at least from Masonic and Odd Fellow Lodges? What of those who belong to the Sacred Shield of the Conference? According to the logic of this editor, they are no longer ministers of the M. E. Church, but ministers of a secret society. Then when they assumed to act in Conference, their power being usurped, (they) invalidated their action. Hence, we are still preachers of the M. E. Church in full and regular standing'.[\[42\]](#)

This assertion of the Advocate above "that they belong to a Convention and not to the M. E. Church". had been countered by the men in their Committee on Resolutions, made before the accusation had come out in the Advocate:

We wish to have it distinctly understood that we have not, and never had the slightest intention of leaving the church of our choice, and that we heartily approve of the course of

Brothers Roberts and McCreery in rejoining the church at their first opportunity
Methodists have a better right to be in the M. E. Church than anybody else, and by God's grace, in it we intend to remain.[\[43\]](#)

Their assertion that "the farcical cry of disunion and secession is the artful production of designing men" was in part confirmed in future years, Mr. Roberts asserted, by the fact that most of these same men remained with the Methodist Episcopal Church.[\[44\]](#)

Mr. Robie, editor of the Buffalo Advocate, classed the Convention as subversive, and charged that their action would lead "either to dismemberment, or to the destruction of government."[\[45\]](#) He wrote strongly against "the terror of starvation which was held over the head of each ecclesiastical juror who voted to their displeasure," and then asked:

Is this their idea of liberty? Is this 'old line Methodism'? What preacher, who is in the power of such a people will hereafter dare to vote as a juror without first consulting them, only as he does it with his life in his hand, or at the peril of his substance. It is not the money we care for but the principle. The Genesee Conference will hereafter know the costs of acting on their own solemn convictions, if they are in the power of such men.[\[46\]](#)

In the second place, Mr. Robie objected to their "determined policy of action, adverse to the judgment of their highest tribunal."[\[47\]](#) He likewise charged that these men were "tried and expelled for libel, fully proved"[\[48\]](#) although, he averred, this fact was kept out of sight. He denied what the Convention asserted that in reality these men were tried for promoting fanaticism. He stated rather "it was not for fanaticism that they were tried They were tried and expelled for libel, fully proved, and hence the charge was for unchristian and immoral conduct, for it was both, if we have any regard to the standards of Civil or Ecclesiastical Courts."[\[49\]](#) This fact, Mr. Robie said, had been steadily concealed from the public eye in all their organs, and a false issue had been presented. He claimed that both Roberts and McCreery had circulated at wholesale, documents in which it was charged that the majority of the Genesee Conference considered bankruptcies and adulteries as venal (that is trivial) offences, and that they voted into the Conference a man who had performed what they called a lascivious act; that a brother in the Conference had been "efficient in pleading men to hell for the crime of preaching and writing the truth." These are specimens, he cited, of the items which were the just ground of grievances, and for which trial and expulsion took place, and yet the Albion Convention, made up of professedly holy men, commencing with a love feast, unanimously said all these clearly proved, did not constitute an offense deserving of censure.[\[50\]](#)

Mr. Robie also reacted against the Laymen's Convention for sending Roberts and McCreery for work at large. He wrote:

They are depending solely upon the fact of their expulsion to give them notoriety and consideration: for, they have nothing beside this, upon which to rely in their endeavor to

gain notoriety and consideration. They can not expect to attract the notice and secure the regards of the people, by the display of superior talents. We do not believe that even their egotism could lead them to such a depth of insane self delusion. No more can they by the eminent usefulness of their past lives, or the prestige of place and position heretofore occupied by them.[\[51\]](#)

Then he proceeded to an item of defense from the charges made against the Methodist Church by saying

There is not one who voted for the condemnation of these men whose Christian and ministerial character does not stand as fair before the world as did theirs before they were tried and convicted (convicted by their peers of immorality), against the solemnly recorded votes of sixty or seventy ministers whose character is unimpeached.[\[52\]](#)

He further inveighed against those men for branding the working majority of the Conference as corrupt men united together by unholy ties and affinities, and banded together to crush out all who may rise to oppose their wicked machinations In order to convince the world that the Genesee Conference was indeed a band of corrupt inquisitors, he thought something else would have to be proved and shown, beside the bare fact that two thirds of its members took legal and constitutional measures "to rid themselves of two of their number who were plainly guilty of libel."[\[53\]](#)

Then Mr. Robie went to the heart of the problem when he charged that they who had been expelled, and their sympathizers, falsely assumed and asserted that the majority of the Genesee Conference were opposed to the life and power of religion; for they said they were expelled because they preached holiness, and were in favor of spiritual Christianity. He asked if that were not a remarkable state of things, and not to be credited without indubitable proof, that a Conference of Methodist preachers would be opposed to the life and power of religion and actually cut off those of its members most earnest and successful in promoting the work of holiness because they are thus earnest and successful. He claimed their ministers were old-fashioned and were successful, and he could not believe that in their old age, the conservative period of life, they had contracted a hatred of "Old-fashioned Methodism." "It is astounding and especially is our wonder further excited to learn," continued Mr. Robie,

that the championship and defence of 'old line Methodism' should be, by common consent of its particular friends committed to such ancient Apostles as the brace aforementioned . . . It will probably be some time before their names shall be duly enrolled in the standard 'Book of Martyrs.'[\[54\]](#)

The recommendation of the Laymen's Convention for Roberts and McCreery to travel at large in religious work was accompanied by a promise of one thousand dollars for Roberts and six hundred dollars for McCreery.[\[55\]](#) Mr. Roberts recounted that in accordance with the recommendation of that convention, he and

Mr. McCreery went throughout the Conference holding meetings and laboring as providence opened the

way.[\[56\]](#) Mr. Roberts said that they were careful to state that they claimed no authority from the M. E. Church to hold meetings, that they did so at the call of Christ, and on their own responsibility as men and as Christians. This disclaim of having church authority Mr. Roberts announced publicly, and also acknowledged the fact of his official severance, as has been previously noted, in the Northern Independent.[\[57\]](#)

5. Expulsions

(a) Result of Actions of Laymen's Convention. There were certain to be serious consequences within the body politic of the church when the virus of party feeling was so plainly evident. What did result was the expulsion of members of the Methodist Church in considerable numbers. Probably that particular step on the part of the Conference was instrumental in creating more sympathy for the minority group than any other one action as indicated by the fifteen hundred members who petitioned the General Conference for redress of grievances. Besides, it created a lay group who were not only voluntarily committed, as were those in the Lay Convention, to the support of Roberts and McCreery, but also threw them into the same camp of outsiders, which no doubt aided in precipitating the new organization. Mr. Roberts asserted, "To have attended the Albion Convention was held to be a crime sufficient for expulsion To expel members and read them out as withdrawn without their consent became the order of the day." Dr. Elias Bowen, in his work published in 1871 stated that many had already been expelled from the church, ostensibly for something else, but really for their neglect or refusal to support "a Christless, persecuting ministry." Of late, however, he said the "guise" had been thrown off, and members had been expelled "for the avowed reason that they declined to support the preachers who had been placed over them by the Conference."[\[58\]\[59\]\[60\]\[61\]\[62\]\[63\]\[64\]\[65\]\[66\]\[67\]](#) So much feeling was stirred over the issue of expulsion of lay members that the Olean Advertiser, a secular paper, carried an article in protest of the action of expelling James H. Brooks, one of the substantial members of the Methodist Episcopal Church of that city.[\[68\]](#) There is not space to list the various instances of these expulsions throughout the area, but only to make mention that expulsions were not infrequent.

(b) Reactions of Hosmer, Editor of Northern Independent. Mr. Hosmer discussed in his paper the matter of expulsions as of "very great moment, because it clearly involved the right of the laity to assemble for the redress of grievances."[\[69\]](#) He continued that if attendance on such meetings was to be construed into a crime, or, if words spoken there were to be prosecuted under the grave head of "contumacy," "slander," "sowing discord," etc.; then whatever might happen, the church laymen must be silent on pain of expulsion. Such a condition of things would be nothing better, he opined, than now falls to the lot of "the deluded votaries of the Catholic Church."[\[70\]](#) He concluded with a statement of his belief that these "ecclesiastical decapitations" were "the worst kind of murder," and that slavery would demand in other Conferences a repetition of the scenes enacted in the Genesee Conference.[\[71\]](#)

(c) Expulsions in the "West." Mr. Roberts referred at some length to the development of the same conditions in the state of Illinois, then called the "West."[\[72\]](#) Mr. Edward Payson Hart, who many years afterward became bishop of the new church, gave a homely account of the development of similar

difficulties in the state of Illinois in the early days, and in it recounted the case of Father Bishop, whose daughter he married. On the Franklinville charge, according to Mr. Hart, the presiding elder "warned the people against the use of dogmatic terms, such as sanctification and the like." [73] Father Bishop petitioned for a change of preachers, and declared that they would not pay Methodist preachers for fighting Methodist doctrine. When the Conference returned both preachers, senior and junior, the Bishops opened their home for a Monday night holiness meeting. Later a place called "The Brick School House" [74], was used for services and the Bishops attended there. During a revival service, Father Bishop and family attended there for a few Sabbaths instead of their own church. Mr. Hart said, "They were soon cited to trial for not attending public worship and class at Franklinville church where they belonged." [75] When the day for the trial arrived, these people who had come from Methodist stock a century old, appeared, and with them a church filled with those who had come to attend the trial. The pastor of the church decided to hold a private trial in the parsonage across the street, to which Father Bishop objected and quoted Baker on the discipline, "A trial should be private only at the request of the accused," [76] but the pastor and committee retired to the parsonage to proceed with the trial. As each member of the family was expelled, "the preacher would come into the church and announce the fact." [77] Following their expulsion from the church, Father Bishop drew up articles of association, and this family and many of their sympathizers formed themselves into an "Earnest Christian Band." [78] Thus it may be seen that members were being expelled in the state of Illinois as well as in the state of New York. This work had begun there, said Mr. Roberts as early as 1855 and continued until a new organization came into existence. [79]

D. SECOND LAYMEN'S CONVENTION

1. The Call

So greatly did the laymen of the Genesee Conference feel, as they expressed it, "the iron heel of oppression heavily laid" upon them, [80] that they issued a "call" for a June meeting, and consequently met at North Bergen on the Genesee Camp Ground, Thursday, June 20, 1859. Mr. Hibbard, editor of the Northern Christian Advocate, published an article ridiculing the statement of oppression in the call and advised, "Let them cut themselves forthwith loose from the oppression that crushes them. Now is the time to make the clean strike of the whole matter, and may heaven favor the exodus!" [81] Then he stated as his serious opinion that the Church had tolerated this element long enough and had permitted it to develop itself while harboring it in the midst. Preachers and members who were not in sympathy with the order of the Church, he maintained, had no right to its privileges, and should not have. [82]

2. The Session

This session did not seem to take too much definite action, but adjourned to meet November 1 and 2 at Albion. No doubt there was still hope of redress that might come at the next Conference session that was not far off. The meeting at that time was held in connection with the Bergen Camp Meeting. The morning of the meeting, B. T. Roberts preached. J. F. Crawford, a visiting minister from the Oneida

Conference wrote and published a report of the Bergen Camp Meeting. About the sermon preached by Mr. Roberts he commented:

What was remarkable in this sermon, the speaker did not as much as refer to his troubles, but the sweetest and most heavenly spirit seemed to reign through the whole discourse. If he continues to maintain the spirit he now possesses, his foes must all fall powerless at his feet.[\[83\]](#)

The Rev. Crawford continued:

We had heard so much about this people, that when we went on the ground, for a little while we were on the come-and-see bench, but we soon found that these persons had nothing but what a few of our people have in the Oneida Conference They are as intelligent a class of people as you will find in any congregation in the State of New York. They are clear in their views of holiness, according to our standard authors, and according to Scripture.[\[84\]](#)

3. The Status of Lay Movements

For Mr. Roberts to be associated with the lay movements was doubtless additional weight against him. Abel Stevens recorded:

A writer who witnessed these belligerent days said: 'In Methodist speech, to be a "radical" was to be accounted unfit for church fellowship For a preacher to be known as a promoter of lay delegation was as much as his ecclesiastical life was worth. For him there was no hope, no preferment, no peace.'[\[85\]](#)

To be associated with such a movement one was generally termed an agitator or a destructionist.

Professor G. R. Crooks tells an interesting incident in his Life of Bishop Matthew Simpson, which Mr. Crooks himself witnessed:

An applicant for admission to the Philadelphia Conference in the year 1847 was objected to on several grounds. While the case was pending a respectable member of the Conference arose and said, 'Mr. President, I am opposed to the admission of this brother. I am told that he is a lay delegation man, and I had as lief travel with the devil as with a lay delegation man.'[\[86\]](#)

However, the Bishops in the General Conference of 1860 recommended lay delegation in one form, "that form being a separate house."[\[87\]](#) Even so, when the vote was taken, both laymen and ministers voted two to one against it. Hence, we see that the general feeling was against lay representation in the church,

and how much more against a group led by two expelled ministers who were, they thought, opposed to the regularly organized church as represented by their Annual Conference.

E. ANNUAL CONFERENCE

1. Prognostications of Robie

The Genesee Annual Conference convened at Brockport in October, 1859, with Bishop Matthew Simpson in the chair. The report found in the Advocate of October 13 stated that the Conference was determined to rid itself of the fictional element of Nazaritism. The editor doubted not that the societies generally throughout the work would be glad to learn that fact, and would rejoice that they were no longer to suffer "the disgrace arising from one of the worst scandals which ever pestered a denominations of Christians." [88] For years past, he continued, the Conference had borne with its abettors, advising and even entreating them to be loyal to church order, and to cease their "disgraceful proceedings." [89] But, he opined, "crazy men will not be orderly;" [90] and since they were bent on their own destruction, the Conference had wisely concluded to let them have their own ways, and cut them off from all connection with the church Others undoubtedly would be expelled; "having coveted martyrdom, they will have it." [91]

2. Fay Purdy's Meeting

One of the aggravations to the body of that Conference was the fact that a large tent for evangelistic services was pitched by the Rev. Fay Purdy, lawyer evangelist, in a meadow a short distance north of the village. Mr. Roberts himself reported that in the outskirts of the village, in plain sight, and almost within hearing of the church, Fay H. Purdy, a well-known evangelist of the M. E. Church, had begun a tent meeting which was to continue throughout the time of the Conference session. A large pavilion, capable of holding three thousand people, had been erected. Around this were grouped several rows of family and society tents. To this meeting were gathered, he asserted, "a large number of intelligent, devoted, earnest Christians, who were stigmatized by the dominant party as Nazarites." [92]

The second day of the Conference, five resolutions were passed against fraternizing with the expelled preachers, and against "holding in an irregular way, or in countenancing, or taking part in, the services of camp meetings, or other meetings thus irregularly held." [93] The last resolution stated that any preacher violating the resolutions would be "held to answer to this Conference for the same." [94] It is said that Bishop Simpson gave to these "test resolutions" his "emphatic endorsement" and support. The Rev. D. W. Thurston, presiding elder on Cortland District, Oneida Conference, was called before the Bishop with committee and admonished, but "the admonition was not heeded." [95] Bishop Simpson also ordered several other preachers who had come from other Conferences to assist in the meeting to take no further part in it.

One must recognize the aggravation to the Annual Conference that these meetings constituted in the light

of past proceedings. The Rev. William Hosmer, editor of the Northern Independent whose paper was then out of favor preached on Sabbath morning. With reference to the preaching of Mr. Roberts, the Brockport paper carried the following statement in connection with an article entitled. "Camp Meeting":

At the close of the service. Mr. Purdy said he was about to make an announcement that no one but himself was cognizant of. He said he never shrunk from responsibility when God spoke to him. He felt that his duty was clear, and he now offered the platform to B. T. Roberts, an expelled member of the Genesee Conference, to proclaim salvation to the people in the afternoon. He hoped no one would come who believed him to be a bad man. At 2:00 PM., the spacious tent was crowded to its utmost capacity, and Mr. Roberts preached an evangelic discourse from 'Son of man, I have made thee a watchman.'"[96]

3. Expulsions and Locations

Under the operation of the above resolutions, which Mr. Roberts declared to be unconstitutional inasmuch as an Annual Conference was not a lawmaking body, the Reverends J. W. Reddy and H. H. Farnsworth were located. "The Reverends John A. Wells, William Cooley and Charles D. Burlingham, not being willing to submit to this tyrannical assumption of authority, were expelled from the Conference and the Church." [97] Against Loren Stiles, Jr. two charges of falsehood were presented but the Conference would not sustain them. The charge of "contumacy" against him was sustained, and the majority of the Conference voted to expel the man whom Roberts described as "one of the most devoted, eloquent, gifted, noble-hearted men then in the ministry of that denomination." [98] C. D. Burlingham was expelled for having received B. T. Roberts on trial into the church without any confession or satisfactory reformation, and for "giving said expelled member license to exhort, at the time of such reception on trial." [99] Mr. Burlingham was expelled, although he showed that at the time he dealt with Mr. Roberts, the question of law on the latter point of administration was not fully settled. He had also "granted the request of Brother Roberts, by discontinuing his probationary membership in the same manner he had been received" when he had learned from an authentic source of the episcopal decision of Bishop Baker that applied to the case. [100]

In the charge against the Rev. William Cooley, which involved his association at the Conference with expelled members in connection with attendance at Purdy's meeting, he stated that the second specification was added after the trial was commenced, and altered twice. At the suggestions of Bishop Simpson, most of it had been withdrawn, to prevent Fay Purdy's testimony, which would have made that meeting a regular one, because he had received the consent of the Rev. E. M. Buck, the preacher in charge, to hold the meeting when he did. With reference to the expulsion of the Rev. John A. Wells on the first specification of the charges against him, namely, for recognizing "as a minister, by admitting to his pulpit, and holding religious meetings in connection with B. T. Roberts, an expelled member from this Conference," [101] Mr. Wells replied:

I had for many years regarded Brother Roberts as a devoted servant of God, eminent for his usefulness. I really believed that his expulsion from the Church was only the result of

hatred aroused by his faithful denunciation of sin, and that he was, in the sight of heaven, as much a servant of God and minister of the Gospel, after his expulsion. as before it. I could not do less than receive him. To have forbidden him to speak in my pulpit, would have been a sin against God that I would not bear in the judgment of all worlds.[\[102\]](#)

Of the action of that Conference, William Hosmer published in the Northern Independent of October 20, 1859, the following estimate of its actions:

Up to the time of this writing, four of the best members of the Conference have been expelled, both from the Conference and the Church. We have known ecclesiastical blunders before, but never one as great as this.[\[103\]](#)

Mr. Hosmer went on to affirm that "in the operations of Methodism, it may perhaps be found that forbearance is a better cure than law."[\[104\]](#) That affirmation he made on the basis of his contention that an Annual Conference had no power to "pass a resolution having the force of law,"[\[105\]](#) and added that it might be a sin and a sufficient cause for expulsion to treat an expelled minister as though he were yet a minister, but that the Methodist Church had nowhere affirmed the fact. All the Discipline said on the subject was that after an appeal has been had, a "person so expelled shall have no privilege of society or sacrament in our Church, without confession, contrition, and satisfactory reformation."[\[106\]](#)

At the same Conference, Mr. Hosmer was virtually placed in the class of the contumacious by a resolution passed by the Conference against any members of the Conference acting as agent for the Northern Independent. Because Mr. Hosmer published a strong antislavery paper, his comment was: "Every preacher who dare act as agent for us, will be expelled for contumacy. Thus the war has commenced openly. It will now be known whether Methodists are slaves or freemen."[\[107\]](#)

[4. Simpson's Opinion and Opinion of Simpson](#)

The Buffalo Advocate printed a speech delivered by Bishop Simpson in which he is reported to have said that he had been a Methodist from his youth up and had lived to witness several secessions, but he never had heard such doctrines professed by Methodist preachers as had been openly declared on that Conference floor. He had heard brethren declare their right to admit to their pulpits, and associate in labor with them, men who stood expelled from the Methodist Episcopal Church, and had heard brethren appeal to their right of private judgment in justification of the same, and also their right to preach when and where they would and to enter within another man's field of labor and work without the consent of the pastor. In all his knowledge of Methodism, he had never heard such doctrines avowed till then. A Methodist Conference, he explained, was like a co-partnership, each member agreeing and pledging himself to work under the direction, and for the common weal of the company. Every member of that body had solemnly promised, before God and his brethren, when he was admitted into the Conference, that he would not be governed by his own will, but act in all things like a son in the Gospel. As such, it was their duty to employ their time in the manner in which the Conference directed; in preaching; in

visiting from house to house; in reading, meditation and prayer. Above all, if men labored with them in the Lord's vineyard, it was needful that they did that part of the work which was advised at those times and places which the Conference judged most' for God's glory. They had solemnly promised they would keep those rules for conscience sake. He said that after such vow and covenant to surrender their private judgment and will to that of their seniors in the Gospel, a promise made without mental reservation, and freely, he was astonished to hear brethren assert a right of private judgment in regard to the order and manner of their ministerial services, against the judgment and direction of the church. He had no doubt that the brethren intended right, but they were misguided. He had said this as their pastor, their chief pastor, to warn Brethren, especially young brethren, that they were treading on the verge of a precipice that was crumbling under their feet. By their course, they were bringing ruin upon the souls around them. He begged them to pause where they were. "We have all of work enough to do and if the circuits are not large enough to fill your hearts, and hands, and time, let us know, and we will make them larger," he concluded.[\[108\]](#)

The editor of the Northern Independent passed his judgment upon that speech by commenting upon the facility with which Bishop Simpson lent his influence to the "bloodthirsty operations of the Regency party"[\[109\]](#) at the late session of the Genesee Conference and asserted that it filled every candid observer with surprise. He said he had heard an able lawyer, who attended all through the trials, and who had no bias in favor of either party, deliberately state that he had never before, in all his experience, seen "such partiality manifested by the presiding officer of a judicial tribunal."[\[110\]](#) After this charge, he excused the presiding officer on the ground that the Bishop asserted that he had papers in his possession which indicated a secession was in progress and that the name of the new church was to be "Associate Methodists." Mr. Hosmer commented "that the good Bishop believed this to be the case . . . that he had such documents in his possession, we have no doubt. But that he was the dupe of designing men, we also believe without a doubt."[\[111\]](#)

F. SECOND LAY CONVENTION, ADJOURNED SESSION

1. Convention in Albion, November, 1859

Soon after Conference, the adjourned session of the second lay convention convened at Albion, New York, November first and second, 1859. Mrs. Roberts recorded in her diary her concern as well as hope for her husband. Probably by then he had begun to realize the situation in which he found himself. Instead of retraction on the part of the Conference, there had come greater rigidity of attitude and further expulsions. Mrs. Roberts recorded in her diary:

Oct. 31, I have fasted today and the Lord let me see I had not held on to Him for Mr. Roberts as I ought and promised to do. I will do it! Amen!

Nov. 1, A good time in praying for Convention Love-Feast at Albion and for Mr. Roberts. How Moses comes up before me when I pray for him. My Father lead him.[\[112\]](#)

When the Convention met in the Baptist Church of Albion, November first and second, they elected Hon. Abner I. Wood as President, and the two secretaries were S. K. J. Chesbrough and William Hart.

2. Actions of the Convention

The Convention felt called to bear testimony to the fact that some occupying the place of Methodist ministers had used their influence, and bent their energies to put down under the name of "fanaticism" what they felt confident was the work of the Holy Spirit.[\[113\]](#) They also extended "cordial sympathy" to those who had been so used, and charged that when "contumacy" was made a crime, that religious liberty was at an end. They quoted the answer of Wesley in reply to the question, "Is not the will of our Governors a law?" to sustain their position: "Therefore if any Bishop wills that I should not preach the Gospel, his will is no law to me. But what if he produced a law against your preaching? I am to obey God rather than men."[\[114\]](#)

They affirmed that the church, in their estimation, was not a group of ministers who had been engaged in unjust persecutions, but rather, as the thirteenth article of religion affirmed, "a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments duly administered."[\[115\]](#) They declared that the purpose of "these persecutions" was "to prevent the work of holiness from spreading among us, to put down the life and power of godliness in our churches, and to inaugurate in its stead the peaceable reign of a cold and heartless formalism."[\[116\]](#)

Besides passing resolutions expressing confidence in those ministers recently expelled, they took a step in the direction of independency. They made the following resolution:

In order to keep our people who are being oppressed by the misrule of the dominant faction in the Genesee Conference from being scattered, and finally lost to the church, we recommend our brethren in the ministry to gather our people into Bands, and to encourage them to union of action and effort in the work of the Lord.[\[117\]](#)

With the oppressive attitude taken in the late Conference, characterized not only by expulsions but denunciation, straightforward action could but be expected as a result of the strong position taken at this lay convention. Thomas Carlton was reported to have said at the late Conference session, "These Nazarites are like Canada thistles, you cut one down and ten will spring up in its place."[\[118\]](#) The Rev. C. D. Burlingham alleged that Canton exclaimed that he "had rather meet a thousand devils than three Nazarites."[\[119\]](#) Shortly after the Convention there was a letter circulated which Mr. Roberts claimed was evidently written by one of the bishops, because of the authoritative tone in which advice was given to "remove every leader who took part in the Albion Convention, or any of a similar character."[\[120\]](#) The writer followed that statement by the affirmation that they had "better have no members than disorderly ones."[\[121\]](#) He reinforced the whole by exhorting them by all means to stand firmly by the action of the church. "Remove every leader who arrays himself against it, no matter what may be his influence, or

how great his usefulness, or how it may affect your congregation, or how it will result in the end." [\[122\]](#) As to private members, the writer would have them do nothing while they did not engage in opposition meetings. But if they got up and sustained meetings for expelled preachers, or resisted church action, he would have them cited for trial, after proper admonition. [\[123\]](#) This letter was circulated among the Regency preachers and by some chance, a copy came into Mr. Roberts' hands. Concerning it, Mr. Roberts said, "To the copy that has been furnished us, no name is appended; but the author of the original is understood to be no less a personage than a Bishop. We do not assume to know To us it certainly reads as if written by one who felt that he had a right to speak with authority." [\[124\]](#)

The Second Lay Convention, under the excitation of the strong position of the late Conference session, not only specified Band work, but also encouraged those expelled to continue to labor for the promotion of the work of God and the salvation of souls, and also assured them that while the expelled thus devoted themselves to the work of the ministry, they would cheerfully use their means and influence for their support." [\[125\]](#)

They also memorialized the General Conference to set aside the action of the Genesee Conference in the alleged cases of "contumacy," and to restore the six expelled ministers to their former Conference and Church relation.

3. Results

The above action which not only confirmed the positions taken by the first Albion Convention, but strengthened them, made it possible for Roberts and his companions to travel and hold meetings as they had formerly done. Mrs. Roberts reflected in her diary:

Nov. 7, 1859. Brother and Sister Hudson feel as I do that Mr. Roberts ought to travel as he has done and look after the work. My soul is distressed. Appointed a meeting at Wales next week.

Nov. 13, I saw, too, how the Lord wanted Mr. Roberts to go, go, preaching Christ.

Dec. 5, It was given me to say to Mr. Roberts that the Lord wanted to make a captain of him.

Dec. 6. I was distressed for Mr. Roberts. He is tempted and sorely tried, but God will deliver. It is raining hard and we expect to go to Pekin. It looks wild to start in this rain, but I can only hear the words, 'Go forward.' We reached Tonawanda, found no team. Mr. Roberts hired one and we went on through the mud - found Mr. Chesbrough's people were not going to meeting - arrived at the hall - a tolerable congregation Stayed at Father Chesbrough's all night. [\[126\]](#)

A report given by Mr. Roberts of his activities for the year is appended, and is explained by the fact that he was then a man just thirty-six years of age, full of the vigor which characterizes the prime of manhood. He said that the Lord had enabled him during the year past, to travel some six thousand miles, and participate in, as nearly as he could judge, some four hundred religious services. In over half that number it was his privilege, he said, to preach the Gospel of the grace of God. He spoke of the large congregations that assembled even on week nights, to hear the plain, searching truths of God's Word applied to their consciences. From two to four thousand persons had attended common grove meetings held in the busiest season of the year.[\[127\]](#)

G. THIRD LAYMEN'S CONVENTION

1. Purpose

In February of 1860, the third Laymen's Convention met at Olean in the Presbyterian Church, evidently with the thought of preparing for the coming General Conference. To this end, appeals were phrased by a Committee on Resolutions, detailing their course of action and asking for redress. Among the resolutions is found one on slavery to the effect that there should be placed "a chapter in the Discipline of the M. E. Church that will exclude all persons from the M. E. Church or her communion, who shall be guilty of holding, buying or selling, or in any way using a human being as a slave."[\[128\]](#)

2. Address on Slavery by Roberts

The Minutes of that Convention refer to extended comments made on the Conference floor by B. T. Roberts on the subject of slavery, testifying that his opinions on slavery were not changed. He had always been an antislavery man, and the first speech he ever made was an antislavery speech. He was opposed to slavery in the church so strongly that he believed it had "no more right there than the devil had."[\[129\]](#) He repudiated the report that had spread that he had received a letter from a presiding elder, telling him that he had better drop the hobby of holiness and take up the slavery issue. He also asserted that the Genesee Conference, in former days, had been thoroughly antislavery, but it seemed, by the returns of the last Conference, that there had been a change of sentiment. He predicted that if the church would take hold of the slavery problem in the right way and in the right spirit, that slavery would soon be extirpated from the land. He expressed his resolve to labor for such a result as long as he lived.[\[130\]](#)

The Convention cited with pleasure the appearance of The Earnest Christian recently begun by Mr. Roberts and pledged themselves to use their "exertions to extend its circulation."[\[131\]](#)

3. Organizational Trend

The Olean Advertiser published an extended account of that third Laymen's Convention, containing a statement that "the Convention was large, every charge or congregation in the Conference being represented."[\[132\]](#) That Convention of laymen went still farther down the road to independence by

passing a resolution, sponsored by S. K. J. Chesbrough that they look with lively interest on the denominational position of The Free Methodist Church of Albion, under the pastoral care of Rev. Loren Stiles, Jr.; that they rejoice in her prosperity; and that they hail her as a "welcome co-laborer in the vineyard of our common Master, and as a worthy member in the sisterhood of Evangelical Churches."[\[133\]](#)

Another definite step toward an organizational setup was also offered by Mr. Chesbrough, to the effect that since the cause of God demanded the holding of camp meetings, General Quarterly Meetings, and other general gatherings, that a committee composed of certain laymen and local preachers, together with the traveling preachers appointed by the Convention, be constituted an executive council in each district to appoint and superintend all camp meetings, General Quarterly Meetings, and such other general gatherings as they judged proper; and in the interim of the sessions of that Convention, to take the general oversight of the work within the bounds of their respective districts.[\[134\]](#)

Thus, that third Convention, scheduled to be held in the Methodist Church at Olean, but restrained by court injunction of one of the members of that church, concluded its sessions in the Presbyterian Church which had been offered to them by their trustees when it was learned that the Methodist Church was not available. The men of that Convention had voluntarily ordered a virtual withdrawal from the Methodist Episcopal Church by their organizational actions, which included appointments of ministers.

[4. Report of Convention by Roberts](#)

Roberts noted that the session of the Convention was of great interest, and that considerable excitement had prevailed in the community in consequence of the steps that had been taken to prevent the Convention from being held in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Because the proceedings had been so widely publicized in the weekly papers, he deemed it best to give only a general outline. Among the items mentioned was the large attendance, and the emphatic and harmonious actions of the Convention. He thought all who witnessed the proceedings had been favorably impressed. He mentioned that the Rev. Loren Stiles had preached "an able and spiritual sermon"[\[135\]](#) to a large number of communicants, and went on to say, "It was a solemn occasion. Most of the members of the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches present came together at the common board of our common Lord."[\[136\]](#) After mentioning the two main petitions for redress of grievances and the memorial against slavery, he concluded, "The delegates went home from the Convention to labor with renewed zeal and increased faith for the salvation of souls."[\[137\]](#)

[5. More Expulsions](#)

Following the actions of the Third Laymen's Convention, renewed measures were taken against those who were active in it. To detail materials found in the course of these trials would be irrelevant and lengthy. One case, however, recorded by Mr. Roberts is related. It was reported that during the trial of Dewey Teft, Mr. Chapping (the minister) was so "arrogant and overbearing" that the manhood of a Mr.

Scott who went to the trial as one of Mr. Chapin's adherents, revolted. "Rising to his feet greatly excited, in thundering tones, Mr. Scott demanded, addressing Mr. Chapin: 'Who are you?' 'The grandson of Ethan Allen!' replied Chapin rising to his feet." To which Mr. Scott replied:

How mightily the race has degenerated. You may be a smart man, but you are not smart enough to be judge, jury, prosecutor, and all, in one case. Now take your proper place and keep it. I want to see fair play.

Mr. Roberts commented, "For a time the wildest excitement prevailed."[\[138\]](#)

H. Independent Churches

1. Albion Congregational Free Methodist Church

Although an extended account of the independent churches which were founded cannot be given, yet Mr. Roberts was so integrally a part of the movement that some mention must be made concerning them to give a picture of the events of those troublous times.

Probably the leading independent church in the area was the Albion Congregational Free Methodist Church which was formed under the ministry of the Rev. Loren Stiles. Mr. Stiles was pastor of the Albion Methodist Episcopal Church when expelled from the Conference and Church in 1859. He was a graduate of the Methodist Theological Seminary at Concord, had served one year as presiding elder in the Genesee Conference, and had won for himself considerable recognition as a pulpit orator. Years after, a presiding elder of many years standing, when speaking of the expulsion of Stiles and Roberts, is reported to have said:

It was generally admitted that the conference had lost its scholar and its orator in the expulsion of B. T. Roberts and Loren Stiles. Stiles was the orator, Roberts the scholar.[\[139\]](#)

Mr. Stiles, when presiding elder, was the originator of the General Quarterly Meetings which had been a factor in bringing together those who believed in "old line Methodism." Sensing the disposition of the Conference at the time of his expulsion, Mr. Stiles believed it was of no use to make an appeal to the General Conference, and so "at the urgent call of the people" he returned to Albion where his friends were "so largely in the majority that, according to equity and according to the laws of the State, they were entitled to the church property."[\[140\]](#) In order to avoid any cause for complaint, however, they put up a large edifice for him "where he lived and labored, and died in the warm affections of the community."[\[141\]](#) Mr. Roberts recounted that they purchased a lot, raised a subscription, and proceeded at once to erect a new house for worship. They built a large, plain and commodious edifice. The audience room was fifty-five by eighty, with an airy and pleasant basement. Until the new church was completed, meetings were held in Academy Hall, which was being crowded to its utmost capacity.[\[142\]](#)

The significance of that church centered in the fact that Stiles brought to an early consummation the work which both Kendall and Roberts had helped to bring to its present status. At a Quarterly Meeting held there in 1860, three hundred and forty communicants were present at the communion service.^[143] According to the Buffalo Morning Express, four hundred took communion at the dedication service.^[144] Dr. Bowen and the Rev. Mr. Ives delivered sermons, forty-five hundred dollars were raised at the dedication service, which covered the balance of the cost of ten thousand dollars. The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church met in Buffalo May first in 1860 and the same month, on May 23rd, the dedication of the Albion Congregational Free Methodist Church took place. The diary of Mrs. Roberts noted the fact that she was present at the dedicatory service. She then recorded an action of the General Conference following, and referred to its close.^[145] The dedication of this free church must have been known to the delegates at the General Conference, since it so vitally concerned the appeal cases which were before them.

From the standpoint of developing strength in the ranks of "old line Methodism" for an independent movement, the Albion Church was a distinct advance, but from the viewpoint of the Methodist Church, it augured no good. Mr. Robie, one of the most severe critics of the new movement, wrote that if such an enterprise, starting "amid the worst features of Church disruption and scandal" but successfully completed, and consecrated by a Doctor of Divinity in the regular work of the ministry, did not manifest "the most daring radicalism, even recklessness of Church order and authority," he thought he should fail to find it anywhere else. "Strange and startling events are occurring in these days of the Church," he asserted.^[146]

2. St. Louis Church

With reference to the St. Louis Church, Mr. Roberts was more actively a participant. He received a call to that church shortly after they were settled in their Buffalo home following his expulsion. He wrote to the Chesbroughs that he was confident the Lord wanted this work to spread all over the country and the world. He confessed, "It is a cross for me to be separated from my family even for a few weeks, yet when the Lord calls I must obey."^[147] He did not plan to be gone more than three or, four weeks. Replying on March 18, 1859, Mr. S. K. J. Chesbrough heartily disapproved of having Mr. Roberts leave them. He said he wished he could look upon his going as the call of the Lord, but he could not see how it was the duty of Brother Roberts to go three thousand miles away and join affinity with strangers in church difficulties. If the laymen of the Genesee Conference were looked to for support, they needed their preachers to stand by them. He thought God had just as much a call for Roberts in New York as St. Louis, and certainly Buffalo needed help. He suggested that he was not the only one who disapproved heartily of it. He felt their people were too afraid to meet the Regency on the battlefield, and unless they did, God would raise up another band that would. They needed "some policy, not worldly policy,"^[148] for while they were answering their opponents, they ought to be building up the walls. He then came back to his main theme, "I am sorry then that just at this standpoint, one of our 'Standard Bearers' has gone to a distant field, and if God blesses him there one week why not six months."^[149] Mrs. Lane wrote and expressed a fear that Mr. Roberts' "antislavery principles might bring him into trouble from

another quarter,"[\[150\]](#) should he take the trip to St. Louis.

However, Mr. Roberts, as one may judge by this time, had a mind of his own and decided to look into the matters pertaining to the St. Louis difficulties which had arisen over the ministry of Dr. John Wesley Redfield in that city.

Mr. Roberts reported he had spent several weeks in St. Louis in the spring of 1859. The previous winter, under the labors of Dr. Redfield, he said, "a deep and thorough revival of God's work" had taken place. Opposition from some in the church to those who aligned themselves with Mr. Redfield developed, and they thought it best to go together and form a new M. E. Church. They were encouraged, it was reported, by the presiding elder of the district, to expect that they would be regularly organized and cared for.[\[151\]](#) He afterwards felt it unwise to do anything for them, probably in the light of developments in the East. They organized as a "Free Methodist Church" and adopted the old Methodist Discipline as far as it was applicable to their circumstance, making non-slave-holding one of the conditions of membership. Their former church associates predicted they would go down as soon as Dr. Redfield left them, but instead Mr. Roberts said their membership had increased from ninety to one hundred and eighty-eight. Their Sabbath School was prosperous, ranging in attendance from one hundred and fifty to one hundred and seventy-five. Their place of worship, capable of holding four or five hundred persons had become too small. They had rented a large church, and also they used the St. Louis theater for religious meetings.[\[152\]](#) Dr. Redfield had written to Mrs. Kendall that the new church would not be received by the Methodist Church North and that they could not join the South Church because of their antislavery principles. They had then organized congregationally until they could open up negotiations with the East. He stated he had written to Mr. Roberts to go out and take charge. He knew other places where matters were somewhat as they were at St. Louis. The original Methodist Church there had written for Bishop Janes to come and help solve the difficulties. He had been expected on the day Redfield wrote, but it was too late then, for the new church had voted two days before to make no further attempt at reconciliation. Dr. Redfield added, "I have for years seen that we must come to this; but never once supposed that it would be done in my day. But we are forced into it."[\[153\]](#)

Concerning his own visit at St. Louis, Mr. Roberts wrote to his wife that the people there "seem highly gratified with my visit," and that they were anxious to have them come and settle there as their pastor. Roberts liked it there very much, and said that if it were in the will of the Lord, he thought he should very much prefer living there than in Buffalo.[\[154\]](#)

It is evident from a letter of Mrs. Kendall to Mrs. Roberts written in May, 1860, that Mrs. Roberts had expressed to her friend a hope that the Methodist Church would yet take them in. In reply, Mrs. Kendall expressed her sentiment that only a separate church would do.[\[155\]](#) Mrs. Kendall was the widow of the deceased Rev. William Kendall, the close friend of Roberts who had died at West Falls. To Mrs. Roberts she wrote:

You think there is hope of restoration to the church. I wish I could say I believe it would be so. If it is so, I shall not falter to go straight through for God everywhere, though it be at

the risk of life every step. Surely if they turn us all loose again into the church, there will be a terrible commotion, and many faint hearts will sink under the influence that now reigns. But God will be glorified in either way. I believe, however, that it is God's will to raise up another people whose God is the Lord, and among whom dwelleth righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.[\[156\]](#)

Suffice it to say that a publication notice was placed in the Northern Christian Advocate in January 25, 1860, stating that the new St. Louis church entitled "Sixth Street Methodist Church" was entirely independent.[\[157\]](#) Other societies were organized under the direction of Dr. Redfield following that. Dr. Redfield said he well knew that they must then "show their hand," if they meant the Methodist Church to see the need of permitting Methodists to enjoy Methodism. So he wrote instructions to organize under the Discipline as they had done in St. Louis. This organizational work was being carried forward in the East also, and Redfield thought that it might lead the General Conference which was to meet in May, 1860, to correct "the abuses" from which they had suffered, reinstate the members and ministers who had been excluded, and give them guarantee that the preaching of living Methodism would be sustained.[\[158\]](#) Mr. Terrill stated that this advice was accepted, and three societies were organized; and awaited the action of the General Conference in May.[\[159\]](#)

3. Syracuse Church

Independent services were held quite early at Syracuse also, where a prominent layman by the name of Charles Hicks was class leader. Mr. Hicks had been for about forty years Deputy Clerk and County Clerk of Onondago County. He had also been admitted to the practice of law in the Court of Common Pleas, and at the last city election before his death, he had been elected to the office of Justice of the Peace for the city at large.[\[160\]](#) Mrs. Roberts evidently joined the Syracuse Church after leaving Pekin, and it was Mr. Hicks who sent her a letter from the Syracuse society, dated December 6, 1860, in which he not only certified to her acceptability as a member, but also added, "I hereby certify to her gifts and graces as a preacher of the Gospel."[\[161\]](#) Mr. Hicks was a close friend of Dr. Redfield and was in correspondence with him. When publications of independent services were placed in the Syracuse paper, it was under Mr. Hick's hand. He was classed as a warm supporter of B. T. Roberts in his early struggles.[\[162\]](#) The above mentioned letter from Mr. Hicks came from "The First Free Methodist Church of Syracuse," which was an outgrowth of an independent church formed under the name of Third Methodist Episcopal Church of Syracuse. Charles T. Hicks, after writing the church letter, appended the following:

56 years anti-Slavery
32 years anti-Rum
13 years anti-Tobacco
9 years anti-Doctor
9 years anti-Tea and Coffee
and from now till the end of the
war, anti-everything that worketh
abomination or maketh a lie.[\[163\]](#)

He was evidently in favor of some things too, especially the experience of holiness which he claimed to have obtained under Dr. Redfield and the Rev. Fay H. Purdy. He was the leading figure of the independent movement at Syracuse, and joined The Free Methodist Church when it was first organized. At Syracuse, it was mainly a lay movement growing out of the influence of two Methodist evangelists, especially Dr. John Wesley Redfield. Syracuse was also included in the itinerary of Mr. Roberts during those years.

4. Rochester Church

One of the unpublished letters of the period relates to an incident in connection with the formation of a "Band" in the city of Rochester as Mr. Roberts returned from a trip to Syracuse where Mrs. Roberts had been engaged in labors. He wrote her:

Coming home from Syracuse I stopped over at Rochester. The trains did not connect. I had to wait from 7 to 9½ in the evening. Sister Babcock had got the pilgrims together to consult on what was best to be done. She said she felt something must be done After the rest had spoken Sister B. said that the Lord required her to take a letter and go out from the Church, and help for a new one a free Methodist Church in Rochester. She wanted as many as would go with her to stand up. Four besides herself arose. 'Now,' said she, 'the band is formed. As many as want to join it, let them arise,' and six arose. 'That,' said she, 'is a good beginning. Now we will look out for a place for meetings, and go ahead in the name of the Lord.' So you see the leaven is spreading, the work is multiplying on our hands. [\[164\]](#)

5. Clintonville Church

In The Free Methodist of July 25, 1950, was published a list of the names of those who subscribed to help build the Clintonville Free Methodist Church, later called the South Elgin Free Methodist Church. The list, containing nineteen names, was dated April 19, 1860, and evidently establishes its claim as the second Free Methodist Church built, although the Albion Church was first organized as the Congregational Free Methodist Church. There seems to be little doubt that this was one of the three churches to which J. G. Terrill referred which was organized awaiting the decision of the General Conference in May.

I. Bands

1. Churches Outgrowth of Bands

These organizations of independent churches were no doubt the product of the formation of "bands" which had begun to spring up early, with the ostensible purpose of purifying the church, and to serve the felt need of a center of spiritual interest for those who believed in "old line Methodism." Mr. Roberts

claimed some authority from the Methodist Discipline:

In one sense we did not organize societies, in another we did. In the sense of a local church, connected with other local churches we did not organize any. But we did organize praying bands' after the model furnished in the old discipline, and similar to the 'holiness bands' now becoming somewhat common in the M. E. Church.[\[165\]](#)

A letter, written very early, from Emeline Smith of Brockport, indicated that as a little praying band, they waited to see what Mr. Roberts would do. She said that the impression had been with numbers, if not all, of their little praying band, that there would be a door opened for them; and in her own mind the conviction had been clear that some of their ministers would be expelled from conference (next), and that in some way, their interests would be affected by that. "And now here we are," concluded Mrs. Smith, "and we wait to know what the Lord will have us do."[\[166\]](#) She added a note on the edge of the letter, "Our little band meets next Wednesday evening to confer as to our course here. I wish if you had time that you would let us know your minds."[\[167\]](#)

Attention has been directed to the action of the second Laymen's Convention held in Albion, November, 1859, which recommended the ministry to gather the people into Bands, and "to encourage them to union of action and effort in the work of the Lord."[\[168\]](#)

2. Organization of Bands

Probably the action of the First Laymen's Convention previously mentioned in sending forth Mr. Roberts and Mr. McCreery to preach resulted in the formation of bands. What they did in the interim was no doubt reflected in the action of the Second Laymen's Convention. Mr. Roberts followed the action of that convention on bands with a commendation and an appeal. He characterized the recommendation for the formation of praying bands as one of the most important measures adopted at that Convention. He said the design was to induce those in sympathy with earnest Christianity to put forth "direct, systematic and persevering efforts for the salvation of souls."[\[169\]](#) He instructed that where there were three or more believers in Christ, of one heart and one mind, who felt the worth of souls, that they form a Band, adopting the directions to the Band Societies found in all Methodist Disciplines published prior to 1852. They should then choose a leader, who should give direction to the meetings, and should select some locality where a revival of religion was specially needed. More specifically still, he instructed them to

procure some place, a church, schoolhouse, hall, shop, any place where the people can be comfortably convened, and go to work. Sing, pray, exhort, 'with hearts and tongues of fire.' At each meeting let one or more who have a living experience relate it as the spirit directs. As souls are awakened pray with them and lead them to Jesus. As they are converted, set them to work for the salvation of others. Let this be done all over the land, and a mighty revival of religion would take place.[\[170\]](#)

These bands were not formed in the East only. Mr. Roberts commented, "One brother writes us from Illinois, 'I take pleasure in informing you that there are pilgrim bands springing up in every direction in this country.' "[\[171\]](#)

3. No Clear Distinction Between Bands and Societies

The distinction between bands and societies did not seem to be clear, at least in the mind of Mrs. Roberts. Mrs. Roberts recorded in her diary: "Mr. Roberts preached and formed a Free Methodist Society (at Syracuse). God owned it, blessed Mr. Roberts and the rest. Only five united tonight. Others will come." [\[172\]](#) The story of Mrs. Babcock taking the lead in forming a Band in Rochester has been related. Mrs. Roberts recorded in her diary further actions of the same woman, on February 25th:

Sister Babcock rose and said the Lord called on her to say they would have a 'Free Methodist Church.' She did not know as there was any one who would go with her; if not, then she was the 'Free Methodist Church,' etc. Mr. Roberts told her he would take her in, read the rules of discipline and some thirty gave in their names. [\[173\]](#)

In this instance, the word Free is with the capital F. What discipline Mr. Roberts used is not known, but probably, it was the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church since there was at that time no formal organization of a new church. That opinion is confirmed by the statement at the time of the organization of the church that they adopted "the old Methodist discipline as far as applicable to their circumstances." [\[174\]](#)

In 1897, the Rev. James Mathews referred to the spirit of those who composed the Bands. Speaking of Frank Smith of Brockport, he said:

He was one of the first pilgrims, and never will I forget his sweet rendering of Bro. McCreery's Battle Hymn:

T've listed during all the war,
And I mean to die in the army;
Content to take a soldier's fare,
And I mean to die in the army.'

That was away back in 1859, at Eagle Harbor general quarterly meeting, before The Free Methodist Church was organized. I was a boy traveling the Big Circuit with Brother McCreery. The scattered saints used to come from afar to the gatherings and cheer each other with holy songs and happy greetings. The rallying cry was, 'I belong to the band, hallelujah!' [\[175\]](#)

J. THE EARNEST CHRISTIAN

1. Purpose of Publication

One of the early works of the life of Mr. Roberts was the editing of a magazine which he began to publish late in the year 1859. Mr. Roberts said of it that he started The Earnest Christian with the sole object of doing good. His aim was to hold up and maintain "without compromise" [\[176\]](#) the Bible standard of salvation. He intended to give no countenance to sin in any of its popular forms. He admitted that the prospect of a magazine being sustained on that basis was not very flattering. He issued a circular and sent it to those who he thought might be favorable to the enterprise, and requested them to form an association and assume the responsibility of the proposed publication. He received no favorable responses. But one person that he knew of was willing to assume any such risk. He felt "called of God to take it personally and did so cheerfully." [\[177\]](#) He had means of his own to carry it through one year at least. He commenced without patronage and without a single subscriber. [\[178\]](#)

In his first issue, he declared the object and scope of the magazine, specifying that it would promote experimental religion, a conversion experience that would make people willingly part with their sins, the doctrine of Christian Holiness as taught by Wesley and Fletcher. He stated he would also advocate the claims of the neglected poor, the class to which Christ and the Apostles belonged, and the class for whose special benefit the Gospel was designed. Apropos to this would be the necessity of plain churches with the seats free. [\[179\]](#) He declared it his purpose in short to publish a revival journal that would be free from controversy and which would avoid all offensive personalities. [\[180\]](#)

2. Content

Mr. Roberts' first main article was on "Free Churches" and his first editorial was on the subject of holiness. The names of his associates appeared in those issues, though not confined to them, in the early issues. Loren Stiles, Dr. Redfield, the late William Kendall, as well as William Cooley and J. A. Wells, S. K. J. Chesbrough and others were contributors. A review of revivals was given in smaller print in the back of the magazine. These accounts followed the general pattern of current revivals both under the labors of Mr. Roberts and that of others.

3. Comments on It

The closing page of the February issue of The Earnest Christian contained a number of commendatory excerpts from the columns of certain papers, both religious and secular. The Buffalo Corn. Advertiser wrote of its being "handsomely printed." [\[181\]](#) The Northern Independent commented it "makes a fine appearance and is well filled." [\[182\]](#) The Buffalo Morning Express opined that it promises much in the ability of its management," the articles being "upon live topics and subjects of great importance." [\[183\]](#) Individuals commented with more specific reference to content and reaction to the same. A. A. Phelps said, "I like your matter exceedingly." [\[184\]](#) D. W. Thurston commented, "I have read your magazine with intense pleasure." [\[185\]](#) Dr. Elias Bowen thought that the "first number augurs well for the

enterprise." [186] S. S. Rice believed it was "destined to be a favorite with those who are in favor of Christianity in Earnest." [187] C. D. Burlingham thought of the first two numbers that they were eminently practical and energetic, meeting the demand of the times. Mr. Roberts referred to the comments of the secular papers as having laid him under obligation in this respect. "Especially do we feel grateful to the editors of the Morning Express," he wrote, "who have spoken to us in terms too complimentary for us to copy." Near the close of the first year of publication, an enthusiast indeed wrote, "We pronounce it unequivocally the best religious periodical in the nation." [188] This was from the pen of a lady, said Mr. Roberts, "one whose writings upon religious experience we used to read with pleasure and profit in other periodicals." [189] As has been previously noted, the third Laymen's Convention gave its approbation to the new magazine.

4. Functions of the Magazine

The subscription list grew rapidly and by 1886, there were ~x thousand subscribers listed for that year. Later, Mr. Roberts called for helpers to complete the list for ten thousand subscribers. No doubt the money which came from these sources greatly contributed to the support of Mr. Roberts, and to the more extended influence of the movement he was sponsoring. Attention is called to it here as a precursor of the new organization, though when it was first published, as late as in the April number of the year 1861, it was declared to be "neither sectarian nor denominational." [190] However, it served the purpose of unifying sentiment, of correcting abuses, of declaring the purpose of the new movement, and most of all, of enlisting new friends. It directly contributed to denominational ends, although it went beyond denominational bounds, and spread even to the army of the Civil War, where "Earnest Christian Bands" were formed.

ENDNOTES

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[3] Ibid.. p. 186.

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[6] Journal of Mrs. Roberts. November 7.1858. Quoted, Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit.. p.68.

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[9] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his father, Pekin to Gowanda, November 2, 1858. Quoted. B. H. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 181, 182.

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[11] Ibid.

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[13] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Mr. Titus Roberts, Gowanda, November 13, 1858. Quoted. B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.184.

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[17] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts, October 22,1858. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter. op. cit., p.67.

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[19] Letter from Emeline Smith, Brockport to B. T. Roberts, January 3,1859. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

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[21] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, November 20, 1856. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter. op. cit.. p.70.

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid. Quotation taken from first clause of Psalm 24:1.

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[27] B. T. Roberts. Why Another Sect, p.192.

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid. Quoted by Wilson T. Hogue, History of The Free Methodist Church, I. p. 195.

[32] Report of Resolutions adopted at First Laymen's Convention. Quoted by Elias, Bowen, History, of the Origin of The Free Methodist Church, (Rochester. New York. 1871), p. 162

[33] Ibid. Quoted by Elias Bowen, op. cit.. p.163.

[34] Ibid. Quoted by Elias, Bowen. op. cit., p.165.

[35] The "Call" to the First Laymen's Convention. Quoted by Elias Bowen, op. cit., p. 157.

[36] Report of Resolutions adopted at First Laymen's Convention. Quoted by Elias Bowen. op. cit., pp. 166, 167.

[37] S. K. J. Chesbrough. The Free Methodist, (August 9, 1910). 8.

[38] Report of Resolutions adopted at First Laymen's Convention. Quoted by Elias Bowen. op. cit., p.170.

[39] Report of Resolutions, adopted at First Laymen's Convention. Quoted by Bowen, op. cit., p.171.

[40] Abel Stevens. Church Polity, p. 162. Quoted in the Resolutions of First Laymen's Convention, and cited by Elias Bowen, op. cit., p.167.

[41] B. T. Roberts. Northern Independent, Vol. III, p.87.

[42] Ibid.

- [43] Report on Resolutions. adopted at First Laymen's Convention. Quoted by Elias Bowen. op. cit., pp. 170,171.
- [44] B. T. Roberts, Why, Another Sect, p.28.
- [45] John Robie, Buffalo Advocate (February 3.1859). 1.
- [46] John Robie, Buffalo Advocate, (February 3, 1859), 1.
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- [49] Ibid.
- [50] Ibid.
- [51] Ibid.
- [52] Ibid.
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- [54] Ibid.
- [55] Report on Resolutions, adopted at First Laymen's Convention. Quoted by Elias Bowen. op. cit., p. 171.
- [56] B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p.201.
- [57] Ibid., pp. 201.202.
- [58] Zenas Osborne, Born of the Spirit. (Saratoga Springs, New York: John Johnson and Company. 1888), pp. 111.112.
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- [61] J. G. Terrill, Life of Rev. John W. Redfield, M. D., p.201.
- [62] Statement in Resolutions of Laymen's Convention. Olean, New York, February 1 and 2, 1860. Quoted by J. G. Terrill. op. cit., pp. 434, 435.447-448.
- [63] Edward P. Hart, Reminiscences of Early Free Methodism, (Chicago, 1903), pp. 2127.
- [64] Wilson T. Hogue, History of The Free Methodist Church. (Chicago. Free Methodist Publishing House. 1915), pp. 137, 138; 208-218; 253-264; 282-285.
- [65] B. T. Roberts. Why Another Sect, pp. 206-217; 263-278.
- [66] "Religious Persecution," Niagara City, Herald, (October 8. 1859). Quoted by Elias Bowen,. op. cit., op. 140-145.
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- [70] Ibid. Quoted by B. T. Roberts. Why Another Sect, p.210.
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- [72] B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, pp. 274-278.
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[85] G. R. Crooks, Life of Bishop Matthew, Simpson. pp. 410, 411. Quoted by Abel Stevens, Supplemental History of American Methodism, (New York: Eaton and Mains. 1899). p.49.

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[94] Ibid.. p.220.

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[98] Ibid., pp. 223,224.

[99] Ibid. Bill of Charges against C. D. Burlingham. Quoted by B. T. Roberts Why, Another Sect, pp. 225. 229.

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[106] Ibid., p.247.

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[109] Rev. William Hosmer, Northern Independent, (November 17, 1859). p. 58.

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[127] B. T. Roberts. The Earnest Christian, (January. 1860). 32.

[128] Wilson T. Hogue. op. cit., I, p.289.

[129] B. T Roberts, Speech before Laymen's Convention. November, 1859. Quoted by Wilson T. Hogue, op. cit., pp. 289, 290.

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[137] Ibid.

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[140] B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, pp. 250, 251.

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[144] Buffalo Morning Express, quoted by B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, pp. 132. 133.

[145] Ellen L. Roberts, Personal Diary of 1880. Found among possessions of the Roberts family.

[146] John Robie. Buffalo Advocate, (May 24, 1800). p.2.

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[168] Resolution of Second Laymen's Convention. Quoted by B. T. Roberts,. *Why Another Sect*, p.261.

[169] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (March, 1860), 97.

[170] *Ibid.*

[171] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (February, 1860), 63.

[172] *Diary of Ellen L. Roberts*, entry for February 8. 1860.

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[175] James Mathews. *The Earnest Christian*, (February, 1897). 64.

[176] B. T. Roberts. *The Earnest Christian*, (August. 1864).

[177] *Ibid.*

[178] *Ibid.*

[179] B. T. Roberts. *The Earnest Christian* (January. 1860), 1.

[180] *Ibid.*

[181] *The Earnest Christian*, (February. 1860). 88.

[182] *Ibid.*

[\[183\]](#) Ibid.

[\[184\]](#) Ibid.

[\[185\]](#) Ibid.

[\[186\]](#) Ibid.

[\[187\]](#) Ibid.

[\[188\]](#) The Earnest Christian, (November, 1860), 366.

[\[189\]](#) Ibid.

[\[190\]](#) The Earnest Christian, (April 1861). 131.

EARNEST CHRISTIAN

CHAPTER VI

A NEW CHURCH COMES INTO BEING

A. RELATION TO METHODISM CONSIDERED

1. Early Statements Reviewed
2. Affiliations

B. THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1860

1. Roberts' Review of His Case
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C. FANATICISM CONSIDERED

1. Differing Views
2. Answers to Questions Proposed
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E. FORMAL ORGANIZATION OF FREE METHODIST CHURCH

1. The Convention Called
2. The Convention Organized
3. Items of Business
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A. RELATION TO METHODISM CONSIDERED

1. Early Statements Reviewed

In the beginning of the troubles in the Genesee Conference, it seems evident that there was no plan to form a different organization, either in the mind of Mr. Roberts or of the lay group who felt called to defend him and the other expelled ministers, for they had declared that they had not, and never had, "the slightest intention of leaving the church."[\[1\]](#) At a later time, there was no less desire expressed by the laymen who met in conventions, to remain true to the principles of the church. They said, "Our attachment to Methodism was never stronger than it is at present, and our sympathy and our means shall be given to the men who toil and suffer to promote it."[\[2\]](#) However, they were by that time identifying Methodism, not with the majority, but with the minority group, headed by Mr. Roberts. Their resolution further read, "We cannot abandon, at the bidding of the majority, the doctrines of Methodism, and the men who defend them."[\[3\]](#)

The action of the Third Laymen's Convention went still further toward separation in appointing an Executive Council on each district to superintend all camp meetings, General Quarterly Meetings, and such other general meetings as they might think proper, and to take general oversight of the work in the interim of the Lay Conventions.

Mr. Roberts and Mr. McCreery, as they continued their preaching during the time they had an exhorter's license, declared they had no thought of forming a new church. Mr. Roberts stated, "Neither of us had any thought of forming a new church; we had great love for Methodism and unfaltering confidence in the integrity of the body as a whole. We did not doubt that the General Conference would make matters right"[\[4\]](#)

2. Affiliations

That there was an attachment to Methodism on the part of some of those people seems to be evident by their subsequent attitudes.

The Rev. Joseph McCreery, Mr. Roberts affirmed, never really became reconciled to the new church after its organization, and took his position against its formation in the beginning. Although he finally joined the new organization, he never seemed to be committed to it or to give it his full support.

C. D. Burlingham, who was expelled in 1858 with three others, was finally restored to the Genesee Conference, and although he continued to preach for fifteen years, Mr. Roberts thought he "seemed a crushed, broken hearted men."[\[5\]](#)

Mr. Wells, expelled at the same session, joined the Presbyterian Church. Numbers of the sympathizers

remained with the Methodist church, among whom were Mr. Hosmer, editor of the *Northern Independent*, the man who was termed by Mr. Roberts the "John Knox of his day," and the Rev. Fay Purdy, the lawyer evangelist who held the camp meeting so near the Conference sessions in 1859.

Two of the six expelled ministers never joined the new church organization, and of the four who did, one was never fully reconciled. With these facts in mind, one may safely conclude that there was no real desire, on the part of some at least, for a new organization. In the beginning, the aim appeared to be to purge away what they felt to be elements of worldliness and departures from original Methodism.

B. THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1860

1. Roberts' Review of His Case

When the General Conference met, the Civil War was imminent, and the great question of the day was that of slavery. It is possible that this problem of such momentous implications to the Methodist Episcopal Church overshadowed the Genesee Conference difficulties and the appeals that came as a result of them, with a resultant lack of the consideration that might have been given in a normal period. Mr. Roberts reported that the Genesee Conference matters were passed over with as little attention as possible. Petitions came in from some fifteen hundred members, asking that the judicial action of that Conference might be thoroughly investigated. Mr. Roberts said the Genesee delegates professed great willingness at first to have their official actions thoroughly investigated. A committee of one from each Conference was then appointed for that purpose. Just as they were getting ready to enter upon their duties, a determined effort was made, so Mr. Roberts affirmed, by the Genesee Conference delegates, and their friends, to get the Committee discharged. Mr. Roberts felt this effort to block investigation of his case must look suspicious to any impartial person, but it nevertheless succeeded, and the Committee was dismissed. Of the six appeal cases, two only were entertained. The appeal of Mr. Roberts from a sentence of censure was heard by a Committee that proved to be equally divided. C. D. Burlingham's case was sent back to the Genesee Conference for a new trial, although Mr. Roberts thought there was nothing to try as all the facts were admitted.[\[6\]](#)

2. Committees to Handle the Case

A special committee had been first appointed to try the case through the efforts of friends of Mr. Roberts. Because of the opposition of certain members of the Genesee Conference, this committee was dismissed and the whole matter was referred to the Committee on Itineracy, which already had so many matters to consider that little time could be given to any one problem. Also it was late in the session when these matters were referred. When the first appeal of Mr. Roberts was heard, and the vote was tied in committee, there was evidence of divided sentiment on his case. Inasmuch as the vote was tied, the Bishop decided that a failure to acquit was a conviction, and therefore the sentence of the Genesee Conference must stand affirmed. Mr. Roberts said that the Judge in civil courts instructs the jury to give the prisoner the benefit of the doubt, but in his case, the Bishop was not so generous.[\[7\]](#) When the second

appeal of Roberts came up, Mr. Roberts, knowing the opposition of some who sat on the Committee, began to challenge the members of the committee, exercising the right of challenging for a cause. Two who were challenged were set aside. Mr. Roberts was not then permitted to challenge further, though he assigned as the cause that some of the jury had already committed themselves against him, and published articles hostile to him in the papers. His objections were over-ruled.^[8] Mr. Roberts added, "I have been credibly informed that it was the evident unfairness of the committee towards me in the outset that made one Bishop vacate the chair, because he did not wish to be a party to the wrong."^[9] Mr. Hosmer, editor of the *Northern Independent*, related that Dr. Curry and Mr. Hatfield, counsel for Mr. Roberts, presented "unanswerable arguments why the case should be heard upon its merits, but the eloquence was exerted in vain."^[10] The appeal from the sentence of expulsion was refused. Mr. Roberts asked a question which was very perplexing to him, "Why the same committee should hear my appeal from the sentence of reproof, and a few days later refuse to entertain my appeal from the sentence of expulsion, remains among the unsolved mysteries."^[11]

It is no doubt true from the standpoint of the written constitution of Methodist law that they did, as Mr. Roberts affirmed, "violate . . . the plainly expressed written constitution of the Church."^[12] However, if the Conference body felt inclined to accept the interpretation of Bishop Simpson in his law decisions in the Genesee Conference, which they did in approving them, then they probably felt that Mr. Roberts had invalidated his appeal by the course he pursued, and that he had virtually withdrawn from the organization through a movement of Bands and independent churches which the Methodist Episcopal Church considered a secession. Mr. Roberts felt that all his endeavors had been to promote Methodism, that his appeals should be heard, and that even if his course subsequent to appeal had been out of order, that as a proper tribunal of law, they should have heard him with reference to the specific charges brought against him then. However, the course of events that had developed, especially with reference to separate organizations, Mr. Roberts himself taking an active part in the congregational bands or churches, could not do otherwise than have a strong influence on the minds of the Conference with reference to his eligibility for appeal.

3. Slavery Influence in the Decision

One more consideration, the slavery issue, must be noted. The *Northern Independent*, strongly antislavery, charges that the South went solid with Dr. Hibbard and the "Regency." The editor asserted that the "border states" and the Regency were one in all the great questions that came before the General Conference, but that more specifically they all knew that Black River Conference had unanimously ordered a complaint to be made against the Philadelphia Conference, for allowing their leaders, stewards, and local traveling preachers to hold slaves in violation of Discipline. If the precedent of setting a special committee upon the track of an Annual Conference, with time and power to investigate fully, was instigated, then another committee might have been after the Philadelphia or Baltimore Conference the next week, and some unpleasant facts might have been brought to light. Hence all the border states and their friends voted to disband the committee.^[13]

In another article in the *Northern Independent*, Mr. Hosmer charged that the Genesee Conference

delegates voted with the "border states" delegates against a change of constitution on the question of slavery, and then when Genesee Conference matters came up, "the border pro-slavery delegates voted solid with the representatives of the majority of the Genesee Conference."[\[14\]](#) The unexplained change of sentiment in four years prompted Mr. Hosmer to ask, "We would like to know by what arguments they [Genesee delegates] were converted [to slavery], and when it was done."[\[15\]](#) The Genesee Conference had heretofore been considered one of the strongest anti-slavery Conferences in the connection.[\[16\]](#) Mr. Roberts agreed with the judgment of Mr. Hosmer. He referred to the fact that when these issues came up, the two groups "talked and voted lovingly together."[\[17\]](#) Then using a striking Scriptural figure Mr. Roberts affirmed

Herod and Pilate became friends. Baltimore helped Genesee to dispose of the 'Nazarites;' and Genesee helped Baltimore to substitute for the rule against slaveholding, some good, but powerless advice. We do not say that there was any bargain to this effect we have no proof of it but we do not believe that at that late day the Genesee delegates were really converted to pro-slavery doctrine. Nor do we believe that the border delegates were converted to the religious theories of the Genesee delegates. They still invite Fay H. Purdy who was called the ringleader of 'the sect called Nazarites,' to labor in that section.[\[18\]](#)

Whether or not this judgment was correct cannot be certainly decided, but considering the strong antislavery sentiments of the Genesee Conference previous to that time, it would appear that there was some degree of plausibility in the construction placed upon the affinity which there developed between Genesee Conference and border state delegates.

4. Injudicious Action of McCreery

All of the men associated with Mr. Roberts were not judicious in their proceedings. Joseph McCreery, who, Mr. Roberts said, truly loved the mother church, did present a couple of petitions to the General Conference which none but Mr. McCreery, with his flare for vivid language, would have done. One of these humbly petitioned

your venerable body, to inquire as sweetly as possible, and as thoroughly as you dare, into the constitutionality, lawfulness and fitness as respects precedent, or usage of the Episcopal interpretations of the Conventicle Act, passed at the last session of the Genesee Conference.[\[19\]](#)

The other petitioned the Reverend body to "abrogate the Conventicle Act consisting of five Pusyite Resolutions passed at the last session of the Genesee Conference."[\[20\]](#)

It is not surprising that the Rev. George Peck moved that these appeals be returned to their author. These are mentioned as a possible source of irritation in regard to the appeals that came before the General Conference. It is very probable that these petitions of McCreery were a source of embarrassment to Mr.

Roberts, who placed his own appeals seriously and managed them on a high and dignified level.

C. FANATICISM CONSIDERED

1. Differing Views

This brings up the consideration of a question that needs to be faced. Was the whole "Nazarite" movement fanatical? Did the movement have in it elements of fanaticism? The answer to the first question would have been answered in that day in both the negative and affirmative, according, to the person answering. Very strong statements in the negative, made by Dr. Elias Bowen and the Rev. Asa Abell, are hard to challenge in the light of their long experience with Methodism. Both of them claimed after long years of service in the Methodist Church, that this which was falsely termed "Nazaritism" was true Methodism.^[21] The First Lay Convention stated that "the charge brought against Brothers Roberts and McCreery, and the class of preachers denominated 'Nazarites,' of promoting fanaticism is utterly false and groundless."^[22] Dr. Bowen described some acts of physical demonstration and added, "but not so much as I used to see at Methodist camp meetings forty years ago."^[23]

One must also be cognizant of the many articles, written especially in the *Buffalo Advocate*, which charged the "Nazarites" with a species of rank fanaticism. Writing of the Bergen Camp Meeting, which was a center of attack, Mr. Robie described what he considered to be a scene of general confusion, and added that it "rivalled in ludicrousness anything we ever saw in a circus in the days of our boyhood."^[24]

Mr. Roberts in writing of the same meeting said that the best of order generally prevailed. Almost the only instances of wilful departure from becoming decorum that had come to his knowledge, had been, he was sorry to say, among those Methodist ministers, whose object in attending seemed to be to obtain material which would "enable wild imagination by misrepresentation, exaggeration, and false coloring to so mould over and paint, as to throw contempt upon the whole proceedings."^[25]

2. Answers to Questions Proposed

(a) First Question. The first question proposed, "Was this movement fanatical?" would have to be answered in the light of the evidence adduced. One of the strongest statements of the Methodistic character of "Nazaritism" is contained in a document signed by seventeen men who were associated with the movement, including B. T. Roberts, and which closed with the assertion

These charges, then, of forming an association encouraging fanaticism, having their origin, in the opinion of some, in ambition and jealousy; made and reiterated, it has been feared, with a design and for effect, if applied to us, we unhesitatingly pronounce to be unjust, iniquitous, slanderous and false.^[26]

Of those who signed this denial, five had been presiding elders, and four of them delegates to the General

Conference, showing that they were recognized leaders in their Conference. Only three of those seventeen ever became members of the Free Methodist Church; one joined the Presbyterian Church, one the United Brethren, and the rest remained with the Methodist Episcopal Church. In process of time, some of them became bitter enemies of the new church. "Yet," Roberts asserted, "we never heard that any of them ever made any statement, inconsistent with what they here say."[\[27\]](#)

(b) *Some Fanaticism Cited.* If the second question proposed were answered, "Were there elements of fanaticism in the movement?" the answer would be in the affirmative. Mr. Roberts was well aware of that fact. He stated that

some who had been clearly saved, unconsciously gave way to spiritual pride and self-will. A spirit of fanaticism was exhibited by some. They would neither be instructed nor controlled. No one had any authority over them. In the eyes of the public we were all held responsible for their unscriptural conduct. The conviction was forced upon us that there must be an organization, even if there were not a dozen to join it.[\[28\]](#)

(c) *Sermon of Chesbrough Acknowledged Fanaticism.* In a sermon preached by S. K. J. Chesbrough, taken in shorthand and published in the Free Methodist in 1900, is found a clear admission of elements of fanaticism. Said Mr. Chesbrough:

We had something to stand when we first started, after people got what is called the 'gifts.' They kept on the gift side, gift of healing, gift of tongues, gift of discerning of spirits, etc. They got into that trouble, into that conflict, and it led some into fanaticism Well, we had a great many 'things among us in the beginning as a church that came in to distract. We had a great deal of what is termed 'physical demonstrations.' Some of them were of the Lord and some of them were not.[\[29\]](#)

A formal action against such elements was taken, however, at the first Eastern Convention held at Rushford, New York. A resolution was introduced by Loren Stiles and passed, which asserted that as individual members of that convention, they did not believe that miraculous gifts in the commonly received theological sense of the term, were for us as Christians at the present day, to be obtained or exercised; nor did they believe that the gifts of healing, of working miracles, of prophecy, of discerning of spirits, of divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues, as miraculous gifts or powers, were any of them "attainable by any of the children of God at the present day."[\[30\]](#)

(d) *Women in Public Work.* Probably one of the causes of difference, and sometimes of distraction, was the place which Mr. Roberts gave to women in public work. Sentiment was greatly divided on that subject among the leaders. Loren Stiles especially was strongly opposed to the same. In the diary of Mrs. Roberts, we find an entry which is but typical and could be multiplied:

I led class in Pekin Tent, a good time. The cross was heavy but I resolved to go straight and do my duty. A searching time. Sister Purdy talked before preaching. It made a

commotion. Brother Purdy preached, a shower of salvation fell on us at the close of the session [\[31\]](#)

That was a day of contention for the rights of women. In June, 1852, a Women's Rights Convention was held in West Chester, Pa., in which the claims which have been wholly recognized today are found.[\[32\]](#) It was to be expected that it would be difficult for women to find their place in public worship, when they were allowed rights by some, and were checked by others. This whole issue became a cause of confusion, and lead some to question the leadership of the Spirit in their lives, including Mrs. Roberts, who was at that time continually in bondage as to whether she should speak or refrain from speaking in the public services. It became her particular "cross" and no doubt the cross of many another timid woman. Some of the new church leaders did not fully agree with Mr. Roberts on that issue.

[3. Conclusion Concerning Fanaticism in the Movement](#)

Elements of fanaticism were difficult to eliminate entirely in the early beginnings of the new movement, since such extravagances have often been an accompaniment of revival movements. Bishop Simpson asserted that "the excitement connected with these meetings passed into extravagance, which was sanctioned by their leading men as being evidences of the influence of the Holy Spirit."[\[33\]](#) That these tendencies were controlled under the direction of the new leadership is discovered in Bishop Simpson's further statement: "As the denomination has progressed, and has extended its boundaries, though their services are still characterized by much fervor, there is less of these manifestations."[\[34\]](#) It is interesting to note that Dr. Stephen Olin, a prominent Methodist minister of that day, spoke of the similar changes through which Methodism had gone:

There have been the new doctrines, and usages, and extravagances, it may be the hostility, the denunciation, and the polemic fray, and then the subsidence of passion the reluctant toleration, the dawning of bland charity then the brotherly salutations, and the blessed fellowship of Christian love, of prayer, and of good works.[\[35\]](#)

Many of the extragances of the earlier movement deepened with the group who refused, as Mr. Roberts expressed it, to be either instructed or controlled. This group did not go along with the new movement but continued to call themselves "Nazarites." Some of them retained their membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church and some of them did not, but Mr. Roberts said that all arrayed themselves against the Free Methodist Church and had always been its unrelenting opponents.[\[36\]](#)

[D. ACTIVITIES PURSUANT TO GENERAL CONFERENCE](#)

Following the rejection of the appeal of Mr. Roberts at the General Conference of the Methodist

Episcopal Church in 1860, he said, "We were, for a while, at a loss what to do. There was no denomination that agreed with us on the issues on which we were thrust out."[\[37\]](#) Mrs. Roberts, however, thought the turn of events in accordance with the best interests of her husband and the Gospel he represented. She recorded in her diary:

One of Mr. Roberts appeals was entertained. When they voted it was a tie. The last was rejected. It was all right. The Lord wants him outside the M. E. Church free and untrammelled to do a work for him. Brother Thurston, Purdy and wife and others took tea here. The General Conference has closed.[\[38\]](#)

The refusal of the General Conference to entertain Mr. Roberts' appeal from expulsion was the action which brought the new movement to crystallization.

1. Eastern Convention

Within a few weeks following the General Conference, a Convention was held, pursuant to a call issued in the *Northern Independent*, which met the latter part of June in the Methodist Episcopal Church of Sweden, near which a camp meeting was then in progress. About one hundred were present, and by a vote of between fifty and sixty, they declared that they were in sympathy with the doctrines and usages of the Methodist Episcopal Church, but recommended that when brethren did not enjoy them, that they should go out to organize bands and societies under the name of Free Methodist. They also resolved by about the same vote that J. W. Redfield, B. T. Roberts, J. McCreery, Jr., J. A. Wells, W. Cooley, S. C. Springer, M. Osborne Doyle, and others, be a committee to draft a code of rules for the regulation and government of said societies, to be adopted at a future delegated convention for which provision was made. B. T. Roberts was constituted a traveling missionary with discretionary powers, and also appointed a delegate to the Laymen's Convention to be held at St. Charles, Illinois.

The greater number in the Convention declared themselves to be in favor of separate ecclesiastical relations, and to that end, several characteristics of church polity were suggested which deviated somewhat from the Methodist polity which had been theirs. There was evidently quite a difference of opinion among them, and it is probable that the lack of harmony existed over the question of the organization of an independent movement, as is evident in the vote.[\[39\]](#)

2. Western Convection

It was not long before the course of events hurried Mr. Roberts into a further decision which more fully prepared him for the coming organization. When the General Conference had rejected his second appeal from expulsion, he had said, "I appeal to God and the people."[\[40\]](#) The people of the West were the first to call for his official services.

Mr. Roberts went to the Western Convention in company with six others from Bergen by way of the

New York Central, Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad to Chicago. They found the camp meeting located thirty-five miles west of Chicago.[\[41\]](#)

Mr. Hart described the camp as being a large circle of tents, in one of the finest groves for camp meeting purposes he had ever seen. Dr. Redfield, the evangelist, was in charge at the camp.

The meeting was well under way when Mr. Hart reached the ground, and he stated that there did not seem any disposition to control the emotions of the group. That there was much of divine power, he asserted, no one could question, but that there was also a good deal of the rankest fanaticism present no one could deny. Dr. Redfield did no more than to say good naturedly, "If the devil tells any of you to stand on your head, don't do it."[\[42\]](#)

It was there at the St. Charles Camp that for the first time E. P. Hart met Mr. Roberts. He gave his impression of Mr. Roberts in the following words:

He was about thirty-seven years of age and in the prime of his manhood. With a Roman cast of countenance, high, full forehead surrounded with hair black as a raven's wing, I thought he was one of the finest looking men I have ever seen.[\[43\]](#)

The Convention was called on July first, on grounds quite similar to the complaints in the East; namely, that old and reliable members had been expelled or read out of the Methodist Church. They met on a rail pile near the home of the man who owned the grove. After devotional exercises, Mr. Roberts was chosen president. They then ordered a camp meeting on the same ground the next year, and another the following September. A resolution was passed to the effect that they had strong attachment to the doctrines, usages, spirit and discipline of Methodism, but that they had witnessed with grief a departure of many of the ministers from the God-honored usages of Methodism; that they felt bound to adhere to them and to labor to promote the life and power of godliness; that they recommended for those in sympathy with the doctrine of holiness to labor on in the mother church, but in case this could not be done, they recommended the formation of Free Methodist Churches as contemplated in the convention held in the Genesee Conference in New York.[\[44\]](#) They then proceeded to organize and man the work, and, in order to take care of increasing appointments during the year, elected a committee of five. Dr. Redfield was made the Superintendent of the Western work, and B. T. Roberts was unanimously elected General Superintendent. Eighteen men, whom Mr. Roberts described as, in the main, young men of promise, went out under the auspices of that Convention. The work was described as then in a formative state, each man who was sent out to preach being under obligation to raise up his own circuit. Most of these ministers were appointed to places where members of the Methodist Episcopal Church had either been read out, or expelled, or were in disfavor with the M. E. Church.[\[45\]](#)

After Mr. Roberts had assisted in the camp meeting which just closed in St. Charles, he then went on to hold meetings at Clintonville, Kishwaukee, Franklinville, Marengo, Bonus, Woodstock and Queen Anne, where he said he found large and attentive congregations. He believed after that trip that God had begun a glorious work in northern Illinois. Some of the men who took part in that Convention became strong

leaders in the work in future years. E. P. Hart became the second General Superintendent of the church; J. G. Terrill, C. E. Harroun, and Joseph Travis filled places of great influence and usefulness in the new church. Dr. Redfield did not live long enough to enter largely into the work.

In September, 1860, following the formal organization of the Free Methodist Church in the East at Pekin, a Convention was held on a campground at Aurora, Illinois, the new discipline was adopted, and the western men went out to organize Free Methodist Churches.

E. FORMAL ORGANIZATION OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH

1. The Convention Called

The Eastern Convention which had met at Sweden, New York, following the General Conference of 1860, provided for and ordered a second Convention, which was called to meet August 23, 1860, at Pekin, Niagara County, New York, the place where Mr. Roberts had last served as a Methodist pastor, and near the home of Isaac and S. K. J. Chesbrough. A formal call was issued in the August number of *The Earnest Christian* for a camp meeting to convene at Pekin, twenty miles north of Buffalo, about forty rods from the depot, to commence on Thursday, the sixteenth of August. It was then announced that the convention would be held at Pekin, for the purpose of adopting a discipline for the Free Methodist Church, and that this would commence at the close of the camp meeting, August 23rd. All societies and bands that found it necessary, in order to promote the prosperity and permanency of the work of holiness, to organize a Free Methodist Church on the basis specified, were asked to send one delegate each, and an additional delegate for every forty members. The specified basis was listed under three heads as,

1. Doctrines and usages of primitive Methodism, such as the witness of the Spirit, entire sanctification as a state of grace distinct from justification, attainable instantaneously by faith. Free seats, and congregational singing, without instrumental music in all cases; plainness of dress.
2. An equal representation of ministers and members in all the councils of the Church.
3. No slaveholding; no connection with secret . . . societies. [\[46\]](#)

2. The Convention Organized

Following the camp meeting which was variously described as of great spiritual value, or of great fanaticism, according to the persons reporting, the Convention met at the scheduled hour. S. K. J. Chesbrough, the secretary of the Laymen's Conventions, who had been actively supporting the expelled ministers and the cause they espoused, was not in sympathy with the organization of a new church, and so refused to attend the Convention which was to meet so near his home. Instead he sat that day at his kitchen door where he could see some of what was transpiring. Just previous to the time when the Convention was scheduled to begin, he saw about a dozen men meet under an apple tree in back of his home, some standing, but most were sitting. He heard one of them make a motion that they proceed with

the organization of a church. After that, they arose and went over into the grove about a quarter of a mile away to conduct the regular session of the Convention that had been called. Thus it was determined by the leading men before the Convention met that the new church would be formed.[\[47\]](#)

After devotions were conducted, the Rev. A. A. Phelps was elected secretary of the Convention. He later recorded that fifteen preachers and forty-five laymen gathered on the camp site, a spot newly dedicated to God by the salvation of souls, and organized, electing Isaac M. Chesbrough as chairman. Mr. Roberts, in his account of the Convention, estimated about eighty laymen were present.[\[48\]](#)

Quite a discussion took place as to the propriety of organizing at that time. Joseph McCreery, Alanson Reddy, W. Cooley, and Mr. Farnsworth were among the ministers who were opposed to organization. Dr. Redfield stepped into the discussion at a critical moment, and said, "Brethren, when fruit is ripe, it had better be picked, lest on falling it bruise. In the west we are in favor of an organization. If in the East you are not ready, wait until you are."[\[49\]](#) Mr. Roberts arose and answered as follows: "We are ready, and the West and the East should move in the matter simultaneously."[\[50\]](#) This evidently brought the matter to a vote, and when the vote was counted, all but seven, five preachers and two laymen, stood up in favor of effecting an organization immediately.[\[51\]](#)

3. Items of Business

The first item of business after the organization of the new church was completed was the election of B. T. Roberts as General Superintendent. Mr. Roberts had argued for a Standing Committee that would have general oversight of the infant church,[\[52\]](#) but the delegates to the Convention felt otherwise. In his diary for August 23, 1860, Mr. Roberts wrote:

To my surprise the choice [as General Superintendent] fell on me. Lord, give me heavenly wisdom to guide me! It was a heavy cross to accept the appointment, but I did not dare to decline, because of the conviction that God called me to this labor and reproach and responsibility. Yet, oh, to what calumny it will subject me! Lord, I will take the cross and the shame. Let me have Thy presence and help, O God of power.[\[53\]](#)

The position granted to Mr. Roberts as leader was not unchallenged. Other men of ability and devotion had their friends who became their champions, who were not unwilling to advocate their claims for consideration.[\[54\]](#) The choice, however, proved to be a happy one for the new organization, for Mr. Roberts was young, then only thirty-seven years of age, full of vigor, and he had many years of service ahead of him.

There was evidently little discussion about a name for the new church; at least no record of such has been found. Several Free Methodist Churches were in existence, one in Buffalo called the Buffalo Free Methodist Episcopal Church; others were found in Clintonville, Illinois; St. Louis, Missouri; Albion, New York; and perhaps Rochester and Syracuse. The term Free Methodist Church had been used for

several years, and it was only natural that this name should be accepted. However, Mr. Roberts wrote in after years that he, probably not wishing to involve the Methodist name, had favored the name "Free Church Connection."[\[55\]](#) The Rev. C. D. Brooks, a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, wrote to Mr. Stiles shortly after his expulsion in 1859, that he thought a good name for the independent congregational church Mr. Stiles organized would be the "Free Methodist Church." He then appended his reasons, as embodying the following principles: free from slavery and secret societies, free seats in all churches, free from the outward ornaments of pride, and free in Christ. Not long after, he learned that Mr. Stiles had endorsed the name and principles, and further, that one year later, the same name and principles were embodied in the new Discipline of the Church adopted at Pekin. He further stated that one chapter of the new Discipline was in his own handwriting, although he was still a member of the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.[\[56\]](#)

Mr. Roberts claimed that in considering the provisions of the Discipline presented by the committee appointed for that purpose, every new feature was scanned most critically. The laymen entered so fully into this discussion that Mr. Roberts was convinced that any church that excluded laymen from their councils was a great loser. After a careful consideration, item by item, and adoption with "singular unanimity,"[\[57\]](#) Mr. Roberts commented, "It was as surprising as delightful to notice the similarity of views entertained by men who think for themselves, coming from different parts of the country."[\[58\]](#)

An article on entire sanctification, taken from Wesley's writings, was adopted. Mr. Loren Stiles desired to have a paragraph on gradual sanctification entered as well as the instantaneous view, but Dr. Redfield contended, "Brethren, I would not make a threat, but unless we go straight on the question of holiness in the Discipline we had better halt where we are."[\[59\]](#) He believed that the gradualistic theory was the cause of the trouble which precipitated the new organization, and hence strongly stated, "We are John Wesleyan Methodists. We must not dodge that point."[\[60\]](#) Also an article on future rewards and punishments, drawn from the Bible, was inserted, due to the practice of some ministers in the region affiliating with Universalists, supplying their pulpits, and going without rebuke to their communion.

With reference to polity, the following provisions were made:

1. The annual and quadrennial conventions were to be composed of an equal number of laymen and ministers.
2. The episcopacy and presiding eldership were abolished. A District Chairman was substituted for the latter.
3. Class leaders and stewards were to be chosen by the members.
4. The sacred right of every accused person to an impartial trial and appeal was carefully guarded.[\[61\]](#)

Several searching questions were entered, to be asked of those intending to join the organization. It was imperative for every person who joined the church to be able to answer affirmatively that he had the witness of the Spirit that he was a child of God. Mr. Roberts stated that so far as his knowledge went, the new church was the only one to propound the further question for those wishing to join in full

connection, "Have you that perfect love which casteth out fear? If not, will you diligently seek until you obtain it?" The first question was inserted because Mr. Roberts thought, as well as others of the Convention, that they should include all the saved and none but the saved,[62] and also to keep out an influx of those who might not be spiritually ready to become substantial members of the new organization.[63] One who had been prominent in the Pekin Convention wrote shortly afterward, "We saw that we were liable to be flooded by the mass of disaffected and discontented religious people, in and out of the church, who were ready to join anything that would be radically opposed to the existing order of things. Hence the question on receiving members." [64] They also wished to avoid the declension which they believed to have occurred in Methodism, which declension had been proclaimed in the columns of *The Advocate* just prior to the days of the Conference conflicts. "There is no occasion of blinking the fact," printed that organ, "that a new element, or rather, the old worldly element, is creeping insidiously into the communion of the body of Christ." [65]

A comment on the origin of these questions on membership came out when an attempt to change one of them in the General Conference of 1894 was voted down. The editor of the *General Conference Daily* recorded that Mr. Roberts once told him that these questions had come to him one day while he was praying during the Convention at Pekin. [66] The second question was urged to maintain the emphasis on the experience of holiness which they believed had suffered decline among them. According to William Warren Sweet, "In the two decades previous to the Civil War Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection was largely neglected and had become little more than a creedal matter among the main Methodist bodies." [67]

The introduction of these two questions, especially the first, emphasized the statement of Mr. Roberts, in October, 1862, when he said, "We have no desire to get up simply a large church; but we do hope that our societies will be composed, exclusively, of those who are in earnest to gain heaven, and who are determined . . . to live up to the requirements of the Bible." [68]

The inclusion of free seats for the purpose of reaching the masses was not to be interpreted to mean that they would lower the requirements of membership in order to reach the masses. Dr. Elton Trueblood has stated that what we want is a group so devoted and so rightly organized that it can work as effectively for redemptive ends in our time as the first Christians worked in the first century. The way to begin, he stated, is to take seriously Hitler's principle of limitation of membership. [69] A prominent sociologist of our day affirms that a band of a hundred, or of fifty, or even of ten living Christians, strong in mutual affections and confidence, and entire in their devotedness to Christ and the salvation of souls, would, he was confident, wield an amount of religious influence immeasurably greater than is usually exerted by our largest and most flourishing churches. Mr. Roberts would, without any doubt, subscribe to the sentiment expressed by Richard Pyke, when he asserted in his book which followed the second centenary anniversary of Methodism, "We must be a holy people before we can be a powerful church. The desire to add to our numbers may be only a secular passion after all." [70]

4. Results of the Convention

(a) *The Withdrawal of Those Who Were Opposed to Organization.* Immediately following the organization of the Free Methodist Church, those who looked with disfavor upon it, headed by the dissenting ministers, withdrew to form the "Nazarite Band." The Rev. and Mrs. W. Cooley, and the Rev. Joseph McCreery went with them for a time. Later, Mr. Cooley, finding himself out of harmony with the actions of the Nazarite Band members at a camp meeting at East Selby, New York, reversed his decision and joined the new church. Mr. McCreery eventually joined also.

The Nazarite movement set itself up in direct opposition to the Free Methodist Church, often endeavoring to hold meetings at the same time. Both conciliation and radical treatment failed in many instances, since some of the leaders of the Nazarite movement manifested marvelous self-possession and equanimity of spirit. Fanaticism in its wildest forms was reported among them, and as the weaknesses of Naziritism became apparent, some joined the new church and others drifted away from the Bands. The main leader was Manson Reddy, formerly a local preacher of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and one of the five who voted against the organization of the Free Methodist Church, to which he never belonged. It was reported that he would pass himself off as such when it was to his advantage in entertainment during his later travels.

One type of interference which Mr. Reddy gave the new church is indicated in the diary of Mrs. Roberts.

Brother Stiles preached. Brother Reddy in the midst of the sermon went up and laid his hands on his head. He stood still and bore it. Brother Reddy fell and Brother Stiles went on preaching.[\[71\]](#)

At the same camp meeting, some of the members of the Nazarite Band attended, and seemed to have separate meetings. Mrs. Roberts recorded that the Nazarites had a meeting back of the "Wales tent." Several got up into a wagon and talked some. It was Mrs. Roberts' opinion that there was little of the Spirit in their talk. Joe Miller preached against organization, and a "Brother Tinkham" said primitive power could not come into any organization of earth.[\[72\]](#)

(b) *Organization of the First Class.* At the same camp meeting where the church was organized on Thursday, August 23, 1860, on the Sunday following, B. T. Roberts formed the first class under the newly adopted Discipline. Nineteen persons answered the questions, and were taken into full relationship. This followed the regular Sunday morning service, and the questions of the new Discipline were written on a piece of paper from which Mr. Roberts read them. The original record book has been lost, and it has been possible to secure only fifteen of the original nineteen names that were that day recorded. Included in that number were Ann E. Chesbrough, Annette Groves, Adaline Rose, Jane E. Cushing, Jarvis Pike, George Rose, Ursula Mitchell, Cornelia Castle, George W. Carl, Joshua Carl, Elizabeth Carl, Lewis E. Chase, Lucina Chase, Jesse W. Murdock and Elsie S. Murdock.[\[73\]](#)

(c) *Consolidation of the Work and Its Immediate Extension.* Moses N. Downing, a minister of the new church, in portraying those early days, said he well remembered the danger of fatality in launching the ship, but through the wisdom given to Dr. Redfield and B. T. Roberts "the little craft safely moved from

its blocking and out into the water, sailed down to Port Rushford where, in October following, a full managing crew was put in charge of affairs, and the craft put to sea." [74] He referred to the first Eastern Convention (later called Conference) of the Free Methodist Church which was held in Rushford, Allegany Co., N. Y. It was composed of fourteen preachers and fourteen lay delegates. The district chairmen were authorized to employ ten other preachers; and even then all the places that called for preachers could not be supplied. The question of a weekly paper was discussed and a committee appointed to raise sufficient funds to buy type, press and other fixtures. Mr. Roberts was afraid that a paper at that time would foster a Controversial spirit by printing all the varying views of the different people at that crucial juncture. Mr. Roberts had consistently refused to publish anything of a controversial nature in *The Earnest Christian*, doubtless realizing fully the effect of the controversial articles printed in the press during the difficult times of the Genesee Conference in the Methodist Church. That he wished to avoid. He expressed as his opinion that what they needed was a general, deep and thorough revival of religion. He looked "upon the worst of encouragement to start a weekly paper at this time, as providential." [75] The appointments were made by five laymen and five preachers, and embraced two districts, the Genesee and the Allegany. Mr. Roberts was evidently made chairman of the Genesee District, though his name does not appear in his own published account, and A. F. Curry was made chairman of the Allegany District. Ten circuits were listed on the Genesee District and nine on the Allegany. Four places were left to be supplied. [76]

At that Convention, a resolution of the Rev. Loren Stiles against miraculous gifts was passed. Mr. Roberts asserted that he knew of no one who made any such pretensions interpreted in the theological sense of the term, and thought the best way to meet their critics was with silence. [77] In an article written on the subject, he endeavored to distinguish between miracle in the theological and philosophical sense, ruling out the former on the ground that they were proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the authority of some particular person. He approved miracles in the philosophical sense, and cited the readers to an article by Dr. Elias Bowen which he would publish in the next issue of *The Earnest Christian*, which he thought was worth the subscription price of the magazine. In that article, Dr. Bowen, still a minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church, took the position that the gifts in general were bequeathed to the church as a perpetual inheritance, and miracle working power to the end of time. [78] These gifts, Dr. Bowen continued, were the fruit of a state of grace and not its condition, and that they were far less valuable than the ordinary gifts we possess. They were not to be sought and no one should boast in them, but if in the power of one of them, they should, like Christ, be content with demonstrating it. [79] That Mr. Stiles and Mr. Roberts were somewhat at variance on that point is evident. Sometime before the Rushford Convention where the resolution against miraculous gifts was passed, Mrs. Roberts wrote in her diary:

This morning Brother Belden [a Congregationalist minister] confessed from the stand that he had received 'the gift of faith' in the night. Brother S. [Stiles] opposition to the gifts is the means of convicting some. I had not heard them mentioned here till he opposed them, classing them with women's preaching Brother Stiles has left. He told Brother Roberts these things should be straightened out this fall at the Convention. He was determined to put some things down - women preaching and the gifts. [80]

Probably Mr. Stiles would have said that the comments of Mr. Roberts took away the force of the resolution. However, Mr. Roberts knew that many good people who were members of the organization were of a varying opinion. To have taken a hard or rigid position at that stage of the history of the infant church would no doubt have been detrimental from the standpoint of ingathering.

The Rushford Camp Meeting immediately preceded the Convention which has just been discussed. A report on that meeting mentioned not only a good band of "earnest Christians" but also the fact that they had purchased the old Methodist Church. Immediately following that meeting, Mr. Roberts went to a camp meeting held at Aurora, Illinois, where he said he found a good attendance at the services. He reported that the men gave up their tobacco and women their jewelry when they got converted. That meeting was followed by another at Mount Pleasant, Ogle County, but forty miles from the Mississippi. The Bonus Grove Camp Meeting kindled a fire on that beautiful prairie, he believed, that would not soon be extinguished.[\[81\]](#)

On October 19, 1860, the Second Free Methodist Church at Buffalo, located on Pearl Street, was dedicated. To secure that building was a great sacrifice to Mr. Roberts, inasmuch as it meant giving up his own home as a down payment. Both house and lot, valued at fifteen hundred dollars, were turned in on the three thousand five hundred dollars which he had to pay for a former theatre building. The deed for that property is still preserved among his papers. This left him homeless. He said he would give the whole of this cheerfully if needed.[\[82\]](#) Mr. Roberts wrote of the purchase of the building in an article in *The Earnest Christian* and mentioned that five hundred dollars had been subscribed at the Bergen Camp, and that one woman had given a gold watch chain, and another a gold watch.[\[83\]](#) Concerning their own sacrifice, Mrs. Roberts testified that before that time they were often in close circumstances, at times finding it difficult even to buy a postage stamp, but ever after that experience they were given more and never knew the stringency of finances that sometimes arose in the earlier days.[\[84\]](#) Mr. Roberts was glad that he had done what he did, and said he believed that the old theatre, now a church, would be the birthplace of hundreds if not thousands of souls. Above all, he rejoiced:

It is FREE. Glory to God! there is one place in the heart of this large wicked city where the poor may have the Gospel preached to them; one place where the auctioneer's voice is not heard converting the house of God into a house of merchandise [\[85\]](#)

A prayer by Dr. Redfield and a message by Mr. Stiles climaxed the simple services that dedicated the plain, unpretentious brick building which would seat five or six hundred people.

Mr. Roberts wrote of the new church in Buffalo in 1861 that scarcely a week had elapsed that some souls had not been saved,[\[86\]](#) and that during the preceding three months, over thirty had been received on probation. At that time, they had about seventy members and a congregation as large as could be crowded into the church, many having to leave for lack of standing room.[\[87\]](#) At one service, they had representatives of five different nations kneeling at the altar for prayer. There was still a debt of eighteen hundred dollars at that date, but Mr. Roberts was already planning to open another church when this one

was paid off.[\[88\]](#)

Some months after Mr. Roberts sold his home to buy the first Free Methodist Church in Buffalo, a Mr. Day asked him to call. To the surprise of Mr. Roberts, Mr. Day presented him with a deed for a lot much more valuable than the one he had sold. The gift was an acknowledgment of gratitude for counsel which had brought peace and happiness to Mr. Day in his old age. Through the aid of friends, Mr. Roberts was able to build a new house upon that lot. The property became much more valuable than the one he had given. Later, when he sold that house, he gave one thousand dollars of the sale price to help the St. Louis Church, in recognition of what others had done to help him in a time of need.[\[89\]](#)

In October Mr. Roberts wrote his wife that the work at Pekin was going very well. Some had been converted since camp meeting. He mentioned that a Mr. J . . . had just written S. K. J. Chesbrough stating that the new church had its foundation in "resentment, pride and ambition." He judged Alanson Reddy was very bitter against them.[\[90\]](#) He thought the work at Buffalo had not suffered unduly by his absence. Then he petitioned his wife, "Pray for me. *I am looking up.* I hail from the upper regions."[\[91\]](#)

Although Mr. S. K. J. Chesbrough had been one of the most active of the laymen of the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in trying to adjust the difficulties that had arisen, and although he had been a staunch supporter of Mr. Roberts, yet he was not in harmony with the organization of a new church, and did not attend the Convention when it was organized. His wife had joined the first class three days following the organization of the church, but Mr. Chesbrough had remained aloof. Less than three months later, Mr. Roberts received from him a letter which began thus:

Salvation! my dearly beloved, if I can be used to the glory of God in waging war against sin in connection with the infant church just starting out, HERE I AM. 'Where duty calls there am I.' Jesus calls, I can no longer stay.[\[92\]](#)

He then quoted a chorus often sung, "Nay, but I yield, I yield," and expressed himself further, "I have concluded after deep, powerful and prolonged struggling to look square at the cross long enough for the Lord to tell me what he wants."[\[93\]](#) He continued that he could no longer deny that the cross lay in the Free Methodist Church. He then offered himself part time for the work of the church, and said that if in the future it was felt that he had gifts and graces he would give himself wholly to the task.[\[94\]](#) Mr. Chesbrough became a leader in that region for years, and finally was elected to take charge of the publishing interests of the church.

All the situations Mr. Roberts faced did not produce encouragement, however. He was still bearing heavily the debt incurred in the purchase of the church in Buffalo. Financial pressures were not the best antidote to his spirits just before Christmas. He wrote, "*But these are critical times. Everything tends to discourage.* But my trust is in Jesus."[\[95\]](#) He felt there was a great work to be done, and he was going about it as he had never done before.

In the month of November, 1860, Mr. Roberts noted in *The Earnest Christian* that the demand for the new Discipline of the Free Methodist Church had been so great that he had been unable to fill the orders, they had come in so fast. He had published all he supposed would be needed for two years to come, but one half were already sold. The heaviest cross he ever took up, he declared, was in the publication of that Discipline, but he had no doubt that it would prove a great blessing to those who would adopt it and live up to it.^[96] A letter came to him about that time which was copied in full in *The Earnest Christian*, in which the writer said that inasmuch as he believed that the Free Methodists were by that time well organized into a body, he desired to be better informed concerning them. He had long prayed for a revival of old-fashioned Methodism, and held himself in readiness to identify himself with such a people, whether rich or poor, few or many, and requested a Discipline as soon as it was ready.^[97]

(d) Conclusion. At the end of the year 1860 the infant church was in its initial stages. In certain instances, especially in Buffalo, and a few places in the middle west, great crowds attended the services. However, in the main, the road over which it had trodden had not been easy. Mr. J. G. Terrill, who was conversant with those early days, commented that just as the outstanding incidents quoted in the history of early Methodism were not common to the movement, the same was true of Free Methodism. He said some scenes of remarkable power did take place, but they were the exceptions rather than the rule. The Free Methodist Church did not have a phenomenal growth. The affirmations of the church on the great moral questions of the day were too strict for that. Mr. Terrill said that the greatest obstacle of the new organization had been its own blunders.^[98]

The future career of Mr. Roberts was to be identified with the new church he had organized, and over which he had been given general supervision. Dr. Elias Bowen of the Methodist Episcopal Church heartily congratulated him on being thrust out into the field, and thought that it was in the order of providence that he should improve the occasion to proclaim earnest Christianity to the people. He was persuaded that officialism would never do it, but it would take a live man and a pure press to lead the van. He then asked the question, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the throne of obloquy and martyrdom for such a time as this?"^[99] The course of Mr. Roberts was to lead him through more than thirty years of the history of the church, so that to a very great extent, a full account of his later life is the history of the movement.

ENDNOTES

^[1] Resolution passed by Laymen's Convention, December 2, 1858. Quoted by Elias Bowen, *History of the Origin of the Free Methodist Church*. (Rochester, New York, 1871), p.170.

^[2] Resolution of Second Laymen's Convention, November 1, 2, 1859. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, *Why Another Sect*, pp. 259, 260.

^[3] *Ibid.*, p.260.

[4] B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p.188.

[5] Ibid., p.254.

[6] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (July, 1860), 226, 227.

[7] B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p 284.

[8] Ibid., p.284.

[9] Ibid.

[10] William Hosmer. Northern Independent, (June 28, 1860). 186.

[11] B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p.265.

[12] Ibid., p.269.

[13] William Hosmer, Northern Independent, (May 24.1860), 167.

[14] William Hosmer, Northern Independent. Quoted by B. T. Roberts,. Why Another Sect. p.298.

[15] Quoted by B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p.298.

[16] Ibid., p.297.

[17] Ibid., p.301.

[18] Ibid., pp. 300, 301.

[19] Joseph McCreery, Buffalo Advocate, (May 17, 1860).

[20] Ibid.

[21] Asa Abell, Northern Independent, (March 10, 1859). Quoted by B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p.136. Elias Bowen, D D History of the Origin of the Free Methodist Church, (Rochester. New York, 1871), p.165.

- [22] Committee on Resolutions, First Laymen's Convention, December, 1858. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, *Why Another Sect*, p. 194
- [23] Elias Bowen, D. D., *The Earnest Christian*, (October, 1866), 129
- [24] John Robie, *The Advocate of Buffalo*, (July 12, 1860), 2
- [25] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (August, 1860), 255.
- [26] Article "Genesee Conference Matters," *The Northern Independent*. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, *Why Another Sect*, pp. 23-25.
- [27] B. T. Roberts, *Why Another Sect*, p.26.
- [28] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (May, 1884), p. 161.
- [29] S. K. J. Chesbrough. *The Free Methodist*, (February 20, 1900), p.2. Reported by Miss Hannah Jacobson, stenographer.
- [30] Resolution passed by First Eastern Convention of Free Methodist Church. Quoted by B. T. Roberts. *The Earnest Christian*, (December. 1860), p.393.
- [31] Ellen L. Roberts. *Diary*, June, 1859. Found among personal possessions of the Roberts family.
- [32] *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, (June 24.1852), p. 3.
- [33] Matthew Simpson, *Cyclopedia of Methodism*, (Fifth Revised Edition 1876), p. 180.
- [34] *Ibid*.
- [35] Stephen Olin, *The Works of Stephen Olin*, Vol. 1. *Sermons and Sketches* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1854). p.276.
- [36] B. T. Roberts, *Why Another Sect*, p.63.
- [37] B. T. Robert *The Earnest Christian*, (May. 1884). p.161.
- [38] Ellen L. Roberts, *Diary of May*, 1859. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[39] Wm. S. Tuttle, *The Advocate*, (June 28, 1860).

[40] B. T. Roberts, *Why Another Sect*, p.285.

[41] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*. (August. 1810), 255, 251.

[42] E. P. Hart, *Reminiscences of Early Free Methodism*, (Chicago). Free Methodist Publishing House, 1903), p.45.

[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 45.

[44] Quoted by Joseph Goodwin Terrill, *The Life of Rev. John W. Redfield, M.D.*, p.450.

[45] *Ibid.*, p.451.

[46] B. T. Roberts. *The Earnest Christian*, (August, 1860), 280.

[47] S. K. J. Chesbrough, *The Free Methodist*, (August 9,1910), 8.

[48] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (September, 1860), 291.

[49] Wilson T. Hogue, *op. cit.*, I,321.

[50] *Ibid.*

[51] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (September. 1860), 291.

[52] B. T. Roberts. *Diary of 1860*. Quoted by Wilson T. Hogue, *op. cit.*, I.328.

[53] *Ibid.*.

[54] B. H. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*, (August 9.1910). 501.

[55] Letter from B. T. Roberts, to wife. from Jacksonville to North Chili, October 14, 1881. Among personal letters of Roberts family.

[56] C D. Brooks, Letter to Bishop Hogue. Quoted by Wilson T. Hogue, *op. cit.*, I, 326.

[57] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (September. 1860), 291.

[58] Ibid.

[59] John W. Redfield. Quoted by Wilson T. Hogue, op. cit., I, 322.

[60] Ibid.

[61] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (September, 1860), I, 291.

[62] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (June, 1883), 167.

[63] The Free Methodist, (October 15, 1890). 3.

[64] Ibid.

[65] John E. Robie, The Advocate, (May 7, 1857), VIII, 383.

[66] General Conference Daily, (October 18, 1894), 135.

[67] Wm. Warren Sweet, Methodism in American History, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), p.341.

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[69] Elton Trueblood. The Predicament of Modern Man, (New York: Harper and Bros., 1944). p.101

[70] Richard Pike, John Wesley Came This Way, (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), p.153.

[71] Personal Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts, July 9.1861. Found among personal belongings of the Roberts family.

[72] Ibid.

[73] The Free Methodist, (August 9. 1910), 499.

[74] Moses N. Downing. The Free Methodist, (August 9, 1910), 4.

[75] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (December, 1860), 192, 393.

[76] Ibid., p.393.

[77] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (December. 1860). 393.

[78] Dr. Ella, Bowen, The Earnest Christian, (January, 1861), 5-8.

[79] Dr. Ella, Bowen, The Earnest Christian, (February. 1861). 39.

[80] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts, September 3.1861. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[81] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (October. 1860), 320.322.

[82] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (August, 1860), II, 259.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Adella P. Carpenter, Ellen Lois Roberts, Life and Writings, (Chicago: Woman's Missionary Society, Free Methodist Church, 1926), p.73.

[85] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (November, 1860), 363.

[86] Ibid., (August, 1881), 255.

[87] Ibid., (November, 1861), 355.

[88] Ibid.

[89] B. H. Roberts, op. cit., 553, 554.

[90] Letter from B. T. Roberts. Buffalo, to his wife, Chicago, October 1, 1860. Found among letters of the Roberts family.

[91] Ibid.

[92] S. K. J. Chesbrough, Letter to B. T. Roberts, November 7, 1860. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[93] Ibid.

[\[94\]](#) Ibid.

[\[95\]](#) Letter from B. T. Roberts, Utica, to his wife, Buffalo, December 21, 1860. Found among personal letters of B. T. Roberts.

[\[96\]](#) B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (November, 1860), 366

[\[97\]](#) *The Earnest Christian*. (November, 1860). 365.

[\[98\]](#) J. G. Terrill. *The Free Methodist*, (December 19, 1894), 2.

[\[99\]](#) Letter from Dr. Elias Bowen. Quoted in *The Earnest Christian*, (August, 1860), 256.

EARNEST CHRISTIAN

CHAPTER VII

EARLY PERIOD OF SUPERINTENDENCY 1860 TO 1870

A. TRAVELER

1. Extent of Travels
2. Character of the Work
3. New Recruits
4. Reactions to Issues of the Day
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B. ORGANIZER AND PROMOTER OF CHURCHES

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C. FOUNDING OF A SCHOOL

D. OFFICIAL GATHERINGS OF THE PERIOD

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E. CIVIL WAR AND SLAVERY

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H. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

I. RESUME

A. TRAVELER

1. Extent of Travels

Mr. Roberts, following the pattern of the two years pursuant to his expulsion, continued his strenuous labors in travel. William Gould attributed the extent to which the new church enlarged in that early period to "the apostolic travels and self denying work"^[1] of the first General Superintendent. Heeding the calls that came to him from all quarters, he went north, south, east, and west, taking advantage of every opportunity that presented itself. He journeyed to Binghamton; and thence south and east. He preached on the street in Carbondale in 1861 and went on to New York City where a holiness meeting was started in the home of the Rev. William Belden, a Presbyterian, who became one of his fast friends and strong helpers. There he came into fellow-ship with D. F. Newton, editor of *The Golden Rule*; and in 1862, Mr. Newton became joint-editor of *The Earnest Christian*. He was back in New York three times in 1864; and records of his visits to Windsor and Deposit are found. In 1865 he was at White Haven and Canaan; Catasqua, Pennsylvania and Vineland, New Jersey in 1867, and later at Elizabeth, Kingwood, and Dover in the same state. The year 1869 found him at Harpersville, Bainbridge, and Philadelphia and many other points.^[2]

2. Character of the Work

Mrs. Roberts, who had previously seemed to discern some things on the basis of the labors which her

husband had already begun, had a vision, so she records, of what her husband was to do. In her diary are found these words:

Last night, after lying down, I saw a map distinctly as I ever saw anything, and railroads, cities, towns and villages upon it. It seemed to me my husband and I had a great work to do, and a small part of it was shown me. Oh, how Satan has told me the Lord had nothing more for us to do. How sorely he has thrust at me for these days.[\[3\]](#)

True to this "vision" Mr. Roberts went from place to place, preaching and endeavoring to extend the work which he had begun. In October of that year, he recorded that he held a grove meeting at Bonus, Illinois, where he had been one year before, and where there had not been a single Free Methodist in the neighborhood. He was surprised on arriving to discover "thirty large tents well filled with devout worshippers."[\[4\]](#) There he found the meeting "progressing most gloriously" under the management of the Rev. Judah Mead, District Chairman. On Sunday, he said, "the whole country turned out for miles around," and listened attentively to the Gospel. Twenty-seven united with the new church.[\[5\]](#) Several were converted in a meeting which he held in Washington Grove, Illinois, and he recorded that so great was the interest with some that the occupants of two of the tents remained on the ground a week after the camp meeting had closed and continued the services and that ten more professed conversion.[\[6\]](#) Just before this in Vestal, Broome County, New York, a two-day meeting had continued, he said, for a third day with "people flocking in for miles around."[\[7\]](#) When he returned home at the end of November, Mrs. Roberts recorded in her Journal, "It does seem so pleasant to sit down alone with my dear husband and children. Yet this is a rare thing with us, and as the Lord seems to order otherwise, I must be content."[\[8\]](#)

3. New Recruits

At the time of a General Quarterly Meeting held in Albion, the Rev. Asa Abell, who for forty years had been a travelling preacher of the Methodist Episcopal Church, cast his lot with the infant church. He was a man of recognized ability in his church, having been a delegate to four General Conferences of the Methodist Church, and a presiding elder for eighteen years. Mr. Roberts reported that there was scarcely a dry eye in the convention when Mr. Abell announced his conviction that the time had come when he must change his church relations. Mr. Abell expressed deep regret that the time had come when he felt he must take such a step, for he said of the Methodist Church, "She is my mother."[\[9\]](#) He believed, he said, that the holiness revival in that region which had been branded fanaticism, was a genuine work of God, and hence his sympathies were with those people. However, it was not without a real pull on his heartstrings that he made the decision he did, for he said that he "could sit down and cry for an hour."[\[10\]](#) He was made chairman of the Genesee District. The Reverend Levi Wood, who had been a member of the East Genesee Conference, also joined the new church about that time and twenty-eight of his members joined with him.[\[11\]](#) In the beginning of the year 1861, the Rev. C. D. Brooks, who, although a Methodist, had suggested the name for the new church, withdrew from the Methodist Episcopal Church, and with most of his members, joined the Free Methodist Church.[\[12\]](#)

4. Reactions to Issues of the Day

The reactions of Mr. Roberts to the issues of the day are also discovered in the performance of his task. An experience is recorded that a camp meeting in Illinois was dismissed a day early so the people could go home to vote against a rearrangement of the congressional districts because Mr. Roberts feared the pro-slavery party would get an advantage if the proposed redistricting were passed.[\[13\]](#)

While he was in New York in 1864, he was stirred by the great masses of people and the apparent inability of the church to meet their needs. The statistics which revealed that need once again gripped him as it did in previous years when he wrote his first articles while still in the mother church. At this later date, he had read in the *Christian Advocate and Journal* that there were not quite one half as many Methodists in New York then, as there had been forty-three years before, when one out of every thirty-eight of the population was a Methodist; at that time, only one in eighty-two. "Then they were a plain humble persecuted people," he affirmed,

the churches were free and the poor were welcomed, but now they have splendid edifices, almost boundless wealth, and fashionable congregations and pewed churches, but without the same power to reach the masses and lead them to Christ as forty years before. The Gospel in its purity must operate through free churches where the rich and poor meet together to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth.[\[14\]](#)

Mr. Roberts was still crusading for free seats.

5. Varied Experiences

In the month of January, 1864, Roberts traveled over twenty-eight hundred miles, preached eighteen times, provided matter for the February number of *The Earnest Christian*, besides writing letters and attending to other official duties. He reported that one half the calls that came to him could not be attended to. On the third of that month, he preached twice in Buffalo to a congregation much larger than he expected. The day was so cold and stormy that two women who had started home under the influence of liquor had fallen down by the way and had frozen to death. Starting out on the Great Western and Michigan Central Railroad in a storm that was raging furiously, he arrived at Detroit where he improved his time at an excellent public library gathering selections of some of the old divines for his magazine. He went on to Clintonville, Illinois, where the second Free Methodist Church was built, and preached; then proceeded to Freeport where he ministered to "a large, intelligent, and attentive congregation."[\[15\]](#) Then he traveled back to Ransomville, New York where he held a Quarterly Meeting. There the Wesleyan Methodist Church offered them the use of their house of worship, and "made themselves at home" among them. Fifteen persons joined the church at that meeting. Barnerville, Schoharie County, New York was next in line for a Quarterly Meeting, made possible by the labors of a Mr. A. Burdick. There he visited Howe's Cave, a natural curiosity of "surpassing interest" and entered its cool depths for two of the thirteen miles that had been explored. He took a ride in a small skiff on a creek that flowed in its depths and was wonderfully exhilarated in being permitted to enter for a short time "into another world where

darkness forever reigns."[\[16\]](#)

The Nazarite Band sometimes caused trouble and confusion, as they did at the Allegheny Camp Meeting where they held meetings in the rear of the Wales tent outside the circle of the regular encampment. Alanson Reddy, their leader, did not make things easy. Mr. Roberts recorded in his *Journal* an incident showing the confusion that sometimes came with their presence. During the regular service at the stand, the Nazarites held a separate service of their own, on the same campground. Mr. Roberts went to the Wales tent and found a number of "brothers" and "sisters" seated at a table while a Mrs. D. was "struggling about preaching." Mr. Roberts said he kindly asked them to close the meeting and go to the stand, and then at the close of the regularly scheduled service they might continue all night if they so desired. One of the women replied, "We will close when God tells us to," and another said, "The Holy Ghost began this meeting, and let Him close it." Then one of the Nazarite men sang to Mr. Roberts, "If you can't stand this Nazarite fire. . . ." They continued this meeting until some rowdies broke it up by imitating them in louder tones, and the whole ended in confusion. In spite of the attempt to disrupt the regular service, they had a good service at the stand, so Mr. Roberts thought.[\[17\]](#)

Mr. Roberts said of this Nazarite Band that instead of aiming to get sinners converted, they seemed to direct their efforts at what they called "a free time," that is, throwing off all restraint; that they put the leadership of the Spirit above the direction given in the Bible, and that instead of seeking purity and power, they seemed to seek reproach, and to glory in that. Also he felt that some of them had given way to a strong will and indulged in a wrong spirit.[\[18\]](#) One of the Nazarites arose in a regular service of the camp meeting, and stated that the Lord wanted her to say Mr. Roberts had a devil, and that the Rev. Asa Abell had been preaching for the devil ever since the camp commenced. So annoying had the fanaticism among the Nazarites become that Mr. Roberts said that many of the best people in the region had become afraid of any demonstration whatsoever, and that they were "afraid almost to let the Lord bless them."[\[19\]](#)

The travelling Superintendent was touched with the feeling of the infirmities of others. His own past experience had taught him to sympathize with the preacher of small means on a rundown charge. Many years later, Bishop Burton R. Jones said that he had often known Mr. Roberts to divide his wardrobe with the frontier preacher whose coat had grown "seedy" and thin with age. His attitude toward the young preachers in their ministrations was also mentioned by Bishop Jones. To one young preacher who expressed to Mr. Roberts his dread of preaching in his presence at camp meeting, he replied, "You need not be afraid of me; no one ever heard me criticize one of our young preachers." The young man said his manner was so kind that he felt the utmost freedom, sure of a sympathetic listener.[\[20\]](#)

Mr. Roberts as a traveler may be seen with his wife near Detroit, "crossing the river in a boat" and while so doing, calling for a cup of tea; and then bringing out a little package and eating their own "bread and butter."[\[21\]](#) Or he may be observed absentmindedly leaving the cars at Lockport on his way to Buffalo without his coat and having to spend a dollar and greatly inconveniencing himself to recover it."[\[22\]](#) Or perchance, he may be seen lying on a "wooden bottomed lounge" in a depot to snatch "a couple of hours of good sleep."[\[23\]](#) Twice within a month, in 1867, while riding on the cars, he was carried past the place at which he wished to stop. Though naturally of great vigor, his labors were exhausting. The first

experience of passing his stop occurred on New Year's day when he was going a few miles to unite in matrimony "an interesting couple of young disciples of Jesus." A conveyance was in waiting for him at the depot. The name of the station was duly called out, but he "paid no attention to it, for, worn out by toil and watching," he was fast asleep. When he awoke, he was miles away from the scene of the wedding. Fortunately another train was soon going back, but by then the conveyance was gone from the depot, and he had to walk two or three miles to reach the house of his friends. He was still there in time for the "interesting services."[\[24\]](#) He was, of course, more watchful for a season. However, some time later, he started for home, a distance of ten miles. The weather was cold, the cars warm, and he was exhausted from the labors of the Sabbath, and "the toils of the day." He heard the name of the station four miles from home called out; he remembered having a feeling of drowsiness, but after that he recalled nothing until he was near a station four miles beyond his desired destination. Anxious children were looking for their father at the proper station, and cordial greetings were waiting at home, but his "senses were locked in sleep." He had to make his way back through the storm and cold on foot, the best he could. He finally reached home in safety, but said he "learned a lesson" that would not "soon be forgotten."[\[25\]](#)

On another occasion he slept at "Brother Stoutenberg's" from 3:00 A.M., intending to get up for the 6:45 train. He did not waken until seven, but jumped up and ran to the depot, only to find that the cars were gone. Satisfied then to go back to the house to write letters, he again made his way to the depot to take the cars at 4:30. He was no more than seated before his host arrived to tell him that the stage did not leave Chenango till morning. That night he wrote, "I went back to the house and stayed all night. I went to bed at night, but did not sleep very well. I am tired and worn."[\[26\]](#)

Again, seated by the side of a "Brother Hook" who took him with his horse and sleigh to a place formerly known as Whopponock to a school, he arrived to tell his experience.[\[27\]](#) This was located four miles north of Norwich, on Christian Avenue. The next evening after preaching from the text, "Escape for thy life"[\[28\]](#) he returned to Norwich over four miles of drifted road, the horses walking nearly all the way. He did not reach his place of abode until half past eleven. It was probably the next morning when he penned these words in his *Journal*: "Retired very weary after twelve. A good day, but worked hard and had a cold ride."[\[29\]](#)

The January of 1869 found him starting out the new year "with hard work" and "a determination to work for the Lord" with all his might. He had dedicated a church at Pittsford, New York, the last day of the old year, and had then ridden to Rochester, where he took the cars to Lockport, and thence by sleigh to Charlottsville ten miles, and preached at a watch night meeting in the Baptist Church. He recorded, "The Lord helped me." That morning, he arose early and went ten miles to Lock-port, and took the train at night. At Spencerport, his two sons, George and Benson, met him with a sleigh to drive him on home. It was a "very cold, blustering day."[\[30\]](#)

In May of the same year, he was off to Spencerport, driven there by his son George, to take the 6:50 A. M. train for Rochester. There he spent the day until 4:00 P.M. mailing out *The Earnest Christian*. He then took the cars for Kennedy to go to Ellington. He reached Corning, New York, about eight o'clock that evening. There he called on an Amos Hard, whose name appeared in the past history of the movement. At

nine he went to a hotel, slept until twelve and once again took the cars for Kennedy, which he reached at seven the next morning. After taking breakfast with the pastor of the Baptist Church, the Rev. Mr. Willoughby, he rode with him five miles in his buggy to Ellington, where a Secret Society Convention was in progress, and where he was to give two addresses. He said, "I spoke in the evening, and endeavored to show that secret societies were wrong in principle and hurtful in their tendency. Some professed to be converted."[\[31\]](#) On May 6, his Journal entry records, "Spoke again in the convention this morning. Endeavored to show the demoralizing influences of secret societies upon their members."[\[32\]](#) Leaving the Convention, he tried for the express, but it did not stop, so he "took way freight to Salamanca,"[\[33\]](#) and from Salamanca rode the. express and "had a berth in a sleeping car."[\[34\]](#) After preaching in the church in New York on May 7th, he "had a very good night's sleep in the parsonage on the church cushions."[\[35\]](#) He then took the Erie Railroad cars for home, stopping at Binghamton at three o'clock in the morning, and called at "Brother Stoutenberg's." He rode with the Stoutenbergs in their buggy to Union to see Dr. Whitney. Then he was off on the accommodation train which reached Rochester at about eleven o'clock at night, and being too far from home and without a means of further transportation, he stayed in the Exchange Hotel that night. The next morning he spent writing in his office until twelve, and then he went home on the cars. There he "found all well," but discovered as he jotted down, "Satan is not dead, but Jesus prevails."[\[36\]](#)

[B. ORGANIZER AND PROMOTER OF CHURCHES](#)

[1. Promoter](#)

As a traveler, the main purpose of Mr. Roberts was to extend the work of the church he had helped to organize. He expressed as his hope that he would see the time come when free churches would be opened all over the land. He had no desire, he said, to build up a large denomination, but he did hope to see earnest Christianity prevail in all the churches. To this end, he believed that free churches were essential.[\[37\]](#) However, he worked hard, and put others to the task of promoting free churches and organizing them whenever possible.

On January 28, 1861, Mr. Roberts wrote to his wife of a meeting the day before which had lasted from nine o'clock in the morning till three in the afternoon. Then he rode six miles and preached that evening at Lyndonville where they organized a church.[\[38\]](#) The church at Rochester, New York which had been formed under the old discipline before the date of the formation of the Free Methodist Church, had grown from about twenty to sixty members. Since that date, they had adopted the discipline of the new church.[\[39\]](#) At a "Love Feast" there, they heard the testimony of a man, one hundred and one years old, who had been a drummer boy in the Revolutionary War. Converted just six months before that, the old man spoke with all the young ardor of a new convert. He had been in Van Schoik's regiment in Fort George, and in the battles of Saratoga, Monmouth, and Yorktown. He had good use of his senses, Mr. Roberts wrote, and had walked three-fourths of a mile to church. When the opportunity was given to join the new church, the centenarian went forward with fourteen others.[\[40\]](#)

2. Reports on the Work of Others

It was a test of faith when the first preachers were sent out from the first Conventions to raise up their own churches. As those men were able to succeed in their undertaking of establishing new churches, it was their custom to write to Mr. Roberts to tell of each new "victory." It would be impossible to reproduce even a small portion of such correspondence that poured into the office of Mr. Roberts. Letters telling of revival meetings, the organization of classes, dedication of churches, camp meetings, came in from all the various parts of the country whence the free church advocates had spread and begun their labors. From Allegheny, New York, came word of a revival in which, it was reported, forty professed religion. About three miles from there, a number of men had been engaged in lumbering. Several wild fellows gathered together at the house of a Mr. Wheeler, talking and making sport of religion, when one of their number suggested in fun that one of their group, Mr. Johnson, should preach them a sermon. Johnson took up a Bible, read a chapter, his hand trembling. He then began to preach "with power," and two were converted including the preacher. The following Sunday evening Rev. Curry went down to preach and several arose for prayer.[\[41\]](#)

From Burlington, Illinois, A. B. Burdick reported, "Almost everybody wants this old kind of religion."[\[42\]](#) Charles Hudson wrote that stone and timber were on the ground for the construction of their new meeting house at Wales.[\[43\]](#) E. Osborne reported that at St. Charles, Illinois, where they had already organized, they were "prospering beyond anything we have known."[\[44\]](#)

In June, 1861, less than a year after the formal organization of the new denomination, Mr. Roberts wrote that "from all directions calls are coming for the establishment of free churches."[\[45\]](#) Only the most pressing of these could be met because of the lack of suitable preachers. He declared he was not desirous of promoting secessions except from sin to holiness, and averred that he was not conscious of even the slightest ambition to build up a new denomination, but preferred that the existing denominations would adopt the principles of experimental and practical godliness and free seats for the masses. He concluded that perhaps the only way to inculcate them was for those who had sufficient faith in God to lead the way.[\[46\]](#) Hence he launched the new church with all the vigor and aggressiveness his young spirit and faith prompted.

3. New Churches Dedicated

(a) *Roberts Dedicated Many Churches.* Mr. Roberts announced the dedication of a Free Methodist Church in Perry, New York, on July 20th, 1861. Perry will be remembered as the place where Mr. Roberts had been expelled from the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Rev. Asa Abell and the Rev. Loren Stiles were to officiate on that occasion.[\[47\]](#) At West Falls, where Mr. Roberts' close friend, William Kendall, had ended the closing days of his life, a new church was erected.[\[48\]](#) On April 13th, 1862, a free church was dedicated in Gowanda, the home town of Mr. Roberts, and where his parents still lived. Mr. Roberts was called on to preach the dedicatory sermon. The church was filled with an attentive congregation for the special services, and some conversions were professed before Mr. Roberts left.[\[49\]](#)

In October of that year, a new church in Marengo, Illinois, the scene of the labors of Dr. Redfield, was dedicated by Mr. Roberts. The church had cost only eight hundred and fifty dollars, and caused him to exclaim upon the extravagance of building churches to surpass those of other denominations. "No more such splendid pewed churches are needed," he asserted, "and we devoutly pray that no more may be built."[\[50\]](#)

(b) *Work in Michigan Begun.* The work of the new church which began in Michigan early in 1863 through the labors of the Rev. E. P. Hart, had its beginnings in an approach made to him concerning the same in the fall of 1862. Mr. Hart stated that in the Conference session of that year, Mr. Roberts spoke to him about it on the basis of a letter he had received from a man in Michigan who desired a Free Methodist Church. When Mr. Roberts asked Mr. Hart if he would go, he replied, "If you say so, and I can get there, I will go to the North Pole." However, because the Conference did not have enough ministers to supply the churches that were developing in that region, Mr. Roberts sent Mr. Hart back to Marengo, stating that the brethren there had consented, if he were sent back, to let him take three months at any time of the year he might choose to visit Michigan.[\[51\]](#) Mr. Roberts turned over to Mr. Hart the letter which Henry L. Jones of Ida, Michigan, had written, and requested him to begin correspondence with him. Before he got away for the trip, however, Dr. Redfield, after having suffered more than two years with a stroke of paralysis, succumbed to his illness.[\[52\]](#) Mr. Roberts was requested to preach the funeral sermon, which he did to a crowded house although the day was very stormy, the "rain falling in torrents."[\[53\]](#) Mr. Hart thought the work in that section seemed not to suffer in consequence of Redfield's long illness.

The enterprise in Michigan which Mr. Hart was then contemplating, had been brought about by a copy of *The Earnest Christian*, which a Mrs. Knoll had obtained while visiting a sister in Buffalo where the magazine was then published. Mrs. Knoll had handed a copy of it to Mr. Jones, who, after reading it carefully, wrote to Mr. Roberts, requesting him to send them a Free Methodist preacher. The visit of Mr. Hart began early in the year 1863.

(c) *Helpers in Illinois and in Missouri.* Mr. Roberts was in close correspondence with all the men who were endeavoring to spread the work of the new church. Those men, commissioned by Mr. Roberts, were loyal and self-sacrificing in all their labors, going out without promise of salary or other earthly benefits, and many were the comforts of life they were called upon to forego. It was this selflessness which touched the heart of Roberts and made him share even his own clothes with his Co-laborers.

J. G. Terrill wrote from Lebanon that God was with them and that he was setting his mark for a Southern Illinois Conference. He thought with "salvation to make the people tractable and discipline to straighten up their lives" they would yet see "a noble people in Southern Illinois."[\[54\]](#) This young man told how he had lost his way in the woods but "Jesus had hold of the bridle" and he was led to "a neighborhood forsaken of the means of grace" and so was able to establish a new preaching appointment. He stated that if the church they were trying to obtain in St. Louis did not materialize, an old sea captain by the name of Loveland would give one of his farms and an additional one thousand dollars if needed to make possible a new church. If the first proposition for a church worked out, he said they would, if possible, repair it

and then "send a Habeas Corpus for Benjamin Titus Roberts to come and dedicate it." He closed his letter with a cordial, "What do you think of that?" [\[55\]](#)

The following year, Mr. Roberts was called to dedicate "an edifice of brick, which formerly belonged to the M. E. Church South" for which they paid nine thousand dollars. It was located on Fifteenth Street, between Franklin Avenue and Morgan Street. The dedication gave occasion for Mr. Roberts to remark that in St. Louis, a city of one hundred eighty-seven thousand people, there were but seventy-six churches, twenty-eight of them being Roman Catholic. He then calculated that if each would hold on an average of five hundred, there would be room for only twenty-one thousand souls. He was pleased with the good location of the church just purchased in a city which he declared "must always be one of the most important cities in the United States" because of its advantageous location, its manufacturing facilities and iron and coal deposits. [\[56\]](#) That church, which had been organized through the influence and labors of Dr. Redfield, was to be a memento to his memory, and a marble slab was to be placed on its walls. Mr. Roberts called for six hundred subscribers at ten dollars each, through the columns of *The Earnest Christian*. [\[57\]](#)

(d) *Hard Times in Michigan*. The work in Ida, Michigan, which began as a result of the letter written to Mr. Roberts, was soon given his attention. On his way there in 1864, his train missed connections with the Great Western Road by about ten minutes, and he was compelled to stop over from two until ten o'clock, although he could have gone to Detroit for six dollars, but since that amount was double the fare from Buffalo there, he said, "I did not choose to pay it." At Paris, a little town where they had stopped, he went through the village the next morning canvassing for subscriptions to his magazine, *The Earnest Christian*, probably inspired by what the magazine had done in Michigan. Everybody there complained of hard times, and he sold but one number for ten cents in silver! He importuned, "I pray the Lord to make that number do the devil more harm than he did by keeping me over." [\[58\]](#) That day he reconsidered his decision and took an accommodation train to Detroit, walked about the city, spent an hour in the reading room of the Young Men's Association, and then went on to Ida which he reached late at night. The next morning he walked about a mile and met the Mr. Henry Jones who had written the letter requesting a Free Methodist Church. He received a cordial welcome, and was taken to the place of the meeting. [\[59\]](#) There, he discovered to his own satisfaction that the Lord had "been helping the labors of Brother Hart" and he thought a good work had begun in that area. He reported a large attendance, some people having driven seventy miles in a wagon. Mr. Roberts felt special help in preaching, and expressed the wish to preach every day if he could have so much help. He felt that was due to the prayers of his wife, for he wrote to her, "You must have been praying for me." [\[60\]](#)

Apropos to the work in Michigan and its results is a write-up of the Huron, Michigan Camp Meeting in 1868 where he saw more people converted and reclaimed than at any other meeting that year. There were often twenty or thirty forward for prayer at a time. He believed that the work received a new impetus there. He expressed encouragement in the subsequent Conference held at North Raisinville by "the peace and harmony" which prevailed, the gratifying increase in members, and especially the fact that five young men joined the Conference and were sent out "as laborers in the vineyard." [\[61\]](#)

The following year, Mr. Roberts wrote about a camp meeting at Coldwater, Michigan, where it had rained every day. He said he had never seen people so willing to stand in the rain and listen to preaching. At the close of the camp he said, "it rained Sunday most of the time, yet five sermons were preached out of doors to attentive audiences." Money was raised and plans formulated there to purchase a large canvas tent so that meetings could be held from place to place.[\[62\]](#)

(e) *Closing Items.* A detailed study of the period shows constant labors in holding meetings and the organization and dedication of new churches, which became more or less routine. All during those years, Mr. Roberts was found working in close conjunction with his fellow-laborers, and was almost continuously travelling in his work, and only occasionally being able to spend a few days at home with his wife and children. Wherever a free church was organized, Mr. Roberts was sure to receive a report of it, which he frequently published in the correspondence section of his magazine.

In 1867, Mr. Roberts referred to a new work which had been started in Ontario by a "Brother Olney." Mr. Roberts administered the ordinance of baptism to more than thirty candidates, including Mr. Olney's two daughters who had been recently converted. "Some were immersed, others sprinkled, others still were baptized by effusion," reported Mr. Roberts, and "all these modes appeared to be endorsed by the Spirit for on all the candidates His glorious power manifestly rested."[\[63\]](#) Another church at Bushnell's Basin had more than doubled its membership that year "by God's blessing."[\[64\]](#)

The work of raising up free churches had already begun in Pennsylvania. Mr. Roberts held a meeting in Pittsburgh. Mr. S. K. J. Chesbrough appeared again in the picture, this time by a letter from Meadville, Pennsylvania, where he was working for the establishment of a free church. He reported that the Lord had graciously revived his work in the hearts of some of his children.[\[65\]](#)

Mr. Roberts had more to do with two societies in his native state. December of 1868 found him spending two Sabbaths in Brooklyn, where a Mr. Mackey, a business man, had moved and had opened up a hall, as well as his own home, for religious services. There a Rev. George Anderson, who was destined to become the first Principal of Chili Seminary, was preaching. Mr. Roberts dedicated there a church capable of seating about five hundred people, on May 9, 1869. The church had been purchased by Mr. Mackey at a cost of nineteen thousand dollars. Mr. Roberts described it as a large, plain, convenient building where the seats were to be "free for all who wish to attend upon the means of grace."[\[66\]](#)

In October of that same year, he dedicated a church in Buffalo, the scene of his many labors. It was a building of brick, forty-two by seventy feet, two stories high; the lower story had two class rooms and a large prayer room, while the auditorium was above. Of it Mr. Roberts said, "It is as plain as a Quaker could ask for, and yet as comfortable as any who wished to worship God could desire." He said he knew of no church which had been instrumental in doing more good in a given length of time than the Free Methodist Church of Buffalo.[\[67\]](#) (He served on its Board of Trustees for many years and from 1877 until death was president.)

The then far-off Minnesota was not forgotten. The Rev. and Mrs. T. S. LaDue had gone there to hold

meetings. Mrs. LaDue was formerly the wife of the Rev. William Kendall whose ministerial work had been cut short by his untimely death. Mrs. La-Due wrote to Mrs. Roberts that she could not begin to tell the "glorious times" in Canon Falls, Minnesota. A large number of young people had been converted, and she believed some of the young men were going to preach. If they did not, she continued, some of the young ladies said they would "for Minnesota has got to be redeemed." Locked out of the school house, they had gone from house to house, and held all day prayer meetings, in one of which, three persons who had walked ten miles to the meeting, were converted. They went home the next day, stopping at every house to tell "the good news," and when they reached home, each one called together the family and read the Bible and prayed with them. As a result several in each family had been converted. These young folk had started meetings and the last Mrs. LaDue heard, eight or ten had been forward for prayer and "the whole neighborhood was under conviction." She predicted that they would have their church before another fall, and requested Mr. Roberts to go out for the dedication. She reported that the interest was spreading to Red Wing, where was located the Methodist University to which Bishop Hamline had donated twenty-five thousand dollars. She announced that at Northfield "they are now waiting for us," and also at Orinoco. They had been well supported, having had the use of a horse and "cutter" that winter, but money was scarce. She hoped to have something for the Roberts soon, and judged that they must have their faith and patience tried, but declared, "God who started this whole thing will surely take us through, school and all."[\[68\]](#)

With people who were willing to go out and work with very little monetary remuneration, and make whatever sacrifices were necessary to the accomplishments of their purpose, it was inevitable that Mr. Roberts could show advances in the various parts of the country to which the preachers and Christian workers had spread in their evangelistic zeal for the cause they espoused.

C. FOUNDING OF A SCHOOL

Mr. Roberts very early realized that if the church he had helped to start was to grow into a well-balanced organization, there must be a school to provide for the training of ministers and Christian workers, as well as laymen who would be capable of bearing intelligently the responsibilities that had come to them.

With this in mind, Mr. Roberts moved to Rochester, New York, in order that he would be nearer the site on which he hoped, and was already planning, to build and establish a school. His plans were not brought to a consummation until 1866. The chapter following will elucidate this matter.

D. OFFICIAL GATHERINGS OF THE PERIOD

Two Conferences were organized in the very beginning of the new church; the Genesee and the Western. It was from that small beginning that the work spread.

1. Organization of Susquehanna Conference

In December, 1860, Mr. Roberts had organized a society at Rose Valley, Wayne County, New York and on February 12, 1861, he organized another at Huron in the same county.^[69] Mr. Roberts had labored widely through eastern New York and churches had been established in New York, Binghamton, Union, Syracuse, Utica, Rome, Rose Valley, and Clyde. His work had been carried on in conjunction with the work of the Rev. Zenas Osborne, Rev. William Cooley, and others. After the work had continued to grow in extent, it was deemed necessary to form another Conference.^[70] This was done at Union, Broome County, New York on April 10, 1862, in an outdoor Convention, the members sitting informally upon a pile of rails in an apple orchard. This official act was the cause of future discord for Mr. Roberts because it was felt by some that he was assuming powers that were not his. This disaffection is attributed, by his son, to the fact that a few were disappointed in the Superintendency, and to the opinion of others that the organization was premature.^[71] It is evident that this feeling must have manifested itself soon after the organization of the church, for there is no mention of the election of Mr. Roberts as General Superintendent in *The Earnest Christian*. The omission might have been, and probably was, in accordance with the general policy which Benson Roberts alleged his father followed, that of refraining from any mention, in his magazine, concerning his own personal advancement to office, or to the position he held as General Superintendent.^[72] The statement of the son with reference to the policy of his father in such matters is confirmed by a study of his reports in the succeeding issues of *The Earnest Christian*. The basis of the dissatisfaction revolved around the fact that nothing had been said in the adopted Discipline about the organization of Conferences, although the General Superintendent had been authorized to travel at large in the interests of the church. A little note on "The Slandered" which Mr. Roberts wrote the following month expressed his views. It was on the basis of a comment of a venerable old man who had offered comfort to the slandered that "only at fruit trees the thieves throw stones." To a man who does his duty, Mr. Roberts affirmed, there will be some who "will not be slow in stirring up the polluted waters of defamation and slander."^[73]

The whole matter was more aggravating to the original Genesee Convention, due to the fact that these same brethren of the new Susquehanna Convention met in session the following September and elected delegates to the ensuing General Conference, to be held in St. Charles, Illinois, the following month.^[74] Nine persons belonged to the new Susquehanna Convention, and Mr. Roberts believed that all of them were "wholly devoted to God and his work."^[75]

2. Genesee Annual Convention

The Genesee Annual Convention convened September 18-22, 1862, with Mr. Roberts in the chair. That year the work was manned in three districts, Northern, Middle and Southern, with Loren Stiles, Asa Abell and A. F. Curry as district chairmen. There were reported twenty-three preachers and sixteen hundred members, and twenty-three circuits, some of which embraced several points, and more than one preacher. That session was somewhat stormy arising over the question of the organization of the Susquehanna Convention and the right of their delegates to be admitted to the General Convention. Attempts were made by Loren Stiles, Asa Abell, G. W. Holmes, and H. Hartshorn to call a separate convention at Perry for November fourth of that year, evidently to procure a condemnation of the official action of Mr. Roberts. At a late date, Mr. Roberts was invited to attend, but having a previous engagement for the

adjourned session of the General Conference, he expressed his regrets at not being able to attend, and gave a full statement to those brethren with reference to his action. So conclusive were the arguments presented, Benson Roberts wrote, that the proposed convention was cancelled.[\[76\]](#)

3. Western Convention

A session of the Western Convention was held in the Free Methodist Church in Marengo, Illinois, beginning October 2, 1862. It was reported that "many" who were there said that there was at that session "the most of the wearing, cementing love of Jesus," that they ever witnessed at any ministerial gathering. Mr. Roberts reported the work of the church in a prosperous condition, the Conference having received ten in full connection and one member on trial. Although many of the members had gone to war, still there was "an increase on the whole." One preacher, R. M. Hooker, who had been Captain in Farnsworth's Illinois Cavalry, and one "distinguished for his undaunted bravery" had fallen in one of the battles before Richmond.[\[77\]](#)

Gains in that area were evidently not due to any easy disciplinary measures. Mr. Hart wrote to Mr. Roberts early that year, informing him, "We are living to the discipline." He gave the following illustration of what he meant. One Wednesday evening, several persons not members of the church entered a "Brother B's class." When the time arrived for beginning the class meeting [a testimony and experience meeting], after speaking of the rules of the Discipline, Mr. B. kindly requested the visitors to retire. "They found a good deal of fault, but finally went out," said Mr. Hart. The leader of the meeting was greatly tempted over the matter, but he "looked to Jesus for deliverance" and before the meeting was closed an old man came along and was "soundly converted to God." Just the evening before when "Brother R's class" was meeting a middle-aged man came to the door. The leader, opening the door, inquired if he wanted religion and the man replied that he did. Whereupon that man was invited in, the people prayed for him and he professed to have his sins forgiven.[\[78\]](#) The new church organization was following the old Methodist system of the closed class meeting, where none but members were permitted to attend. In early Methodism, a ticket was issued to those who came up to the standard, and none were admitted except those who could present a ticket.

4. General Conference of 1862

The first General Conference of the Free Methodist Church, held at St. Charles, Kane County, Illinois at the Free Methodist Church, convened on October 8, 1862. B. T. Roberts was president and Joseph Travis was elected secretary. The time of the Conference was employed mainly in revising the Discipline, the revisions appearing in the 1862 edition.

The Genesee delegates, who had previously taken a position against the organization of the Susquehanna Convention, at their own Conference, were opposed to recognizing the men elected from the Susquehanna Convention as bona fide delegates of the Convention, and wanted to refuse them admittance on the ground that the Susquehanna Convention was not legally established. Mr. Roberts decided that all who came with proper credentials were members and should be so regarded for the purpose of

organizing. He maintained that every organized body must be a judge of the qualifications of its members. The Gene-see delegates refused to organize, though two of them did cast their ballots for a secretary. Mr. Stiles prompted Mr. Holmes to move that the Susquehanna delegates be admitted. Mr. Roberts decided that the delegates had already been admitted and that the proper form of the motion would be that they were not en-titled to seats as delegates. This did not satisfy the Genesee delegates, who did not desire to keep out the Susquehanna delegates but did wish to strike a blow at Mr. Roberts for organizing that Conference without being specifically empowered by the Discipline to do so. After sundry arguments concerning the matter, the Genesee delegates absented themselves and a resolution was passed by the remaining delegates that the Genesee delegates would no longer be considered members of the Convention, and they proceeded to the business of the Church.[\[79\]](#)

B. T. Roberts was then unanimously elected General Superintendent.[\[80\]](#) He, with Joseph Travis and Moses Downing, were elected a committee to publish the revised Discipline. Mr. Roberts, Joseph Travis and Thomas Sully were made a Committee to draft a Constitution for a Missionary Society of the Free Methodist Church, and to secure its incorporation in the state of New York. Mr. Roberts was elected president of the new society, and B. P. Rogers secretary, and a third member, C. T. Hicks from Syracuse, was added. The following motion was recorded on October 13th:

Resolved: That the appropriation made by Bro. John Dunkle of Freys Bush, N. Y. for the use of the Free Methodist Church, and intrusted to B. T. Roberts be so applied by Bro. Roberts as he shall believe it will best glorify God.[\[81\]](#)

The Convention then adjourned to meet in an adjourned session at the city of Buffalo, New York, November 4, 1862. The session opened with Mr. Roberts leading the devotions. After opening in due form, opportunity was given for the Genesee delegates to state their case which they did, demanding that the General Convention should not consider itself organized, and that it should organize anew excluding the Susquehanna delegation. This petition was denied inasmuch as this was but on adjourned session of the former one at St. Charles, duly organized, and that they considered the Susquehanna delegates as clearly entitled to their seats as any other, and that no reason of any weight had been offered for their exclusion; further that any exclusion could only be effected by the General Convention after it was organized.[\[82\]](#) Mr. Roberts insisted that the Susquehanna Convention was as properly organized as either the Genesee or Western Convention, since both of those Conventions had been organized under the same Discipline with its lack of specific instruction as to the same, as had been the case when the third Convention was organized. If the delegation from one Convention were disqualified, then the delegations from the other two must also be disqualified.[\[83\]](#) Mr. Benjamin Hackney, formerly a member of Congress and a delegate from the west, strongly supported the right of Mr. Roberts to organize the said Convention in the absence of any specified law to the contrary, declaring that he would rather see the Free Methodist Church, as much as he loved it, split in its infancy than to compromise on a principle of righteousness.[\[84\]](#) When the matter was settled unanimously against the Genesee delegates, Loren Stiles and G. W. Holmes retired and the two reserve delegates, Titus Roberts, father of B. T. Roberts, and the Rev. Levi Wood took their places. The salary of Mr. Roberts was set at five hundred dollars a year and travelling expenses.[\[85\]](#) Mr. Roberts, Joseph Travis, and Moses Downing were made a committee to

revise the Discipline.[\[86\]](#) The name of the General Convention was changed to General Conference.

To the credit of the Genesee Conference, they passed a resolution thirty-five to two in the 1864 convention in which they stated that although they still held the same opinion as they had formerly expressed, and although they thought they should have been met at least half way, they agreed to waive the entire matter, and adopted the 1862 Discipline.[\[87\]](#) Be it said, however, that Mr. Stiles, who seemed to be the leader in the opposition, had by that time succumbed to disease. Mr. Roberts, nevertheless, paid him a fine tribute at his death, and seemed never to show any outward signs of resentment toward his old friend whose attitudes, if persisted in, might have well nigh wrecked the infant church on the rocks of a technicality.

[5. General Conference of 1866](#)

This General Conference, which convened at Buffalo on October 10, 1866, adjourned the thirteenth to meet at Albion on the fifteenth. The Michigan Conference had been organized in the interim of the last General Conference, making the list of conferences four. The General Superintendent Roberts was given charge of all missions outside of the recognized bounds of the annual Conferences.[\[88\]](#) Mr. Roberts was again elected General Superintendent, receiving seventeen of the nineteen ballots cast; the other two votes were cast in favor of Levi Wood. The Executive Committee was empowered to elect an additional Superintendent, if in their judgment "the interests of the cause of God demands."[\[89\]](#) Mr. Roberts, together with Asa Abell and D. W. Thurston, was appointed a committee to apply to the state of New York to incorporate the Free Methodist Church.[\[90\]](#) In that Conference, the requirements for church membership were made more rigid. No member was to be admitted on probation until he gave evidence of "a desire to flee the wrath to come by saving faith in Christ and consent to be governed by the general rules."[\[91\]](#) They also adopted a rule forbidding membership in secret societies on the part of its members, and also declared against the raising of hops for the general market, thus interpreting one of the general rules which forbade "evil of every kind." Statistics for that year show eighty-five preachers, and four thousand, eight hundred and eighty-nine members.

That General Conference recommended the publication of a weekly paper, to be called *The Free Methodist*, on condition that five thousand dollars be raised first. The Rev. Levi Wood was to raise the sum, and if successful, edit the same. He was not successful in raising the money, but he published the paper in Rochester, New York, for two years and nine months on his own responsibility.[\[92\]](#) *The Earnest Christian* was widely read among the members of the Free Methodist Church, but Mr. Roberts had never conducted it as a denominational publication, for which the leaders were beginning to feel a need.

[6. General Conference of 1870](#)

The third General Conference session was held at Aurora, Illinois, beginning October 12, 1870. Out of a total of twenty-nine votes cast for General Superintendent, Mr. Roberts received eighteen, and the Rev. E. Owen received seven votes.[\[93\]](#)

H. Hornsby presented a charge of maladministration against the General Superintendent. Mr. Roberts, vacating the chair to B. Owen, argued in his own defense. After considerable debate, the following resolution was passed unanimously, "Resolved: That the charge against B. T. Roberts be dismissed." [94]

Rev. Levi Wood, having become financially involved in the publication of *The Free Methodist*, offered it for sale to the General Conference and the offer was accepted. The Rev. Epenetus Owen was elected editor but resigned the same day. Mr. Joseph Mackey, the business man responsible for the opening of a Free Methodist Church in Brooklyn and New York, volunteered to take the responsibility for the debt which rested upon it, and publish it for the church. His first issue was November 10, 1870, published in New York. [95] The competition of another periodical, published so near the place of publication for *The Earnest Christian*, was removed, and *The Earnest Christian* carried the news of the change with the comment, "The people may expect a live, stirring paper, issued promptly." [96]

A new Conference, the Kansas-Missouri, had been organized. Mr. Roberts reported that the statistics showed "a gratifying increase in nearly all the Conferences." [97]

Mr. Roberts was elected a delegate to the Anti-Secret Society Convention to be held in Philadelphia in June of 1871, and was requested to appoint two delegates to the State Anti-Secret Society Convention to be held at Syracuse on November 15th of that year. [98] Mr. Roberts had attended a meeting on Anti-Secrecy in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in May, 1868, where a permanent organization had been effected. That Convention, composed of one hundred eighty delegates and representing thirteen denominations, was entertained largely by the United Presbyterians and the Reformed Presbyterians, who were prominent in the organization. [99]

E. CIVIL AND SLAVERY

1. Beginnings

Mr. Roberts, who was then in the throes of establishing a new church, was nevertheless not too busy to give time to write about the principles and issues involved in the Civil War which was just beginning. He recorded in his *Journal* of January 11, 1861, "News came that South Carolina has commenced war on the United States, by firing upon a steamer sent for the relief of Fort Sumter." [100] The first firing upon the flag had been on January 9th by the batteries erected against Fort Sumter, the inciting cause being the appearance of "The Star of the West" off the harbor, bringing supplies from New York. [101]

Mr. Roberts wrote of the electrifying effect of that act in an article on "Our Country," published in *The Earnest Christian*, beginning with the cryptic statement, "Civil War is upon us," and declaring that now "the appeal has been made from the ballot-box to the sword." He declared that "the cold-blooded North was fully aroused." [102] Active preparations for war were going on in city, town, and country. The flag was flying from public edifice and private dwelling, from the heads of horses, the shoulders of girls, the

hands of boys, as well as in military companies. The determination had gone forth, strongly expressed "to protect it at any cost, from being despoiled of a single star." Ex-President Fillmore, a conservative, had presided over the first war meeting that was held, and paid the first contribution for the support of families of volunteers. Manufacturing companies paid wages to their workers who had enlisted, and expressed a determination to keep the jobs open until they returned. After citing instances of the southern aggression, taking free colored citizens from ships in southern harbors and selling them as slaves for their jail fee, the suppression of the press and speech, Senators murderously assailed in the halls of Congress for uttering their sentiments, the mails robbed, and anti-slavery periodicals consigned to the flames, he concluded by affirming that now she had "robbed the treasury, stolen the property of the government and commenced civil war."[\[103\]](#) He thought that never was a contest more righteous than this, to rid the state of "the sum of all villainies," and as Wesley asserted, an institution "the vilest upon which the sun ever shone."[\[104\]](#)

2. Moral Issues of the War

(a) *Slavery the Central Issue.* While Bishop Janes and Bishop Simpson of the Methodist Episcopal Church, as well as the great pulpit orator of that period, Henry Ward Beecher, were lecturing in this country and Mr. Beecher making a trip to Europe, in behalf of the Northern cause,[\[105\]](#) Mr. Roberts was defining the issue in his magazine, *The Earnest Christian*. Roberts did not feel that the cause of this conflict lay in any real hatred between the people of the North and South, nor in a desire for separation on the part of the South, but back of the whole issue, he believed, was "a deep seated conviction" in the minds of the people of the North that the system of human bondage was wrong. Hence, he believed that the nominal issue of separation was not the real issue, but that the South was really fighting to perpetuate slavery. The North, he said, was fighting for the freedom of "four millions of human beings who are now groaning in the house of bondage." He believed that if some of the Christian denominations had taken a firmer stand against an institution, "the most hellish that ever was devised" it would not have developed into a monster too big to control. "LET SLAVERY DIE!" he concluded.[\[106\]](#)

(b) *Reverses in War Necessary to Arouse North.* After one of the first great reverses for the North, Mrs. Roberts wrote in her diary, "Read an account of the horrible battle of Bull Run: it is awful indeed. The killed and wounded are estimated at 1000."[\[107\]](#) That first great defeat that has begun in a retreat and ended in a rout,[\[108\]](#) astonished the North. The reaction of Mr. Roberts was that "this is as we expected it would be. Our government needs some severe rebuffs to make it less tolerant of slavery."[\[109\]](#) He continued:

Let the rebels gain a few victories, with the help of their slaves compelled to do the drudgery of the camp, to build fortifications, and to aid in battle, and we should hear of no more offers on the part of our officers to suppress servile insurrections: and the Fugitive Slave Law, a disgrace to any nation, civilized or savage, will not long remain upon our statute book.[\[110\]](#)

He maintained that there could be no peace as long as slavery existed, and that it would be better by far to

let the South separate with slavery than to "compel her to return bringing slavery with her."[\[111\]](#)

In October, Mr. Roberts carried a popular article entitled "Praying About the War" which dealt with the Fugitive Slave Law. "Blind Henry" rode on the cars with Mr. Roberts on the way to a camp meeting, and while discussing the war, he told Mr. Roberts that he could not pray for the success of the cause, even though he greatly desired the success of the Union cause and was strongly opposed to slavery. "When I pray for the Lord to give us victory," said Blind Henry, "He looks me in the face and asks, 'What are you fighting for? Before I can interfere in your war I must know what you are contending about.' " "Why Lord," he answered, "we are fighting for the Union, for the Constitution and the laws of the United States." Said the Lord, "Let me see your constitution to compare it with my Bible, for I cannot fight against myself, against my law." Blind Henry continued:

Trembling I hand Him the Constitution. . . . and he reads: 'No person held to service or labor in one state, escaping into another, shall be discharged from such service or labor,' and then reads the Fugitive Slave Law based thereon. The Lord then opens the Bible and reads: 'Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee.' (Deut. 23:15). 'Here,' he says, 'there is a plain contradiction. What do you propose to do with my 4,000,000 of poor, who cry day and night unto me, and whose cries have entered my ears?' 'Why, Lord, we do not intend to do any-thing with them, only leave them as they are for fear the Democrats will be offended.' The Lord turns away, and says as He leaves me, 'You must do your own fighting then. If I take up arms, it must be in behalf of my poor, oppressed, downtrodden children.'[\[112\]](#)

(c) *Emancipation Called For.* Little time elapsed before Mr. Roberts went to the heart of the issue and began to plead, editorially as well as vocally, for the emancipation of the slaves. He inveighed against "the hesitation of the government to strike at the root of the difficulty." He wrote:

Fever caused by a bullet lodged in the flesh will not be removed by cooling draughts and soothing anodynes. The wound must be laid open, and the cause of irritation removed, before health can be restored. Slavery is, and while it exists always will be, a source of irritation to the body politic. It makes a wound that is incurable. Concessions and compromises

'Will but skin and film the
ulcerous place; While rank
corruption, mining all within,
Infests unseen.'[\[113\]](#)

He declared, "The offer of freedom must be made at once to every slave in the rebellious states." If we had followed the English system of compensated emancipation, war might have been avoided, but that day was gone and "emancipation by the sword, or inglorious defeat," were the alternatives he presented. He declared that if the government would proclaim this policy, such an enthusiastic support would be

given as to render its arms irresistible, and at the same time, four millions of friends, ready to stake their lives upon the issue, would be secured in the heart of the rebellious states. He contended that Congress had the power to do it since the Constitution of the United States granted the power to "insure domestic tranquility" and "to provide for the general welfare."[\[114\]](#)

In an editorial Mr. Roberts summed up the reverses of the Union forces and then made a moral application. He wrote of the "inglorious defeat" of our "Grand Army" at Manassas, and the manner in which they fled "as fast and as far as they could" from the field of battle; the surrender of the heroic Mulligan at Lexington; the eastern division of the army hemmed in at Washington, and the national metropolis being in little better than a state of siege; Fremont, with his well-known energy, building forts at St. Louis instead of driving the rebels out of Missouri; the disabling of our blockading fleet at the mouth of the Mississippi; the gallant Ellsworth from whom much was expected, smitten down by the assassin's hand; the "noble, brave, patriotic" Lyon, by his "dashing, heroic achievements" which had won the admiration of the country, fallen upon the field of battle. After this account, he asked, "What then is the cause of our reverses? Why then do we meet with so little success?" He answered by asserting in a long paragraph that the war was fought on the issue of restoring the Union rather than on the real issue of slavery, and that many in high places who were in authority were profiteering rather than working for the welfare of the nation. He told of his own visit to an encampment of a cavalry regiment raised by a member of Congress, and that he had been "creditably informed" that the horses bought for the regiment were the most common kind of plow horses, bought for seventy-five to eighty dollars, when the Government had allowed one hundred and twenty dollars apiece for horses adapted to the kind of work they were required to do, thus robbing the Government in those twelve hundred purchases of about fifty thousand dollars. He emphasized the necessity of stopping such swindling, while "our beloved country is bleeding at every pore."[\[115\]](#)

Meanwhile, the Government, in the midst of its reverses, had called for a day of national fasting and prayer, set for September 26, 1861. Mrs. Roberts, then in Aurora, Illinois, with her husband, recorded in her diary, "This day has been set apart as a day of fasting and prayer on account of the condition of our country. My husband preached on the National sins this afternoon in the Hall."[\[116\]](#) Mr. Roberts recorded that day that he preached from Isaiah 58:6, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" He made a short review of his message thus: "We showed that slavery was an institution contrary to the Bible and bringing upon us the vengeance of heaven. We must 'let the oppressed go free' before we can expect God to bless our arms."[\[117\]](#)

(d) *Emancipation Realized.* In the year of 1862, Mr. Roberts was still insisting, editorially, upon the emancipation of the slaves. He expostulated:

Leaving slavery still in the body politic, is like mollient plasters over an eating cancer in the human body; they may hide something of deformity, and for a moment diminish acuteness of suffering; but the policy will only leave time for the cancer to deepen its roots, extend its area, and bring in increased suffering, with inevitable death. The only safe course

is to cut out the cancer, dry up the thing.[\[118\]](#)

Writing later, he spoke of the affairs of "our poor bleeding country" growing more desperate, and said, "Oh what a pity it is that our rulers cannot rise to the sublimity of the occasion! God is calling in thunder tones, 'Let my people, the oppressed go free.' " He thought the President ought to see that the war could never be ended in favor of the North while the institution of slavery was still preserved, that he should realize the importance of surrounding himself with men who were heartily in favor of human freedom, and gain the added strength of "four millions of the bone and sinew of the South."[\[119\]](#)

President Lincoln, however, had been awaiting a more propitious hour, and when Lee was checked in his invasion of the North, that long contemplated document, "The Emancipation Proclamation," was issued.[\[120\]](#) Its importance stems from the fact that henceforth the war was to be waged not only for the preservation of the Union, but also for the permanent banishment of the slave, which Mr. Roberts had contended was the real issue from the beginning. From the summer of 1862, Lincoln made both the emancipation of the slave and the restoration of the Union the price of peace.[\[121\]](#)

Mr. Roberts greeted the Emancipation Proclamation as "the long wished for Document" and as an indication that God had answered prayer. Announcing that for the African in our midst, the year of Jubilee was about to dawn, that January first, 1863, would set free all the slaves of the rebels, he rejoiced that this "blessed act" would secure cooperation of all the good. and the favor of Heaven, and would commend the cause to the liberty loving world. Under the belief that this moral issue had been settled, he predicted that the nation would enter upon an unprecedented era of prosperity. He also prayed God's blessing upon the President in his efforts to restore peace.[\[122\]](#)

Through the columns of *The Earnest Christian*, Mr. Roberts promoted the formation of "Earnest Christian Bands" among the men in the army. These Bands were formed in different regiments of the army, and many were the letters Mr. Roberts received from the soldiers, thanking him for his magazine, and the blessing it had brought to the fighting forces. Some of these letters were printed in *The Earnest Christian*. A letter from one of the soldiers stated that he was writing to give Mr. Roberts an idea of the good that his magazine was doing in the army. Eight months before, the soldier said, he had never heard "the doctrine of sanctification preached or explained, never had seen anyone who enjoyed it, consequently knew nothing about it." He said that a copy of *The Earnest Christian* had fallen into his hands, and through reading it and the Bible he had "embraced the blessing" on May 17th. Then he reported that they were having a glorious revival there at Little Rock, Arkansas, and that over sixty had professed conversion. He reported that souls were "being converted in the woods, cornfields, cane-breaks, and in camps as well as in the church." He felt that God was calling him to become a preacher of the Gospel.[\[123\]](#)

Another letter from Anson G. Foote of Savannah, Georgia, stated that he had taken *The Earnest Christian* for four years. and thought he could not live without it, declaring he had found it "a Christian soldier's comforter, as well as a guide in the divine life." He thanked God that although some thought religion could not be lived in the army it had been "fully demonstrated to the contrary in thousands of cases."

Jesus was found "in camp, on the march, among the soldiers everywhere." He closed by wishing the editor and the contributors to his magazine "a Happy New Year, a fervent God speed, and a heartfelt God bless you." [\[124\]](#)

At the close of the war Mr. Roberts announced in his magazine that God had graciously given victory to our armies. He then asked the soldiers to send in their change of address, so *The Earnest Christian* could be sent to their home address. [\[125\]](#)

(e) *Assassination of Lincoln*. The assassination of Mr. Lincoln called forth an extended editorial in *The Earnest Christian*. When Lincoln had been elected, Mr. Roberts wrote, "The Union has gone. The god of politicians, to which many have paid an idolatrous worship, has broken in pieces." The Union had "fallen to pieces by its own corruption." He then judged that "the election of a Republican President is the ostensible cause," although he hastened to add, "the real cause is the ungovernable spirit of slavery." [\[126\]](#) However, when the news of the death of Mr. Lincoln came to the nation, he spoke of "a mighty outburst of sincere, spontaneous grief" which had filled the land. Public and private buildings were covered "with solemn drapery," the slow tolling of bells was heard from morning till night, immense funeral processions, and the "saddened looks and silent tears" gave but a faint idea of the anguish felt by thirty millions of people at the loss of their honored dead by the assassin's hand. Roberts believed that this man who had arisen from common man to the "Chief Magistrate of this mighty Republic" had "acquitted himself so as to win the admiration of every lover of his race." He described in some detail the task that had been his; he spoke of how the one who "sat highest in the affections of the people" had suddenly been smitten down by the hand of the assassin, and his chief minister stabbed as he lay helpless in bed. "The nation reeled under the shock, and grief and horror swayed every mind." Roberts again saw the hand of God in all, for he declared that the nation in its rejoicing over victory was fast forgetting "the hellish nature of that vile institution" and were in danger that all the sacrifices "of blood and treasure" would have been in vain. But now, since "slavery personified" had showed its "diabolical spirit" the nation had been aroused and united as never before. He believed that a future course demanded "that traitors be disfranchised, and that loyal men, be they black or white" should be entrusted "with all the rights of citizens." [\[127\]](#)

(f) *Freedmen Taught*. Reference has been made to the purchase of a church in St. Louis. In the same year, Mr. Roberts announced that a school for the benefit of freedmen was taught evenings in the basement of that church. Also, in the year 1867, he mentioned that the Rev. William Cooley and wife had started work in Cairo, Illinois, among the freedmen, and called for the friends of an earnest Christianity to support those who went South, not to promote "a more orderly mode of worship" but to encourage them to trust in God and enjoy religion. [\[128\]](#)

The issues for which Mr. Roberts had contended through many years were now settled, and in an editorial the year after the close of the war he rejoiced that "slavery is dead beyond the possibility of a resurrection." It was a cause of great rejoicing indeed for the man whose first public speech had been against slavery and who recounted that "brick bats and rotten eggs were the arguments" they had to meet in those days.

F. METHODS

1. Preaching of Mr. Roberts

Mr. Roberts had extensive opportunities for preaching in his traveling and administrative work. The peculiar characteristics of his ministry during those early years are revealed in part. Preaching for display he thought was wrong, for he stated that he would "no more dare to dress up his sermons than he would his person" for he believed that anything that savored of "showing off" one's education, or wealth, or good standing, evidenced a want of humility.^[129] He felt that he and others ought to be directed in their preaching by the Holy Spirit. At one time he recorded in his diary: "I tried to preach, but did not follow the Lord fully in the opening exercises, and the meeting suffered in consequence."^[130] Occasionally Mrs. Roberts thought her husband failed. In her diary she wrote, "My husband preached . . . but he did not have his usual power. He did not get the right subject."^[131] At other times, he felt he was specially helped of God in his preaching. In his *Journal* is the entry, "The Lord helped me in preaching, much more than I had reason to hope. The congregation was large and attentive. It appeared to me that many were deeply convicted."^[132] The idea of getting the right text seemed at times to bother him. After a "love feast" in which he said "the Spirit came upon the people in mighty power," creating "a deep feeling all over the house," he recorded that "the Lord helped me in trying to preach, though I am not certain that I hit upon the right text. There was an appearance of deep feeling over all the house." He did not seem to be satisfied even though there was an evident continuation of the spirit that had pervaded the "love feast." "At times the people were so blessed that we could hardly go on with the service."^[133] According to Mrs. Roberts, the congregation did not always respond readily, as she noted when her husband preached at Carbondale, "He preached the truth and was helped, but the people looked as though they were hearing strange things."^[134] At other times, such as that recorded at the Ogle Camp Meeting, she thought the reaction to his sermon was good "especially when he dwelt upon the people's giving their substance to the Lord. The Spirit came in the meeting. It did not seem like the same place."^[135] She received such help personally that she wrote, "I grew rich all the time he was talking."^[136]

Preaching in a shoe shop which had been rented and fixed up for meetings in the city of Akron, Ohio, to about twenty or twenty-five persons, he recorded, "The Lord helped me some."^[137]

In the Indiana Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Chicago, he observed that he had never preached to a people "that seemed more hungry for the Gospel in its purity. Many of the congregation were melted to tears; and the plain truth was not only received but welcomed."^[138]

On the other hand, he had an experience where the people did not like his direct dealing. He had been called to labor in a revival where it was reported that over a hundred had been converted, and the whole community was said to be under conviction. Mr. Roberts heard that the evangelist who had conducted the first part of the revival meeting had preached his farewell sermon on Sunday morning and left on the cars Sunday afternoon. To one who believed in a strict observance of the Sabbath day, that seemed "a very

suspicious circumstance" with reference to the genuineness of the revival. Arriving at the scene of the meeting, he preached "two plain, gospel sermons" in which he endeavored "to lay the axe at the root of the corrupt tree," but was halted in continuing with any more services, being "kindly informed" that they thought they could get along better without him. They told him that his preaching discouraged the converts because it left too much for them to do. Mr. Roberts explained that these converts had been taught that Jesus had done all, and faith only was necessary, while he insisted upon the necessity of repentance, restitution and confession as a preliminary to saving faith. The "brightest convert" of the previous evangelist said after hearing the first sermon of Mr. Roberts that if his preaching were true, then he had never been converted, and quite evidently so, for he continued to engage "in the damnable work of selling liquor."[\[139\]](#) With such a background of experience, he was able to tell with sympathetic understanding of a preacher who turned to medicine, and finally to law. When asked the reason for this strange conduct, he replied that he left the ministry because he found that people cared more for their bodies than for their souls; he took to law, because he discovered that they would pay more to have their own way, than they would for the preservation of soul and body both.[\[140\]](#)

An experience was related which occurred at a camp meeting in Wayne County, Illinois, when Mr. Roberts was preaching on the text, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit."[\[141\]](#) He wrote to his wife that the Spirit of the Lord had been "poured out upon the people in a remarkable manner," and that the meeting had gone on through the night until six o'clock the next morning. He said he was conscious that the Lord greatly helped him and that he felt the "Spirit's power as he had seldom felt it. The preachers broke down, and fell on their knees before the Lord, and the Spirit came upon them mightily." He commented that it was a time never to be forgotten, and added, "I feel as if my commission were renewed," and desired that his wife pray for him that he might never again "grieve the Holy Spirit in any way."[\[142\]](#)

Mr. Roberts encouraged his preachers, not only by his own continuous activity but by exhortations as well, never to be content with preaching two or three sermons a week. "If you cannot find attentive hearers in one place, go to another. Stir about Visit the people from house to house; exhort them, pray with them, and kindle a revival flame." He could not see how a preacher who was fully consecrated to God and "baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire" could settle down, take it easy, and lead a "self-indulgent life."[\[143\]](#)

The monthly accounts of his own activities in meetings, published in *The Earnest Christian*, were a means of stirring the preachers of the new church to follow the example of their General Superintendent, and were doubtless instrumental in a wider diffusion of the work of the church. In November, 1861, he noted that he "made pastoral visits in Niagara County. Encouraged the people to look for revivals."[\[144\]](#) He also told them that he once lived near a blacksmith in his early ministry, who was diligent in his calling. The ring of his hammer roused Mr. Roberts to read God's Word and pray, to study and devotion. "The Holy Spirit said, 'Ought you to be less diligent to lay up treasures in Heaven, than this man is to secure an earthly competence?' "[\[145\]](#)

He enforced upon his co-laborers the necessity of pastoral calling and personal work by referring to a most interesting meeting which he had held about four miles from Norwich, Chenango County, New

York. A Mr. Charles Howe, an exhorter, had gone out into an irreligious community to hold meetings. For two or three miles not a single professor of religion could be found, and the people were not accustomed to attend services. That man did not pretend to preach and never took a text, but simply went to work for others. He reported that nearly every one in the neighborhood was saved. In ten families, living along in order on one street, the parents and children were all converted during these meetings. Seven husbands with their wives joined the church, along with several others. He noted that this was the product of the efforts of a cartman who was "thoroughly in earnest in trying to get souls saved."[\[146\]](#)

Mr. Roberts demonstrated to his preachers the value of personal work by speaking to people as opportunity afforded wherever he went. He was traveling on "the cars" in January 20, 1866, and talked with "two dissolute fine-looking young men" who had been in the army. They acknowledged their need of religion, and one of them told him he "expected to die of consumption." He tried to get across the message of salvation, and trusted that "a good impression was made."[\[147\]](#)

[2. Mission Activity, Work Among the Poor](#)

A Gospel for the poor had been the theme of Mr. Roberts as he preached and wrote against "stock churches" and promoted the free. In April, 1861, he told the people to build churches "perfectly plain" and not more expensive than was absolutely necessary, since "splendid churches" were the "offspring of pride" and pride produced formality. If rich men became necessary, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, had said then it was "farewell to Methodist discipline if not to Methodist doctrine." Then, too, where there were the rich in fashionable array, the poor man in cheap raiment would not intrude. "You need never expect to see a simple hearted, spiritual people worshipping in a magnificent temple" he averred. He was opposed to every procedure that would keep away the poor.[\[148\]](#)

He was also in favor of taking the Gospel to the poor. Mrs. Roberts recorded of the people in Buffalo, "My soul clings to this people. God is with them. How I love their souls. I feel reluctant in leaving even for a season. My soul longs, pants, thirsts for a mighty work here among the poor."[\[149\]](#) Later in the same year she stated that the Lord was sending among them "the poor and those who prize his favor when they get it."[\[150\]](#) That was the spirit of her husband who wrote definitely against trying to reach the rich. "Fish for the rich folks, do you?" he inquired. "Friends, beware of worldly policy, the trap of Satan." He enforced his idea by pointing out that God hath chosen the weak and the despised and the foolish, and confirmed the truth by the Scripture, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?"[\[151\]](#)

The outcasts were sometimes reclaimed. As far back as Albion, Mr. Roberts had been doing religious work in the jails. He recounted the incident of a young man and his wife who greeted him with cordiality on the Bergen Campground, and when he could not recall him immediately, the young man said that it was he who had been converted through the efforts of Mr. Roberts in the Albion jail. After the trial of the young man, and sentence was pronounced, Mr. Roberts went to the men of whom the young man had taken the property, addressed a letter to the Governor certifying to the previous good character of the convicted man, and joined in a petition for his pardon. The Sheriff then took the documents and went to

Albany and procured his pardon. All this came about because Mr. Roberts had been a little too late for the cars, and he had redeemed the time by holding the jail service.[\[152\]](#)

In 1862, he made mention of the fact that he had opened a mission on the Five Points, in Buffalo, a place that was as truly missionary ground "as any that could be found in India or China." Here, where "Satan reigned supreme"

Wander the sons of Belial
Flown with insolence and wine.[\[153\]](#)

In that degenerate area between the canal and the lake, "almost every building" had "a brothel and a bar," Mr. Roberts noted. In these "suburbs of perdition"[\[154\]](#) he had been aroused by an incident that occurred in connection with services which he had held on the docks the previous summer.[\[155\]](#) Of that work he had written to his wife, "The meetings in the dock are full of interest. Souls are awakened and some from there have gone to the church and been converted."[\[156\]](#) A boatman, living in the worst part of that section, who had attended the services of Mr. Roberts, took sick and thought he was going to die. He called for some of the people to pray for him which they did. "The noise of singing and praying brought many in from the adjoining saloons," he recounted, and most of them knelt while a spirit of "deep solemnity pervaded the room." He felt that he ought to have services down in that "desolate dark place" and after visiting among the people and praying with them, and looking around, he found a large hall over a saloon which he rented at ten dollars a month, "seated it," and commenced meetings. No bell was needed as the sound of prayer and praise brought a congregation. Five young men, and two young women of ill-famed character, were converted by the time the meetings had been held five weeks. Mr. Roberts and his good wife furnished a home for these young ladies for a time until they could find work "to take care of themselves in a respectable manner."[\[157\]](#) He published a notice in The Earnest Christian that if any of the "Sisters" would be willing to help these unfortunate but penitent girls by taking them into their families and helping to establish them in a better manner of living, to let their wishes be known.[\[158\]](#)

In 1868, Mr. Roberts wrote of attending a service in a colored home where Mr. Mackey had been holding meetings once a week. He found it a free place in which to preach. The singing was "in the spirit such as you found among the colored people that enjoy religion." A number had knelt for special prayer and several "clear testimonies of the power of Christ to save were given," two from persons over one hundred years of age. During that visit to New York, he found "Sister Jane Dunning" of Binghamton with three other women engaged in work among the poor, but more especially among the sick and dying of the large colored population. Dr. G. A. Sabine, a medical doctor, paid those four women an aggregate of one hundred seventy dollars a month for doing that charitable work, and they went to the poor in garrets as well as cellars, distributing clothes and food, helping them to get fuel, and reading the Bible to them and praying for them.[\[159\]](#)

In 1869, he wrote about the work being done in the Water Street Mission in New York by Frank and Emeline Smith, who had been members of the Brockport Methodist Church when Mr. Roberts was pastor there. An active friendship and correspondence had been maintained between Mrs. Roberts and Mrs.

Smith from that time. The meetings of that mission had commenced in the dance house of John Allen, a man who had professed conversion but had not endured. The meetings had to be moved to another building. The Smiths were working there without salary, and Mr. Roberts made an appeal for assistance for them. Thus, Mr. Roberts labored for the poor, and endeavored to encourage the workers who gave themselves to it.[\[160\]](#)

3. Religious Meetings of Various Kinds

(a) *Outdoor Meetings.* At the last charge Mr. Roberts had in Pekin, New York, while still in the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he had a regular appointment every Sunday afternoon in a grove. Hundreds attended, he said, so that no house in the vicinity could have accommodated them. He said of these meetings in the open, "God honors out-door meetings," and he estimated that they were among the most successful meetings he ever held. He told of receiving a letter from a lady who said she listened to him preach through the windows of her house, which adjoined the city park where he had held meetings for several days, and as a result she "gave up the world," and the last he heard from her "she was walking in the light of the blessing of holiness." He added, "We prefer a grove, an orchard, a shady park, or even an unsheltered common, to the best churches, especially if the right to worship God in them is a subject of merchandise."[\[161\]](#)

One of these outdoor services he held about seventy miles southwest of Chicago, in Aurora, Illinois. After the camp meeting held in that place had closed, Mr. Roberts preached in the public park in the afternoon, on the east side of the river, to a "large and attentive congregation." Since the preaching appeared to take effect, they held another meeting the next day. One person "deeply pricked to the heart," went forward to seek salvation. The next day Sabbath services were continued. Mr. Roberts said that when Mrs. Roberts related to the "weeping multitude" what God had done for her, and exhorted them, he had never seen "more deep feeling manifested" than in that large congregation which had listened with "intense interest."[\[162\]](#)

Mrs. Roberts in her diary spoke of outdoor meetings the following year. While at Carbondale, they went on the street about 6:30 in the evening and began to sing and the people gathered to listen. As Mr. Roberts preached they kept coming until there was "a large crowd." After he finished he called on Mrs. Roberts to speak, which she did, although it seemed to her that she did not have "a word to say." But when she began to speak, she felt the Lord "did greatly bless" her. Afterwards another "sister" talked some. Since there seemed to be "great conviction" they proceeded to the house of a "Brother B.," followed by many of the crowd, and "some sinners, four or five, were reclaimed. It was a blessed season."[\[163\]](#)

The next day at Binghamton, New York, they went to the Court House about the same hour as the previous evening where a meeting had been announced. She confessed, "It was a great cross to me to go there but the Lord went with us. Mr. Roberts preached and my soul was stirred while he talked to the people." After he finished she talked and her "soul was filled and blessed." She exclaimed, "Oh, what a love Jesus gives me for those who do not hear the gospel. My soul is stirred."[\[164\]](#)

The following day, they reached Caryville, New York. In the afternoon they went to a grove where a meeting was scheduled, and though but few attended, Mrs. Roberts recorded that for her at least it was a "profitable time." Mr. Roberts preached about "being joined to the Lord in a perpetual covenant." After trying a meeting in the hall that evening, and finding it "was hard moving anybody," they learned that "the brethren and sisters," who had evidently gathered in for the service in the grove, were going back home.[\[165\]](#)

In June, 1865, Mr. Roberts attended another open air meeting, held near Dublin, Indiana. The people, he stated, were Quakers from Carolina, and Lutherans and United Brethren from Pennsylvania. Here a "regularly licensed female preacher" of the United Brethren Church preached "a good, sound, effective sermon." A Quaker preacher, Enos Prey, gave "a powerful exhortation," and told "as clear an experience of experimental piety" as Mr. Roberts had ever heard, and demonstrated by shouting for joy.[\[166\]](#)

In August of that same year, he conducted a grove meeting at Canaan, Pennsylvania, ten miles over the mountain from Carbon-dale, for a three day period. Of it, he said, "Some eight or ten, we trust, obtained forgiveness of sins, and believers were quickened and encouraged."[\[167\]](#)

(b) *Camp Meetings*. The Bergen, New York Camp of 1861 was scheduled to begin on the twentieth of June, and Mr. and Mrs. Roberts arrived the day before from St. Charles, Illinois, where they had been helping in a camp meeting. When they reached the ground, they found that their tent had been erected along with the others, and was located just in back of the stand. Mrs. Roberts did not like a location so close to the place of meeting, but "concluded the Lord might be in it all." She was even "a good deal tempted over having a tent," probably expecting a room would be provided for them, but she reconciled herself to it, stating, "But it is right I know and I will make the best of it." They prepared their camp beds for the night. Besides Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, four others were also placed in the same tent. Before retiring, they had tea together, and then had a prayer meeting in the tent. Mrs. Roberts recorded in her diary, "My husband took hold and consecrated himself anew" and "God gave him a baptism of the Holy Ghost I shall long remember that meeting. Brother Fay Purdy [the lawyer-evangelist] was in it and many saints of God."[\[168\]](#)

Mr. Roberts preached the next day at 10:00 o'clock, and although Mrs. Roberts thought the Lord helped him, she recorded, "He did not say all he ought to the pilgrims; if so, he would have said some close things."[\[169\]](#) That evening, the Rev. Levi Wood, reputed in the church in after years for being lengthy, "preached a long sermon - till after eleven o'clock."[\[170\]](#) On the 24th she said that "Brother Reddy [Alanson Reddy of the Nazarite Band], made some remarks which did no good." On the 25th Levi Wood again preached, on the subject of sanctification. Just how long it was she did not say, but probably long enough to produce patience. She said Mr. Gorham, editor of *The Guide to Holiness*, made some pertinent remarks in application, which other misapplied, and it brought great distress to Mrs. Roberts and confusion to others. Mr. Roberts arose and talked and, his wife said, "cleared up things" considerably. The matter for confusion centered in some remarks by Mr. Reddy, the Nazarite Band leader, immediately following the sermon. The misapplied remarks of Mr. Gorham had referred to Mr. Reddy. Mrs. Roberts

recorded that she believed there was a class doing more harm than Alanson Reddy, although she did not think he was "right by any means." She hastened to add, "His heart is right, I believe, but not his head."[\[171\]](#)

Mr. Roberts, passing over the little details that hold a woman's interest, reported "the success of this meeting was fully equal to that of any which had been held upon that Heaven-favored ground."[\[172\]](#) Mr. Roberts recounted that people came from as far as New York City and New England to see if the "extravagant misrepresentations that some professedly religious papers published" of the meeting the year before were so. Mr. Roberts said their testimony, before leaving, was that "this is old-fashioned Methodism. This is what we used to see years ago, and what we still believe in."[\[173\]](#) This campground, which Mr. Roberts and Mr. Stiles had personally secured, was soon out of the hands of the Free Methodist people, because of certain clauses in the title, previously referred to, which made it legally the property of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Pekin Camp Meeting, held in August of 1861 in the grove of Isaac Chesbrough, had about thirty tents pitched on a poor uneven ground, most of them out in the "blazing sun" since there were only a few shade trees.[\[174\]](#) A young man, who had been convicted of sin in "pilgrim meetings" before enlisting in the army, and whose religious interests it was reported had been maintained by reading *The Earnest Christian* sent to him by a friend while he was at Fortress Monroe, attended the Bergen Camp that year, and while there he "enlisted for life in Emmanuel's army."[\[175\]](#)

Mrs. Roberts recorded in her diary that at the Pekin Camp Meeting, there were several tents with the name "Nazarite" on them, and that there seemed to be "much feeling among them in reference to the free church movement."[\[176\]](#) These Nazarite "protestants" took a prominent part in the meeting evidencing their enthusiasm with much shouting and bodily exercise. Mrs. Roberts gave as her opinion that "the work in their hearts is quite superficial," and that she felt more than ever "that God is a God of order."[\[177\]](#)

The Pekin Camp Meeting was followed by one at Rose, New York, and another at Yates, New York. At both of these camps, the Rev. H. Belden, a Congregational minister, and D. F. Newton, editor of the *Golden Rule*, attended and rendered assistance. At the Rose Camp, Mrs. Roberts recorded that a "missionary subscription" was taken for the church in Buffalo.[\[178\]](#) At the same camp the following year, Mr. Roberts recorded that the attendance was large, but that "Satan, transformed into an angel of light" had succeeded in pushing some "beyond the kingdom of grace into his own territory." These "precious but deluded souls" had been led into "many acts of extravagance and folly." Because there was quite a group of extremists on the ground, many others, without being aware of it, fell under their influence. Mr. Roberts said that he met this influence "kindly and firmly, with the Word of God and the power of the Holy Ghost." He wrote that the victory was complete and "the spell was broken, and nearly all of the captives were delivered."[\[179\]](#) The Susquehanna Annual Convention was held in conjunction with that meeting.

Then there was the Ogle Camp Meeting where "most of the tents leaked" but Mrs. Roberts was fortunate

in being able to write, "Ours did not."[\[180\]](#) Of the Barnerville, New York Camp Meeting in 1864, Mr. Roberts recorded the written request that prayer be offered for rain, phrased as follows: "Dear Brother Roberts, please pray for rain: the ground is parching under the burning sun, vegetation is suffering, and the fountains of water are drying up." A fervent prayer was offered by Mr. Roberts, and the people said, "Amen." The morning service had just closed "when the sky was overcast, and a downpour of rain caused streams of water to run on the ground, and the thirsty land drank from its pools."[\[181\]](#)

In 1865 at the St. Charles, Illinois Camp Meeting, Mr. Roberts estimated that one hundred were justified, and a still larger number sanctified. The service that began on Sabbath afternoon never closed until six o'clock the next morning.[\[182\]](#)

Great camp meetings were still in progress among the Methodists in that day. Mr. Roberts visited the New York Camp Meeting of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1867. Though he said he noticed "a good deal of show and fashion," he was struck with the large number of plain, unpretending people in attendance. He believed that Methodism had a strong hold upon the common people and that it was "a great mistake to let go that hold under any pretence whatever."[\[183\]](#)

The same year, Mr. Roberts attended a camp meeting near Freeport, Michigan, which he felt to be a "most satisfactory meeting." Mrs. Martha LaDue reported the meeting in glowing terms. She spoke of a sermon preached by Mr. Roberts on the subject of holiness in which he endeavored to prove that the standard of holiness generally taught fell below the Bible standard "of a true gospel awakening." The last night scores thronged the altar, and as they found pardon, they gave place to others, who kept coming, invited and uninvited, until after midnight. When an effort was made to form the usual procession for marching around the ground to say their farewells, nothing could divert the seekers praying at the altar. Father Benjamin was reported to have said that he was "set back twenty years" in his life, and "Brother Ely" formerly of the Genesee Conference, said that he felt "the same fire that he used to feel when laboring with Brother Roberts in the Genesee Conference."[\[184\]](#)

[G. PERSONAL AND HOME INTERESTS](#)

[1. Mutual Understanding Between Husband and Wife](#)

In 1860, Mrs. Roberts confessed in her diary that she was discouraged because Mr. Roberts did not hold on in prayer for all he wanted and saw he needed when she felt her faith was strong enough to claim that promise that one could "chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight."[\[185\]](#) The next morning she confessed to her husband that she felt she had done wrong "in yielding to discouragement." "He prayed for me," she wrote, "and the Lord blessed us both."[\[186\]](#)

After being away from home for a time she recorded that she was "glad to be at home . . . with my dear husband." She continued, "We never felt so strongly united in Jesus as now. Oh what a blessed union. We knelt together as is our custom often, I might almost say always, and prayed." She thought the Lord

graciously blessed them both, and that her husband was "nearer to Jesus than ever before."[\[187\]](#) No doubt that sense of union was greater because they so fully shared every experience. She found herself clinging to her husband so closely at times that she exclaimed, "How careful we have to be lest we cling to some creature good more than God. I sometimes fear I love my husband too well. Yet I would not. Jesus keep and save me."[\[188\]](#) At another time when he had just returned from a trip, she recorded, "I was rejoiced to see him."[\[189\]](#) When he was gone, she spent a morning making her husband "a . . . wrapper"[\[190\]](#) and when he got back after an absence, and much other company which had caused her to withdraw within herself, it seemed "so pleasant to sit down alone with my dear husband and children."[\[191\]](#)

Mr. Roberts, comforting his wife, wrote to her, "Darling, you have a great work to do for the Lord, and I pray often that you may have all the grace you need. You must look up and keep blessed and not be tempted."[\[192\]](#) A letter written back the next year could have been for some such word as above. She glowed, "You are such a light to me, such a help to me, such sunshine to my soul and spirit. May you have a long life to bless me and gladden your children and cheer the many that love you." Then she added, perhaps because of something he had written, "You must never think that there are few that love you, for there are many, and they are those that love Jesus."[\[193\]](#)

That Mr. Roberts was not always the perfect lover, at least in remembrance, is indicated in a letter Mrs. Roberts wrote to him while he was on his way to the St. Charles Camp Meeting. After telling him that she was glad to receive his recent letter, she said, rather reprovngly, "You left without even saying Good-bye to me," but then added hastily, "But I know it was unintentional." Was it a coincidence of trial that just at that time, S. K. J. Chesbrough, their dear friend of the past as well as of the future, would not go to Charlotte and preach. Neither would he preach on Sabbath morning, but, she said, he "sat down like a mule and said, 'Let anyone exhort or pray.' Is there any wonder that she exclaimed, "It was up-hill work. The Spirit did not help any one do anything." He wouldn't even "speak a word of experience. If he had been out of the way we should have had a better meeting." Then she added, "Lord bless and take care of you. I want you to be free at St. Charles Camp Meeting. Go around and talk with the people in their tents."[\[194\]](#)

Such a little act of forgetfulness as the above did not change the love of Mrs. Roberts for her husband. In 1867, when he arrived unexpectedly, she wrote, "My dear husband came to my surprise. He looked good to me." This lifted her spirits to the point where she testified, "He is the Master's child." Then added, "I feel few if any are so blessed as I, for a dearer companion no one ever had." The secret of their closeness she divulged, "The Lord gives us great union of soul and union of sentiments and views. To the Lord be all the praise."[\[195\]](#)

In 1870, Mr. Roberts wrote his wife that his stay away from home might be a longer one than he had planned since he felt that he should go on from Chambersburg to New York and Brooklyn to see that help was given there. He added, "I do not know how to stay away so long. I want to be a greater blessing and a greater help to you than I have ever been."[\[196\]](#)

2. Children and Home

Mr. Roberts, although away from home much of the time, felt a true paternal affection for his children. He wrote his wife in 1860, "I do not think you had better leave Charlie. If anything should happen to him people would talk about us more than ever."[\[197\]](#) Probably this note of caution arose out of an experience earlier when their little Sarah had died. Mrs. Roberts had gone to a camp meeting to spend two days, leaving the child well and happy, in the care of friends. When she returned home two days later, it was to learn that the child had taken suddenly ill and died shortly before her mother arrived. He closed his letter of caution to his wife with a "kiss to Charlie" and a request for prayer.[\[198\]](#) In 1862 he wrote his wife affectionately telling her that he loved her, his "precious one, very dearly-never so much" and added, "also our precious children." He then expressed as his hope that God would spare them to do the work that he seemed "to get along with so poorly."[\[199\]](#)

The children wrote to their father when he was away. His son, Benson, while visiting an uncle and aunt at Bonus Prairie, Illinois, wrote his mother in a childish hand so different from the finished flourishes of his mature years, saying, "I wrote to Father the eighth of July and mailed it the 9th and as I have not heard from him yet, I concluded that he had not got it." After telling his mother to "tell Pa" that he liked "*The Life of Summerfield* first rate," and asking for his brother George to write, he made a further requisition. "Tell Pa if he has time I would like to have him take my book back to the Young Men's Association." After telling them that he went "barefoot all the time," he made a religious close, "Give my love to all and accept it yourself. I pray for you all and want you to pray for me." The letter was signed in very large letters, "Your Loving, Affectionate Son, B. H. Roberts."[\[200\]](#)

The one statement that stands out with reference to his father is, "if he has time." Probably the busy father could not spend too much time with his growing children. However, he was always very glad to hear from his precious wife and children while away.[\[201\]](#)

Their son George wrote to his parents in 1865 when they were in Marengo, Illinois. After telling them how glad he was to receive a letter from them on Saturday, he questioned, "Did you say that I should speak to Ma McCall about the strawberry plants?" indicating that the parents were assigning him home duties during their absence. He broke in with the information, "Cornelia says we're all doing well." Then quickly getting away from the subject of behavior to things less personal, he told them that Cornelia had been going to work with beans that week. He also suggested to them that peaches were coming down in price, and that "we could get them for one dollar a basket Saturday." "School begins today" he injected between peaches at one dollar a basket and instructions Cornelia sent for them to stay until they got through. Then he closed with this intimation of industry, "I am very busy getting ready for school," and signed his name as "Your affectionate son, George L. Roberts."[\[202\]](#)

Mrs. Roberts recorded in her diary a homely little scene of Mr. Roberts in the woods with his boys, with Mrs. Roberts observing them. "The boys with the help of their father have begun to make maple sugar." Evidently standing for some time and watching their activities, she commented, "It is a slow process. It only drops." Then putting her finger out for a taste, probably at the suggestion of one of the boys, she

discovered it was "not very sweet," yet added "it makes sugar."[\[203\]](#)

Others, too, tried to make the boys happy. A communication from Mary Hicks in Syracuse, after asking about Sammie and "Benjie," stated that "Brother Hicks is building him [probably Sammie] a hen coop." She said it was a very "nice building" and Mr. Hicks was working on it "every morning before light." He was also furnishing nine or ten hens to go with the coop.[\[204\]](#)

At one time when Mrs. Roberts was away, she wrote to her husband regarding his duty toward the children thus:

Now, dearest, take a little time to talk with your boys when you get home; hear the full story each one has to tell and sympathize with them in their tribulations and then in love and patience be firm and strict with them. Make each one behave at prayers and at the table. I will help you all I can when I get home and you may exhort me, and see to it that I do the right thing by the children Kiss the little ones for me.[\[205\]](#)

3. Finances

Mr. Roberts did not always find his finances easy. During the early years following the organization of the new church, there was little financial backing. Added to that, he had personally assumed the responsibility of the first free church in Buffalo and had sold his own home to make the first payment on the building. About four months after the founding of the new church, he sent fifteen dollars to his wife, with the comment, "I would be glad to send you more if I could. But debts are horrid looking things, and I have to face them when I get to Buffalo."[\[206\]](#) With reference to the financial stress occasioned by giving up their home to buy a church, his *Journal* records, "We saw no way to do it but by turning in our house." He recorded that after giving the thousand dollars realized from the sale of their home, he borrowed eleven hundred dollars beside to put on the church, and added, "This I owe, and the want of it embarrasses me a good deal. But the Lord will bring us through. Our trust is in Him. I will not be troubled after doing my duty. Lord, let me have thy presence and favor." He noted that "we have had to pay repairs, interest, etc."[\[207\]](#) Writing again of the same matter, he said, "The financial load upon me is felt sometimes as I go to Buffalo; but the Lord keeps me. I have not yielded to temptation this time as I have too often under such circumstances."[\[208\]](#) According to Mrs. Roberts, the matter came to a successful close. She recorded in her diary, "My dear husband began to ask Jesus for faith that would enable him to carry his financial load. He claimed it. It was so clear, his taking it. Bless God, he was greatly blessed."[\[209\]](#)

That the rising costs during the war period increased his difficulties, there is little doubt. Mrs. Lane wrote in 1862 about butter being thirty-one cents a pound in New York. She also noted receiving a "firkin of butter" which had cost two dollars and seventy-five cents for express alone. She thought Mr. Roberts might have had it sent to her.[\[210\]](#) Coming to the close of the war period, Mr. Roberts wrote, "There is scarcely an article which a family needs to eat or wear that does not cost at least twice as much as it did

before the war broke out." Coal, he said, had gone up in price from four dollars and fifty cents a ton to seventeen dollars; flour from five dollars a barrel to fourteen; butter formerly priced from thirteen to twenty cents a pound, had gone up to forty-five and fifty cents. Other things went up accordingly. He remarked that the merchants were not affected unfavorably, for money was plentiful and their profits were greater than ever before. Farmers had been bettered in their condition since the crops of the previous year had been fair and the price of farm products compared favorably with other things. Mechanics' and laborers' wages had doubled. He then made the following appeal:

But there has been no increase in the salaries of ministers. This is especially true of those who will not cater to the times, but who faithfully declare the whole knowledge of God. They cannot live in this way. Those who love God must see to it that his faithful ministers do not suffer. If you pay them no more than formerly, let it be in things they need and at the same price which they formerly paid for them. Unless some such course is taken, both ministers and members will suffer, the one from covetousness, the other from want.[\[211\]](#)

Even though the above stringency was evidenced, yet it appeared that the finances of Mr. Roberts must have improved through this period. Among the personal papers of Mr. Roberts is to be found the record of a transaction which took place in October, 1865, in which Benjamin T. Roberts and James Mathews bought the patent right for an improved water-proof blacking for the sum of two thousand seven hundred and eighty dollars, part of which sum had been paid to Mr. D. L. Pickard prior to his application for patent rights.[\[212\]](#) Also among his personal papers is to be found a Quitclaim Deed from this same Daniel L. Pickard to Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin T. Roberts, for 160 acres of land in West Calhoun County, Iowa. A statement at the end explained that the same property had been conveyed to him, probably in payment on the patent mentioned. By then Mr. Roberts either had sufficient money to buy it back, or had borrowed sufficient for that purpose.[\[213\]](#)

Mr. James Mathews, whose name appeared on the patent rights for the blacking, later became involved financially and wrote to Mr. Roberts about his plight. He said, "You have trials one way, and I in another. They say that you are 'sharp enough to line your own pockets' and that I 'don't know enough.' So it goes. God help me." He closed with an appeal for Mr. Roberts to do something for him with a J. R. Annis with reference, evidently, to easing some financial pressures centering in the buying of a house.[\[214\]](#) This might indicate that the blacking enterprise did not pay off, for Mathews said that if they got no return from the blacking they would have to let the home go and be "homeless wanderers."[\[215\]](#) It is possible that Mr. Roberts, becoming suspicious of the blacking enterprise, had turned back his rights to Mr. Pickard and received in return his property in Iowa. Certainly Mr. Roberts had to be a good business manager, for his salary was small, and before the date of a regular salary, he had to support himself, largely, it would appear, through *The Earnest Christian* enterprise.

The Roberts were very kind to Mrs. George Lane during the years subsequent to the death of her husband, often sending her supplies which she needed. A letter, marked as her last letter, dated July 5, 1866, contained a request for a dollar to buy coal.[\[216\]](#) The financial assistance they gave to Mrs. Lane came back to them at her death. She willed one thousand dollars to the Roberts.[\[217\]](#) This money, which

came to them that year, plus the money which probably came back to the Roberts from their investment in the Buffalo Church, accounts for some of the ready cash they had.

4. Personal Religious Experience

The close union of husband and wife who had each declared their devotion to Christian service was probably a factor in the spiritual life of both. In times of pressure they prayed with and for one another. In a letter to his wife, Mr. Roberts requested, "I want you to continue to pray about the printing. I do not want to get out of God's order again. It makes such confusion when I do."[\[218\]](#) To someone who remarked about the spiritual life of Mr. Roberts, he replied, "My wife keeps an altar up all the time. If I need to be prayed for, it is there and she is ready."[\[219\]](#)

He did not consider himself sufficient, as one may judge from his letters and diary, but was seeking continually to have a deeper spiritual life. At one time his faith was sorely tried, yet he recorded that he knew God's promise "has never yet failed." He then confessed, "But I feel so deeply my unfaithfulness and sinfulness in the sight of God that it sometimes seems hard for me to claim the promises. My fear is that I do not meet the conditions."[\[220\]](#) Part of this feeling evidently stemmed from his failure to do all he thought he should. He continued, "I try to do all I can, yet I do not feel satisfied with the way in which my time is passing. I am not idle, and yet it seems as if I accomplish but little." He then wrote a prayer for assistance, "Lord make me diligent, active, useful, devoted," followed by this expression of desire and determination, "I want to be filled with the Spirit. I will do the will of the Lord, if he will only give me His light and His help."[\[221\]](#)

In the midst of what he termed a "good meeting" he wrote, "I am trying to seek the Lord with all my heart; but it has seemed to me some of the time that I should die." He then referred to the first twenty verses of the sixty-ninth Psalm as the best expression of his experience. These verses speak particularly of reproach:

Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children . . . and the reproach of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I have found none.[\[222\]](#)

What the immediate circumstance was which occasioned this feeling he did not say, but closed the paragraph by remarking, "I know you pray for me; for I feel the effects of your prayers."[\[223\]](#)

All within the new church was not easy sailing, for the turbulence of varying ideas and opinions that were held before the councils of the church could settle a fixed course, kept the waters troubled. Mrs. Lane wrote a little before this, "I am astonished that people under your influence can so soon stray away from God. Do they truly walk in the light? If so, how can they knowing its blessedness so soon lose what they

gain?"[\[224\]](#) A source of encouragement should have been Mrs. Lane's statement, "I never lost, (all, at least) of what I gained when I was there with you in Albion."[\[225\]](#)

No doubt the problems of the Susquehanna Convention and of the General Conference of that year were still weighing heavily upon Mr. Roberts. Everything had not been smooth at the General Conference, and the withdrawal of the Genesee Conference delegates doubtless brought upon him great concern.

A little incident that revealed the way pressures might arise occurred the next year. He had an appointment somewhere near Fort Plain, but when he arrived at the nearest depot, there was no one to meet him to take him on to the place of the meeting. The stage was full and would not take another passenger except he would go through to Cooperstown. The roads were muddy and it was dark and rainy. Moreover he said, "I was tired and sick at heart." So he took the cars and went back to Rochester. Following that, he received a letter from "Brother John Dunckle" which he began to read, but finding it condemnatory, "had not the courage to go through." He said, "He thinks that I am very wicked in not going to my appointment there the last time." Mr. Roberts turned the letter over to his wife, requested her to read it and "make the best defense of me to him you can." He expressed a wish, "I do hope the Lord is not going to let me lose all my friends."[\[226\]](#) Later he was able to write that although "many things look discouraging," yet "the Lord lifts up my head and keeps me full of courage."[\[227\]](#) A still more triumphant ring, arising no doubt from the fact that *The Earnest Christian* was succeeding, "The Lord has in a wonderful manner kept me thus far by His mighty power. The temptations with which I have been assailed are losing their power. Under the most depressing circumstances I have been kept joyous."[\[228\]](#) His own ministry sometimes brought him spiritual help, as when he preached on being led by the Spirit. Not only did light come to other minds, but was shed especially on his. A prayer service followed in which the people petitioned for a baptism of the Holy Spirit, in which he said, "The Lord held me to a fuller consecration to Him than I had ever made." After consecrating to deny self, redeem the time, and to "go forward in the work of God as much as I feel I ought," he expressed the belief, "The Lord accepted and blessed me, and gave me His Holy Spirit."[\[229\]](#) The months immediately following the rejection of his appeal from expulsion from the Methodist Episcopal Church were probably one of the darkest periods of his life, and it was during that period that much of the above, pertaining to times of discouragement and darkness with his attempts to rise above them, was written.

In 1864, although he had been among members who were "tempted with one another, looking at one another," he could say, "I feel very well in body, and the Lord is helping me in my soul, and I believe is going to give me more power and salvation than I ever had," and then added, "But nothing but power divine can make me what I should be." The closing paragraph of the same letter opened with the words, "We must keep full of courage."[\[230\]](#) When he wrote those words, he was near Oberlin College where Charles G. Finney, then still living and greatly admired by Mr. Roberts, was president. Perhaps nearness to that great man of faith inspired his own faith. Also his good health and naturally great vigor were a proper basis for his cheerful spirits. The next year at the Wayne Camp Meeting where he estimated that one hundred had been converted and another hundred sanctified, he reacted normally, "My courage is greatly increased. Bless the Lord."[\[231\]](#)

But when others were discouraged, it was time for him to encourage. After having received a letter from a disheartened preacher, he wrote back that he was sorry things were in such a state, with the church cold, members backslidden, sinners indifferent, congregations small, and but little interest in religion. However, he consoled, such a state of things was by no means uncommon, for Christians even in the days of the Apostles went back to the "beggarly elements of the world" and that "fatal fashion has had followers ever since." Then he encouraged, "But as matters are, they are not hopeless. God still lives. His word has lost none of its efficacy. It is still quick, and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. Try that." After further advising him to begin with his own heart, and to "probe it thoroughly" for the presence of compromise or the want of self-denial, or receiving honor from men, he expressed his opinion that "seek to disguise it as he may, he who was once successful in saving souls, but fails now, month in and month out, is back-slidden, more or less from God. His power is gone." [332] Then he advised this preacher, "If this is the case with you, own it to yourself; do not attribute your failure to circumstances. Lay it to its true cause, your want of grace. Then whatever else you do, get the grace that will make you conqueror." [333] His further exhortation that he should humble himself before God, and should ask until he received a baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, expressed his own belief, and was probably the cause of his frequent practice of seeking the Lord.

Mr. Roberts not only thought that disheartened minister should make his confessions, but he believed also that whole societies should do the same. After preaching in North Chili, New York, in 1868 from a rather strange text, "They shall devour and subdue with sling stones," [234] he recorded, "The Lord helped me and I was somewhat blessed." That little touch of blessing did not keep him from adding, "But I feel discouraged about the work here, on account of the unwillingness of the members to break down before the Lord. They feel satisfied with themselves." He observed that "God had opened the eyes of some, and convicted them of the need of getting the spirit, but others heal them up." [235]

Wearied in body while in a meeting at Chambersburg, he was nevertheless trying to "look to the Lord for such a blessing" on his soul as he had never had. That afternoon he felt "a good deal drawn out in prayer" and expressed a desire that he would be made a "lasting blessing" to the people. He then entered the confessional, "But I want to be blessed myself most of all," and added, "I must say that I feel very much humbled and encouraged." [236] In the same meeting after "a good day yesterday" in which he thought the Lord helped him very much in preaching, he gave an experience which he said was somewhat typical. "I was a good deal blessed in my room before going to church; but not being satisfied that it was of the Lord, as you know is very apt to be the case with me, I got down in the parlor to pray again, and was a good deal tempted." What the cause of his temptation was he did not say, but the incident revealed a tendency for him to doubt God's presence and help, suggested also by his constant seeking. In any case, his desires and longings were Godward. Coming out of a camp meeting in Meadville, Pennsylvania, he noted, "Yesterday morning, in the woods by myself, I felt my heart very much melted and I feel a good deal encouraged about myself. The Lord will take me through." [237]

A great many persons, down through the years, shared the hospitality of the Roberts home. The times when they were alone became increasingly rare, just as the letters expressing appreciation for their influence and help became more common. A letter illustrating their influence was written by "Orpha"

who had gone to school and had stayed in the home of the Roberts. After returning to her own home, she wrote, "To me, to come from your house here was like going from Heaven to earth." A little later in the letter she said that "not to condemn one's self or anybody else is *glorious*." She expressed confidence that God "would give you and others at your house a big reward for all you have done for me." Her faith for the future was based on the help she had obtained there, for "there were seeds sown in my heart at your house," she asserted, "which I believe will grow and make me a mighty instrument in God's hands for good."[\[238\]](#)

In the latter part of that year, Mrs. Mary Hicks from Syracuse, New York wrote appreciatively of a letter written by Mr. Roberts to them, saying, "Brother Roberts' few lines were worth a thousand dollars to me. I thought if he had some faith, my case wasn't helpless."[\[239\]](#)

H. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

In the early years of the formation of the Free Methodist Church, Mr. Roberts was invited to attend the Annual Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, held at Wheaton College. He wrote about that trip to "a new, beautiful village on the open prairie, about twenty-five miles out of Chicago." In the college chapel he addressed the Conference from "Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." Dr. C. A. Blanchard was president of the college at that time. It was his opinion in the beginning that the Free Methodists should have united with the Wesleyan Methodists,[\[240\]](#) but he later changed his mind. Referring to his address, Mr. Roberts said, "The Lord graciously assisted us to enforce the claim of holiness to the personal and earnest attention of all . . . especially of ministers of the gospel." He said the ministers were greatly affected so that "some of their strongest men wept like children." Mr. Blanchard, who was a Congregational Doctor of Divinity, "endorsed the doctrine," and said that he had not been "a stranger to the experience of this state of grace, and hoped to come again into its enjoyment." Mr. Roberts wrote that he would be greatly disappointed if the Wesleyans did not double their membership within the bounds of the Illinois Conference, and that his visit to Wheaton would long be cherished among his most pleasing recollections.[\[241\]](#)

At the first General Conference of 1862, B. T. Roberts was made chairman of a committee of four members to confer with the Bible Christians, with reference to uniting with them. The committee was "to take such steps toward effecting said union as God by His providence may indicate to them."[\[242\]](#) Mr. Roberts stated that the Bible Christians were a branch of the Methodist family which arose in England in the year 1815. From all he could gather, they were "a pious, zealous people, laboring to promote the Gospel in its sincerity."

Mr. Roberts at that time believed that the experiences through which he had passed brought on a loss of strictly sectarian zeal on his part. In a running account of his life, he said,

The experiences through which I have passed, have had a good effect in many ways. They have cured me of sectarian bigotry. I have lost my denominational zeal I feel a deep sympathy with every enterprise that has a tendency to pro-mote the kingdom of Christ in its

purity.[\[243\]](#)

However, before he concluded the article he announced that he expected to live to see "free churches all over the land," especially in the cities where the poor were congregated.

In July of 1865, he attended a convention at Cleveland which had for its object the union of all non-episcopal Methodists into one body. There were one hundred preachers and laymen in attendance. Among them were a number of preachers "eminent for their abilities" and for the "sacrifices they have made in standing by their convictions of duty." Although he remarked upon the "kind, Christian spirit" which prevailed, he was evidently not there with' the thought of becoming a part of the merger. He was obliged to leave the second day of the convention, but thought the indications were that a majority would unite on "a congregational basis, each local church to decide upon its own doctrines, and conditions of membership."[\[244\]](#) It is probable that the Free Methodist Church was too episcopal in its nature, and the ideas of Mr. Roberts too wedded to the Methodist system to be interested in a merger of that kind.

In August of 1867, he attended part of the National Camp Meeting, which had been called for the special purpose of promoting the work of holiness. It was held at Vineland, New Jersey. He thought the results would be far reaching since people attended from points as far away as Maine and New Orleans, and that it would aid "in introducing into many localities a higher standard of Christian experience."[\[245\]](#) About the same time he attended a large Methodist Camp Meeting at Sing Sing.

The next year Mr. Roberts attended the National Camp Meeting held at Hamilton, Massachusetts. He estimated that there were from six to seven hundred tents on the ground and three or four thousand people in regular attendance. It was thought there were twenty thousand people present on the Sabbath. Four hundred preachers were on the ground. He appraised this as "the greatest camp meeting ever held on this continent; and probably the greatest held in the world, since the days when Israel kept the feast of tabernacles seven days unto the Lord."[\[246\]](#) The year following Mr. Roberts did not attend, but a testimony of the Rev. Benjamin Pomeroy was published in *The Earnest Christian*, in which he said, "I feel grand that Old Methodism can get up the biggest meeting ever held on this continent." He spoke of it as "National" in the sense that "the desire to return to the old landmarks of essential Methodism" was "as broad as the nation, and more intense than any national feeling."[\[247\]](#)

No mention of such a camp was made in *The Earnest Christian* during the next two years. Evidently the little new stream of Methodism was busy making its own channel, and its leader was actively engaged in deepening the same.

I. RESUME

The new church that had started as a protest movement, was leveling off to a more normal development during the first ten years of its history, largely through the attitudes of Mr. Roberts and others, particularly Mr. Loren Stiles, who passed away in 1863. Mr. Roberts was not quite so rigid in his

attitudes as Mr. Stiles, who was accused of persecuting those who differed with him.[\[248\]](#) The Nazirite movement, composed of those who remained either within the Methodist Church or became largely independent, had to be controlled. The attitudes and actions of Mr. Roberts tended in the direction of conservatism. In 1861 he said, "We do not fear any of the manifestations of the Spirit of God," but added this caution to "let the emotion you manifest be an effect produced by the Divine Spirit. We may shout until shouting becomes a habit." He thought such a procedure would result in ill effects upon both the person himself and the people who heard. "There may be a formal noise as well as a formal silence," he said. "What we want is not noisy meetings, not still meetings, but the Spirit of the living God in all our worshipping assemblies."[\[249\]](#)

Referring the following year to a certain fanaticism which had been among them, Mr. Roberts said, "That hateful fanaticism which has so long grieved God's people is pretty much subdued. Its successor, the fierce "think as I do or be damned" spirit is quitting the field, and pure love is the acknowledged leader of God's forces." He exhorted the people "east and west, north and south" to "enter the chariot of love."[\[250\]](#)

It has been noted that so fearful did the people become of fanaticism, that many good people did not give what might have then been considered a normal expression to their religious fervor. Perhaps Mr. Roberts felt the pendulum was swinging too far in the direction of formalism by 1869, for his sentiments then appeared to be somewhat in reverse. In December of that year, he wrote about putting on a campaign for the salvation of souls, and told the people not to be afraid of excitement. "You cannot have a work that will amount to anything without it. In business and in politics, the first effort is to get up an excitement. To do anything toward saving men their feelings must be stirred." He expressed it as his opinion that it was "the greatest absurdity to suppose that the vast interests of eternity" could be properly attended to without excitement. "It is absolutely impossible" he averred. "If God begins to work in some unexpected way, so as to excite attention all over the country, do not get alarmed."[\[251\]](#)

Near the close of the first ten year period of the history of the new movement, the Rev. Joseph McCreery wrote his judgment of conditions in a rather graphic manner. Mr. McCreery will be remembered as one of the expelled ministers of the Genesee Conference, who had been charged in the Conference of 1855 with saying startling and unwise things. Mr. McCreery, in a letter to Mr. Roberts said:

Hitherto the wings of this pilgrim army have been much too heavy for the center, which array, I judge, is likely to be gradually rectified. Or, in other words, extremes will be less prevalent than they have been in the past. I suppose you will remember at the Freeport Camp Meeting a spirit of extreme opposition to a safe and conservative course on a certain question of extreme interest in those extreme days in the West.[\[252\]](#)

When men were able to reflect in self criticism upon their own movement, there was an indication of some change.

ENDNOTES

- [1] William Gould, General Conference Daily of the Free Methodist church, (October 21, 1898). 7.
- [2] Ibid.
- [3] Mrs. B. T. Roberts, Diary for March 31, 1861. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [4] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (October, 1861), II, 323.
- [5] Ibid.
- [6] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (November, 1881), II, 354.
- [7] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (August, 1881), II. 289, 290.
- [8] Mrs. B. T. Roberts, Diary for November 28, 1851. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [9] B. T. Roberts, Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., 249, 250.
- [10] Ibid., p.250.
- [11] Ibid.
- [12] Letter from B. T. Roberts, to his wife, Allegany. New York, written from Buffalo, January 28, 1861. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [13] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (July, 1852), IV. 29.30.
- [14] B T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (January, 1864), 32.
- [15] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (February, 1864), 65.
- [16] Ibid.
- [17] B. T. Roberts, Journal of July 10, 1861. Quoted by B. H. Roberts,. opt. cit., pp. 319, 320
- [18] B. T. Roberts, Journal for August 16, 1861. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 321, 322.

- [19] B. T. Roberts, Journal for August 30.1861. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.323.
- [20] Burton R. Jones, The Free Methodist, (May 4, 1897), 12.
- [21] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts. entry for June 19, 1861. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [22] Diary of B. T. Roberts, entry of September 5.1861.
- [23] Letter from B. T. Roberts. Ida, Michigan, June 13,1864. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.346.
- [24] B. T. Roberts. The Earnest Christian, (February, 1867), XIII, 62.
- [25] Ibid.
- [26] B. T. Roberts, Diary, February .7, 1853. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. op. cit.. p. 381.
- [27] B. T. Roberts, Diary, February 8, 1868. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p. 382
- [28] Gen. 19.17.
- [29] Diary of B. T. Roberts. February 8, 1868. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. op. cit., p. 362.
- [30] Ibid., January 1,1869. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. op. cit.. p. 383.
- [31] Ibid., May 5, 1869. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p. 392.
- [32] Ibid., May 6,1869. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit.. p. 392.
- [33] Ibid.
- [34] Ibid.
- [35] Ibid., May 10, 1869. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p. 383.
- [36] Ibid., May 12.1869. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p. 393.
- [37] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (March. 1861), II, 100.

[38] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Buffalo, to his wife, Allegany, New York. January 28 1861. Found among letters of Roberts family.

[39] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (April, 1861), II, 129, 130.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Letter from Charles Hudson to B. T. Roberts. Quoted In The Earnest Christian, (March, 1861), 98. Letter dated January 24, 1861.

[42] Letter from A. B. Burdick to B. T. Roberts. Quoted in The Earnest Christian, (March, 1861), 99.

[43] Letter from Charles Hudson to B. T. Roberts, February 8, 1861. Quoted In The Earnest Christian, (March, 1861), 98.

[44] Letter from E. Osborne to B. T. Roberts, March, 1861. Quoted In The Earnest Christian, (April, 1861), II, 130.

[45] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (June, 1861), II, 192.

[46] Ibid.

[47] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (July, 1861), 228.

[48] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (November, 1861), 355.

[49] B. T. Roberts. The Earnest Christian, (April, 1862), 129.

[50] Ibid., (November, 1862), IV, 158.

[51] Edward P. Hart, Reminiscences of Early Free Methodism, (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House. 1903), p.74.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., p.75.

[54] Letter from J. G. Terrill, Lebanon, Illinois, to B. T. Roberts, November 24, 1864. Found among the personal letters of Roberts.

[55] Ibid.

[56] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (April. 1865), 127.

[57] Ibid.. 128.

[58] B. T. Roberts, Letter to his wife, written from Ida, Michigan, June 13, 1864. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit.. p. 346

[59] Ibid. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p. 547.

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[61] B T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (October. 1864). 118.

[62] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (July. 1869), 33.

[63] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (September, 1867), 98.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Letter from S. K. J. Chesbrough. Meadville, to Mr. Roberts. Quoted in *The Earnest Christian*, (March, 1867), 98.

[66] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (June 1869), 189, 190.

[67] Ibid. (November, 1869) 162.

[68] Letter from Mrs. T. S. LaDue, Canon Falls, Minnesota, to Mrs. Roberts, March 11, 1869. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[69] Wilson T. Hague, op. cit.. I, p. 357.

[70] Ibid., p.358.

[71] B. H. Roberts op. cit., p.274.

[72] Ibid.

[73] B T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (May, 1862), III. 164.

[74] Wilson T Hogue, *op. cit.*, I. p.351.

[75] B T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (October, 1862), 123.

[76] B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-290.

[77] B. T. Roberts. *The Earnest Christian*, (November, 1862), 158.

[78] Letter from 11. P. Hart to Mr. Roberts, written from Marengo. Illinois. January 7,1862. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (February, 1862), III, 65.

[79] B. T. Roberts, *Personal Account of First General Conference*. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 218-282.

[80] *First General Conference Minutes of the Free Methodist Church, Denominational Headquarters. Winona Lake, Indiana*, p.6.

[81] *Ibid.*, p.10.

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[83] Letter from B. T. Roberts to disaffected Genesee Conference members to meet November 4,1862 at Perry, New York. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, 288.

[84] Moses Downing, *Personal Account of First General Conference. Adjourned Session, Buffalo, November 4, 1862*. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*. 281.

[85] *General Conference Minutes of the Free Methodist Church, Winona Lake, Indiana*, p.14.

[86] *Ibid.*

[87] *Minutes of the Genesee Conference of the Free Methodist Church, 1864*. Quoted by Wilson T. Hogue, *op. cit.* I, 370.

[88] *General Conference Minutes of the Free Methodist Church, 1868, Winona Lake, Indiana*, p.31.

[90] *Ibid.*, p.29.

[91] Ibid., p.19.

[92] The Free Methodist (November 6. 1936), 4,

[93] General Conference Minutes of the Free Methodist Church, 1870, p.48.

[94] Ibid., p.45

[95] The Free Methodist, (November 6, 1936), 4.

[96] The Earnest Christian, (November. 1870), 162.

[97] B. T. Roberts. The Earnest Christian, (November, 1870), 162.

[98] General Conference Minutes of the Free Methodist Church, 1870, p.49.

[99] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (June. 1868), 186.

[100] Journal of B. T. Roberts, January 11, 1861. quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p. 305.

[101] Americana Encyclopedia, (New York: Americana Corporation, 1941), VII, p.6.

[102] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (May, 1861) II, 180.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Life of Henry Ward Beecher. (New York: Hurst and Company), p.40. (No author listed).

[106] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian. (July, 1861). 224.

[107] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts, entry for July 29, 1861. Found among the personal papers, of the Roberts family.

[108] Americana Encyclopedia. (New York.. Americana Corporation, 1941), VII, p. 8.

[109] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (August, 1861), 255.

[110] *Ibid.*

[111] *Ibid.*

[112] *The Earnest Christian*, (October, 1861), 322.

[113] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (September, 1861). 289.

[114] *Ibid.*

[115] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (November, 1861), 352, 353.

[116] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts, September 26, 1861. Found among personal belongings of the Roberts family.

[117] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (November. 1861), 354.

[118] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (May, 1882). 155.

[119] *Ibid.*, (September. 1862). 91, 92.

[120] David Saville Muzzey. *The United States of America*, (Boston: Gins, and Company, 1922), 572 (footnote).

[121] *Ibid.*, pp. 595,596.

[122] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (October, 1862). 122.

[123] Letter to Mr. Roberts from "J. W.," Little Rock. Arkansas. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*. 343,344.

[124] Letter to Mr. Roberts, from Anson G. Foote, Savannah, Georgia. Printed in, *The Earnest Christian*, (March, 1865). 98.

[125] *The Earnest Christian*. (August. 1865). 65.

[126] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (April, 1861), 128.

[127] Ibid., (May, 1865), 157, 158.

[128] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (February, 1867). 64.

[129] B. T. Roberts. *The Earnest Christian*, (August. 1864). 65.

[130] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 10, 1861. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.305.

[131] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts, September 6, 1861. Found among personal papers of the Roberts family.

[132] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 13,1861. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

[133] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 27.1861. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 313, 314.

[134] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts. August 6, 1861. Found among personal papers of the Roberts family.

[135] Ibid., September 19, 1861.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 31.1861. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

[138] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (October, 1861), 355.

[139] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (January, 1866), 9.

[140] Ibid., (November. 1868), 159.

[141] Ephesians 4:30.

[142] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Wayne, Illinois, to his wife, June 13, 1865. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 350, 351.

[143] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (July, 1867), 33.

[144] B. T. Roberts *The Earnest Christian*, (November, 1861), 355.

[145] Ibid., (March, 1869), 97.

[146] B. T. Roberts. The Earnest Christian, (April. 1868), 123.

[147] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 20 1866. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 375, 376.

[148] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (March. 1861), 100.

[149] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts, May 14, 1861. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[150] Ibid., October 31, 1861.

[151] James 2:5.

[152] B. T. Roberts. The Earnest Christian, (January, 1862), 31, 32.

[153] Ibid., (June. 1862). 187.

[154] Ibid., 188.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Buffalo, to his wife, Chicago, October 1, 1860. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[157] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (June. 1862), 188.

[158] Ibid.

[159] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (April, 1868), 122.

[160] Ibid., (May, 1869), 159.

[161] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian. (May, 1861), 161.

[162] Ibid., (October, 1860), 321.

[163] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts. August 7, 1861. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[164] Ibid., August 8, 1861.

[165] Ibid., August 10, 1861.

[166] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (July, 1865), 33.

[167] Ibid., (September, 1865), 97..

[168] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts. July 20-25, 1861. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[169] Ibid.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Ibid.

[172] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (July, 1861), 226.

[173] Ibid.

[174] Diary of Mr. B. T. Roberts, August 23.1861. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[175] B T. Roberts. *The Earnest Christian*, (October, 1861), 323.

[176] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts, August 17, 1861. Found among personal papers of the Roberts family.

[177] Ibid.

[178] Ibid., August 23-28, 1861.

[179] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (October. 1862). 123.

[180] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, September 19.1861. Found among the personal papers of the Roberts family.

[181] A. B. Burdick, *The Earnest Christian*, (March, 1987), 85.

[182] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (July, 1865), 32, 33.

[183] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (August, 1867), 66.

[184] Martha LaDue, *The Earnest Christian*, (October, 1867), 131.132.

[185] Deut. 32:30.

[186] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts, February 11, 12, 1860. Found among the personal papers of the Roberts family.

[187] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts, July 12, 1861. Found among the personal papers of the Roberts family.

[188] *Ibid.*, July 31, 1861.

[189] *Ibid.*, August 3, 1861.

[190] *Ibid.*, September 28, 1861.

[191] Diary of Mrs. B. T. Roberts, November 26, 1861.

[192] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, May 2, 1862. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. *op. cit.*, p.284.

[193] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, November 21, 1863. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[194] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, May 30, 1865. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[195] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, February 1, 1867.

[196] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Chambersburg, to his wife, March 3, 1870. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.397.

[197] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, December 19, 1860. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[198] *Ibid.*

[199] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, written from Binghamton, New York, December 29, 1862. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.295.

- [200] Letter from B. H. Roberts to his mother. written from Bonus Prairie, Illinois, August, 1864. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [201] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, written from Wayne, Illinois, June 13, 1865.
- [202] Letter from George L. Roberts to his parents, Marengo, Illinois. September 4, 1865. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [203] Diary of Mrs. Roberts, March 1, 1867. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [204] Letter from Mary Hicks, Syracuse, to Sammie and "Benjie" Roberts, December 14, 1870.
- [205] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, written from Williamsburg to North Chili. Undated. Found among letters of family.
- [206] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, written from Utica to Buffalo, December 21, 1860. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [207] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 18, 1861. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. op. cit., pp. 308, 309.
- [208] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 25, 1861. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p. 312.
- [209] Diary of Mrs. Roberts. February 2, 1861. Found among personal papers of the Roberts family.
- [210] Letter from Mrs. Lane to Mrs. Roberts. December 6, 1862.
- [211] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (January. 1865), 64.
- [212] Assignment of Patent Paper. Found among the personal papers of B. T. Roberts.
- [213] Quitclaim Deed. Found among the personal papers of B. T. Roberts.
- [214] Letter from James A. Mathews to B. T. Roberts, written from Garnett, Kansas, February 4, 1869. Found among personal letters of B. T. Roberts.
- [215] Ibid.
- [216] Letter from Mrs. George Lane to Mrs. Roberts, July 5, 1866. Found among the personal letters of

the Roberts family.

- [217] Will of Mrs. George Lane, recorded 1859. Found among the personal papers of the Roberts family.
- [218] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, May 2, 1862. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.294.
- [219] Statement of B. T. Roberts. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, op. cit., p.42.
- [220] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 19, 1861. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.309.
- [221] Ibid.
- [222] Psalms 69:7, 8, 9, 20.
- [223] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, December 29, 1862. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 294, 295.
- [224] Letter from Mrs. Lane to Mrs. Roberts. December 6, 1862. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [225] Ibid.
- [226] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife. written from Binghamton, February 2, 1863. Found among personal] letters of the Roberts family.
- [227] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 21, 1861. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.310.
- [228] Diary of B. T. Roberts, January 29, 1861. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p. 335.
- [229] Ibid., July 10,1861. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op,. cit., p.319.
- [230] Letter from B. T. Roberts to hi wife, written from Wheaton, Illinois, June 14, 1864. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [231] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, written from Wayne. Illinois, June 13, 1865. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [232] Letter from B. T. Roberts to a disheartened preacher, written in 1867. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 377, 378.

[233] Ibid.

[234] Zach. 9:15.

[235] Diary of B. T. Roberts, February 2, 1888. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p. 381.

[236] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife. written February 26, 1870. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 395, 396.

[237] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, written from Meadville, Pennsylvania, June 27.1870. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[238] Letter from "Orpha" to Mrs. Roberts, written from Syracuse, New York, March 12, 1870. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[239] Letter from Mary Hicks. written from Syracuse, December 14, 1870. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[240] General Conference Daily of the Free Methodist Church, Vol. II, No. 12, (October 21, 1860). p.162.

[241] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian (October, 1860), 321.

[242] Minutes of the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church, 1862, p. 13. Found at Denominational Headquarters, Winona Lake, Indiana.

[243] B. T. Roberts. The Earnest Christian. (January, 1865), 7.

[244] B. T. Roberts, "Union Convention." The Earnest Christian, (July, 1865), 13.

[245] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (August, 1867). 68.

[246] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (September, 1868), 82.

[247] Benjamin Pomeroy, The Earnest Christian, (September, 1862), 99.

[248] Letter from Mrs. Martha LaDue, to Mrs. Roberts, October 18. 1861. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[\[249\]](#) B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (July, 1861), 226, 227.

[\[250\]](#) B. T. Roberts. *The Earnest Christian*, (November, 1865). 183.

[\[251\]](#) *Ibid.*, (December, 1869), 188, 182.

[\[252\]](#) Letter to B. T. Roberts, from Joseph McCreery, written from California, January 10.1870. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

EARNEST CHRISTIAN

CHAPTER VIII

THE FOUNDING OF CHILI SEMINARY*

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Benjamin Titus Roberts, who had become the head of the new movement called the Free Methodist Church, began to feel early in the history of the movement the necessity for an educational institution. It is not strange that a man who was a graduate of a Methodist University with a Master of Arts degree, and a student of no mean accomplishments, as attested by Phi Beta Kappa honors which were his, should think of the place which learning must hold in any stable Christian enterprise. And so it was that he who had been offered the presidency of Wyoming Seminary at Kingston, Pennsylvania, when he was only

twenty-five years of age, began to feel the necessity of establishing a school that would serve the purposes of his group.

A. REASONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCHOOL

1. Purposes Clarified

Probably a statement of Theodore Roosevelt gathered up the thought of Mr. Roberts when he asserted,

We must cultivate the mind, but it is not enough only to cultivate the mind. With education of mind must go the spiritual teaching which will make us turn the trained intellect to good account. Education must be education of the heart and conscience no less than to the mind.^[1]

The Education Committee of the Genesee Conference of the Free Methodist Church expressed the opinion that education was "the true handmaid of religion"; and that a "truly pious people" would be "an intelligent people."^[2] Mr. Roberts said that one of the first acts of the Pilgrim Fathers and also of Asbury had been to found an institution of learning. He believed that God had called them as a people "to hold up the Bible standard of religion, and to preach the Gospel to the poor."^[3] Without education it would be impossible to accomplish this mission. To clarify the attitudes of Mr. Roberts in this respect, a quotation from "The Design and Plan of the Chili Seminary" as found in the first catalogue which he published is given: "While we cannot prize too highly the benefits of mental culture," he stated, "we must not lose sight of that MORAL and RELIGIOUS culture, which lies at the foundation of correct principles and good character."^[4] To divorce the two would be dangerous as the past had shown, since ignorance was the "mother of SUPERSTITION AND RELIGIOUS ERROR." A system of education that did not comprehend the great truths of Christianity "fosters skepticism and infidelity in the youthful mind." A teacher should labor, he thought, to show the harmony between science and religion, "between the discoveries of the one and the doctrines of the other." While he would "eschew anything sectarian," he would make the Word of God the standard, using the Bible as a textbook. He would aim to impress the great truth, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," but they would also "watch for their souls as those who must give account."^[5]

Another purpose incidental to the above, was the desire to remove the children of their people from institutions of a more "worldly" character. In 1869 Mr. Roberts said that "for years, the conviction has rested upon us, that there ought to be a school under more decidedly religious influences than most with which we are acquainted."^[6] In the catalogue noted above, the opening sentence reads, "We design having such a school, as some have seen the necessity of, one where a practical and thorough education can be gained, without the hindrances to piety found in most of the fashionable schools of our land."^[7] To enforce this idea, he directed attention to an article in *The Earnest Christian*, written by Mrs. J. B. Freeland, in which she had mentioned a fifteen year old girl who had been converted, but while attending school "compromised." Mr. Roberts emphasized, "It was while she was attending school; and she is but

one of the many sad proofs that we have among us of the need we have of salvation schools, where children may acquire an education without doing it at the peril of their own souls."[\[8\]](#) The first decisive action taken by the local Conference area specified that they wished their children to have a scientific and literary education "comparatively free from those temptations and worldly influences, which too often beset the inmates of such institutions, and prove the destruction of real, scriptural piety."[\[9\]](#) As the General Superintendent, it was B. T. Roberts who presided at all the Conference sessions, and who put his impress upon them in these matters.

Another sidelight on the above is found in an early communication from the Rev. William Belden of New York City, written to Mrs. Roberts in which he mentioned in reply to an appeal for funds that she had specified the new institution to be "a place to educate the children of the poor ministers of the Free Methodist Church."[\[10\]](#) Knowing the small salaries given to these men on the field, Mr. Roberts was aware that few of them could give their children proper educational advantages at the higher costs involved in most schools of the day. However, not only the preachers, but others of small means were in view. His interest in the poor of earth had not decreased with the passing years. He said a few years later:

Another object we have in view, is to give those of but little means an opportunity to acquire an education by their own efforts. For this purpose a farm was purchased and is carried on in connection with the school.[\[11\]](#)

He also "purposed to give the youth of both sexes an opportunity to acquire a good education where they would not be led into the pride and vanity and extravagance of the day."[\[12\]](#) His interest in using not only men but women as well in the ministry probably made him feel more deeply the need of the co-educational emphasis. The express purpose, however, was not to prepare for the ministry but to provide a place, as the Genesee Conference resolution expressed it, "where our children may obtain a scientific and literary education."[\[13\]](#) Then, too, this scientific and literary education "was to be joined to definite religious teaching." Mr. Roberts thought that from the first "a deep religious influence" had prevailed which was "constantly increasing."[\[14\]](#) By the year 1876, he expressed it as his belief that Chili Seminary had come up more nearly to his idea of a "salvation school" than he had even dared to hope.[\[15\]](#)

Overshadowing the whole project was the belief of Mr. Roberts that he was divinely directed in the founding of the school. He said specifically, "We started our school at Chili, as we firmly believed, by Divine direction."[\[16\]](#) Those who were most closely associated with it knew, however, that everything had not been ideal, in every respect. The Committee on Education of the Genesee Conference in 1876 stated, "It is not wisdom to cavil, because everything connected therewith has not been perfect," but they felt that the "general results" were "more favorable than could have been reasonably expected under the circumstances."[\[17\]](#) They expressed the opinion that the school was serving the church because there was "no more earnest and self sacrificing devotion, to the distinctive principles which we maintain" than could be found "among those youth who have shared most largely the benefits of that institution."[\[18\]](#)

2. Theory of Education Involved

The Illinois Conference of 1868 had approved "the thorough practical education of all classes,"^[19] indicating the emphasis that Mr. Roberts was in the beginning placing upon this aspect of education. In 1866, after speaking quite at length on the benefits of religious training, Mr. Roberts continued, "Children should also be trained up to the practice of labor. Man was made to work." This he further elucidated by our first parents in the garden, and by speaking of the necessity of labor as found in the Ten Commandments, and by quoting Paul to the effect that if any would not work neither should he eat. He argued that Christ probably forbade to lay up riches lest people should be found without the necessity of work. He also cited Solon, the Athenian lawgiver as excusing any son, not trained in a trade by his father, from his support.^[20] Referring to the same necessities two years later, he emphasized that work was in reality "a religious duty, just as incumbent upon us as it is to pray, or keep the Sabbath." One could no more afford to be idle than to break one of God's commandments.

The conditions of our country, Mr. Roberts thought, suffered from the aversion to labor manifested by the young men and women. Farmers found it difficult to obtain laborers, while the city was "crowded with young men, eager for almost any situation" that did not involve the necessity of working with the hands. The "eating-saloons" were crowded with "stout young men" for waiters when they "might much better be hoeing corn or splitting rails." Depots were thronged with "stalwart runners for the hotels" who yelled themselves hoarse "for their whiskey and cold victuals." The workmen, he said, were "generally foreigners."^[21]

Mr. Roberts believed a true education would eliminate the indisposition to work. "Boys who have been kept at school for years, without work, do not like to take their coats off and go at it when they leave school." Hence, he said, for the double purpose of promoting, along with sound learning, "vital piety and habits of industry," he had commenced the task of founding a seminary of learning at Chili, New York.^[22] A farm of one hundred forty-five acres had been purchased to fulfill his design of having "all the scholars work from three to five hours every day." He stated that an "accomplished farmer" would teach the science and the practice of "agriculture and horticulture."^[23] Since he believed that "work and study should go hand in hand all through life," he believed also that this and every school should help to form the union at "an early age."^[24] Rousseau had in mind the education of the higher classes and Roberts of the middle and poor classes. Rousseau was looking at European life; Roberts at the American scene where each one must shift for himself. Roberts was endeavoring to get away from what Rousseau meant when he cried, "Things! Things! I shall never repeat often enough that we give too much power to words. With our babbling education we make nothing but babblers."^[25] Mr. Roberts believed that a false education had much to do with the evils of society which are "generally deplored."^[26] These evils he hoped to correct in his school

B. THE FOUNDING OF THE SCHOOL

1. Conference Actives

(a) *School Beginnings*. The first reference which mentions the founding of a school is discovered in the Genesee Conference Journal for the year 1861. Here the following resolution is recorded

Resolved, that a Committee of two preachers, and two laymen be appointed, to take measures to secure, if possible, during the coming Convention year, a suitable edifice and grounds to be devoted to school purposes, either as a Seminary or an Academy; provided such purchase shall come within the bounds of \$2000.00, and provided, also, that no purchase be made which shall involve this Convention in any financial responsibility. [\[27\]](#)

A committee of four was specified: Rev. Asa Abell, Rev. L. Stiles, Jr. for the ministers and G. W. Holmes and T. B. Catton for the laymen. The period of greatest stress, both as to church establishment and the higher prices of the war years intervened, so that nothing of practical moment was accomplished between that action and that of 1865 when the Genesee Conference took the initiative. The Committee on Education, believing that their "wants as a denomination" along educational lines, warranted action, brought in a resolution that they "proceed at once to found an institution of learning" of academy or seminary grade. Also, willing now to assume financial obligations, they called for a subscription of fifteen thousand dollars. A committee of six, three ministers and three laymen, were appointed to carry out the resolutions and to fix the location of the institution. [\[28\]](#) They would also "respectfully ask" the Susquehanna Conference to cooperate with them in such a way as they should choose both in the founding and supporting of the same, "affording material aid, and in due time the patronage of a large number of students." A copy of these resolutions were ordered forwarded to the Secretary of the Susquehanna Conference. [\[29\]](#)

The Susquehanna Conference, which met the next month, answered the communication by simply adopting the report transmitted to them from the Genesee Conference, and agreed to appoint two ministers and one layman "to cooperate with the Committee on Education appointed by the Genesee Conference in carrying out the plan of operation proposed in said report." D. W. Thurston and W. J. Selby were appointed ministerial representatives and W. F. Geer the layman. [\[30\]](#) Thus the resolutions, under the guidance of Mr. Roberts, came into official action, and resulted in the origin of the proposed school.

(b) *Legal Steps to Its Founding*. The Genesee Conference, which had taken the initial steps for action with reference to the founding of the school, also led off the following year, by confirming a resolution brought in by the Committee on Education that, first, a committee of eleven be appointed by the Conference with full powers to secure the incorporation of a Board of Trustees of a seminary of learning to be "under the direction and patronage of the Free Methodist Church;" and second, specifying that the corporation for the school was to be composed of fifteen trustees, five to be elected by the Genesee Annual Conference, four by the Susquehanna Conference if they cooperated, three by the citizens of the neighborhood where the school should be located and three by the trustees. Nine trustees were to be from the Genesee Conference if the Susquehanna Conference did not cooperate. The above committee was to proceed to the purchase and erection of suitable buildings as soon as ten thousand dollars in "reliable

subscriptions could be procured for that purpose."[\[31\]](#)

The Susquehanna Conference again followed the lead taken by the Genesee Conference. In a preliminary statement to their resolution, they declared that no church could meet its obligations "without making provision for the children under her care." They observed that the church needed "one or more" literary institutions, "with a regime similar to that of the Kings-wood School, under the care of the early Methodists; and more intensely religious than the schools of modern times."[\[32\]](#) A Kings-wood school had been introduced into America as early as 1780. The next year, Asbury recorded in his *Journal*, "The Lord begins to smile on our Kingswood school." With such a school in mind, the men of the Susquehanna Conference resolved to "cheerfully cooperate" with the Genesee Conference "in establishing an Institution of Learning under the supervision of the several conferences."[\[33\]](#) Before this date, however, a subscription list, circulated by B. T. Roberts for the school, specified Benjamin T. Roberts, Asa Abell, and G. W. Wilcox as those officially entrusted with responsibility, and instructed that the money signed be paid to them "or the Trustees who might be appointed to succeed them." Hence, it appears that before the action of the Genesee Conference, a temporary organization had been effected for the purpose of making the purchase, before the date affixed, June 8th, 1866.[\[34\]](#)

The Board of Trustees found in the first Annual Catalogue is headed by B. T. Roberts as President. Then follow the names of Asa Abell, Amos F. Curry, Seth M. Woodruff, Hiram A. Crouch, Joshua R. Annis, William Belden, Hart Smith, William Gould, B. F. Stoutenberg, William F. Geer, Joseph Mackey, Claudius Brainerd, Leonard Halstead, Bolivar Beach, and George W. Coleman.[\[35\]](#) The name of G. W. Wilcox does not appear in the above list, indicating that the elections had substituted the above names.

2. Purchase of the Rumsey Farm

At first Mr. Roberts thought of locating the school in Rochester, New York, but being convinced that city life was not conducive to the proper education of young people, he decided to locate in the country. For many years he had been acquainted with the territory that lay within Monroe County, and had been present at the dedication of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Chili during the pastorate of the Rev. William Kendall. Since that time, a "strong Free Methodist society" had been formed there. In the spring of 1866, he learned that a farm owned by a Mr. Rumsey was for sale. He went to Troy to see the proprietor, who returned to Rochester with him and was an over-night guest in his home. They agreed on the price for the farm, but Mr. Roberts, in order to make the deal, found it necessary to turn over his house in Rochester as the first payment. The owner would not consent to take the house, and it seemed that the deal was off, at least temporarily. Before retiring that night, Mr. Roberts said to his wife, "We must pray the Lord to influence him to take this house, and we must pray earnestly, for if he does not, this matter must fall through." They did pray, and the next morning their guest informed them that after consideration, he had decided to take the house in part payment. Thus a fine one hundred and forty-five acre farm came into their possession, but also a mortgage for ten thousand dollars. Interest on the loan had to be met, as well as principal to be covered.[\[36\]](#)

3. School Beginnings

(a) *Early Teachers*. Delia Jeffries, who later became the wife of the Rev. T. B. Catton, was the first teacher secured for the school. Mr. Roberts wrote to her on July 26th, stating that he had purchased a school, and wished her to consider making "application to become a teacher in the school."[\[37\]](#) In her reply to Mrs. Roberts, she said:

I have just been reading your letter of July 26th, and see that it is about time for your return from the west. I am feeling that I should be glad to know how you are getting along, and what the prospects of the school at present are. I have heard very little from you since I received your letter.

Then she added the following reaction:

God has been blessing me abundantly of late, and given me to feel a heart to enter the work there. I believe it to be the order of God to have something of a school, and ever since Brother Roberts spoke to me about it some years ago, I have been looking in that direction and expecting the Lord to open my way before me and make the path of duty clear and plain. It has been so almost ever since I parted with you at the camp meeting at Spencerport. Matters that were at that time giving me no little anxiety were afterward settled, and I had not a doubt that it was the order of God for me to enter the school this fall. I have made all my arrangements to spend the winter in Chili if you wish me to do so.[\[38\]](#)

Her letter intimated that Mr. Roberts had told her to go to Chili as soon as he arrived from the west, but she thought she should receive some communication from him. She inquired if he still had in mind the same brother for Principal that he had mentioned to her. She also desired to know if anything had been done about a building for the winter.[\[39\]](#) Then she added this personal item:

I am so glad to know that your husband has not changed his mind about my being one of the teachers. This has helped me to go in the *self denying* way, when, had it not been for that, I might have looked for some other position, where there would be *less cross*, or *no cross* at all and no Jesus.

Then she requested prayer and a further communication.[\[40\]](#)

The fact that Mr. Roberts had spoken to Delia Jeffries several years previous to the time of her letter in 1866, indicated that he had been considering a school from the early beginnings of the new church. Benson Roberts, a pupil of Miss Jeffries, referred to her as "a devoted Christian, possessing piety, sense, learning and experience," and noted that she became "a helper of the highest worth."[\[41\]](#) E. B. Mathews, one of the early students in the school, spoke of her in 1889 at an assembly of the school. He said they had but one teacher, "but she was excellent." He said that "Miss Delia Jeffries taught the school for Jesus

sake" and he regarded her name "as precious ointment poured forth."[\[42\]](#)

Mr. Roberts, also, was one of the teachers in the early years, although he was never able to give full time to the job. Teaching was not new to him, for he had taught school during his University days to help defray his expenses. He temporarily renewed his teaching duties until they were able to secure other full-time teachers. Edward Mathews, later a missionary to Africa, stated that the visits of Mr. Roberts to the school "meant Greek and Latin roots for some and an address for all on deportment." He related that on one occasion after finishing his lecture on deportment, Mr. Roberts had the advanced class form in a semicircle in front of him. As he opened the exercises, he violated the rule he had just laid down to them against lounging, "and as we all thought, sleeping while the recitations were going on."[\[43\]](#) But "the overtired divine," fatigued from his busy labors on the Sabbath or a night journey, soon proved that he "was not unmindful of his duties as he roused up and opened fire on each in turn, to the confusion of all."[\[44\]](#) Another experience with grammar so threw the young Mathews into a "phrensy" that he declared to Mr. Roberts he was too old to conquer it. Mr. Roberts "came to the rescue" he added, telling him that he [Mathews] knew "more grammar in three weeks study than he did after working a year." Then, in order to secure a corroboration of his assertion, he asked Mr. Mathews to parse the following sentence, "Old John Haight has a white face."[\[45\]](#) Old John Haight turned out to be a cow named after a former owner. To one of the students working on the farm, and morning and night milking this cow, Mr. Roberts gave the sentence, "John Haight gives milk," and then proceeded to explain that "John Haight" is the subject because it tells who does something, "gives" is the verb for it tells what is done, "milk" is the object, etc. Repeating this in the seclusion of the barn "to the boiling of the streams of milk," the science of the relations of words began to open to his mind.[\[46\]](#) One pupil could not understand what was meant by a passive verb. He called this student forward, telling him he would give an illustration, which he did by playfully shaking him. Then he questioned, "What was done to you?" The answer came, "I was shaken." "Well," said Mr. Roberts, "that is a passive verb." Then another question, "What did I do?" The answer came, "You shook me." "That is an active verb," he replied, to the laughter of his pupils in the class. A young man, reared on a farm, thought he was qualified to direct his own studies. In order to bring him to a sense of his own deficiencies, Mr. Roberts asked him to tell the difference between a horse and a cow. Several attempts were made before the perspiring student was brought to admit that he needed to learn accuracy in the use of words.[\[47\]](#) Probably with all his other duties, Mr. Roberts could not give sufficient time to be classed as a teacher in the thinking of the students, since Edward B. Mathews told his audience in later years that they had "but one."[\[48\]](#) However, Miss Jeffries plainly implied that there were just two of them teaching the next year. Hence, we must conclude from her statement that for the first two terms, there were but two teachers engaged.[\[49\]](#) Lucy Glen also served as an early teacher, and a Professor Wright is mentioned in the diary of Mr. Roberts as making a failure at the school in 1869.[\[50\]](#) Mrs. J. B. Freeland and Miss Lucy Sellew taught in the following years. Suffice it to say that Mr. Roberts also acted as President of the school during the first two years. He then turned most of these duties over to Mr. George W. Anderson from New York, who was given the title, "Principal."[\[51\]](#)

(b) *First Location.* The old Rumsey farmhouse, where Mr. Roberts had often been entertained as a Methodist minister, was used for the first class rooms. Miss Jeffries wrote, "In the fall of 1866, we opened a school in one of the rooms in the farmhouse, and continued it through the winter."[\[52\]](#) This

farmhouse was the place where the Roberts family were then living, after having given up their home in Rochester.

(c) *That First Day*. Although Mrs. Roberts was not so enthusiastic about the school at first,^[53] yet she quickly fell in line with the plans of her husband. In an article written years later, Mrs. Roberts said she did not know how in those "stinted times" such a thing could come to pass, but she added, "it did come, because God was in it." No doubt she remembered the hard days in Buffalo after they gave up their home to help buy the first free church, and doubtless it was hard for her once again to give up their home in Rochester to make a payment for a school which she did not feel had sufficient financial backing to succeed. She then recalled, "When the day came one early spring morning that we drove to the shop where we were to begin, I felt as if a heavenly company attended us all the way. When I entered the house, I could not but say, 'God is here.' I felt I must go upon my knees and thank God." She realized that "it meant much to be consecrated to God" to a larger task, to mother not only her own, but all the young people who would be coming there to school from different parts of the country. For this task, she said, "My wings must be enlarged, my love . . . doubled, and my faith of the kind that removed mountains."^[54] That first day was but an intimation of the coming cares and burdens that were to rest upon both Mr. and Mrs. Roberts.

4. Purchase of the Old Tavern

(a) *The Transaction*. Mr. Roberts was in need of a building for the school, and the old town tavern seemed to be the building best adapted for his purposes. He decided that the purchase of that building would provide him with a building for the school, and would remove the demoralizing influence of the tavern in the community. He not only had to buy the building, but the business as well. It was thought the people of the community might give assistance in supplying the five hundred dollars asked for the business, so Mr. Roberts arranged for a temperance meeting, and had "able speakers" present, but, even though the "Good Templars" were out in force, only twenty-five dollars came in to help with the purchase.^[55] Mr. Roberts did not record this failure, but reported that "the hotel property at Chili, ten miles west of Rochester, New York, on the Central Railroad, has been purchased to commence the school with until the buildings are completed."^[56] Perhaps the good times which many had enjoyed in that old tavern killed the spirit of giving that day.

(b) *The Old Tavern, a Landmark*. That old landmark, which still remains intact, was built about 1800 as a hotel and barroom. The building has stood the test of time because it was reinforced by heavy hand hewn beams of red beach and oak. It contained thirteen rooms, was three stories high, and had a large wine cellar beneath it. The rooms were "high and spacious," each containing a large fireplace, reaching to the ceiling and entirely hand-carved. The ballroom was on the second floor and occupied the whole length of the house. The remainder of the floor was used for bedrooms. On the first floor was a large parlour, a living room, a kitchen about twenty-five by thirty-five feet, a barroom, several halls and two or three rooms of unknown use. The wine cellar was divided into sections, one used for wine storage, and another for a large brick bake oven.

Between the thirties and the forties in the nineteenth century, the hotel was operated by a Mr. Ferril. At that time, and for many years following, it was the chief stopping place between Buffalo and Rochester on the old Buffalo Trail. Here the stagecoaches stopped to give their passengers rest and refreshment. There the cattle drivers on their long, hot journeys, stopped for food and drink. Here the country folk gathered for their gay parties. One of the students of the school, in a personal interview with one of the earliest residents, reported he was told by the old man that "the most beautiful women on this side of New York" stopped at the tavern once. The old man continued smartly, "You think you young ones have parties: why they're nothing compared to the ones in those days. They used to come in the morning, prepare food start at noon" and "the Lord knows when they finished." The ladies, he added, changed dresses after eating and danced all night.[\[57\]](#)

Mr. Arch Merrill, in a historical study on *Stagecoach Towns*, entitled his second chapter "Down the Buffalo Road." From his work is taken the following:

Let's pretend that the hands of the clock have slipped back more than a century and that we are riding for a little while in a stagecoach, drawn by four spirited horses, down the road that links the booming young cities of Rochester and Buffalo.

It's a rather cramped journey. The passengers who got on at the Mansion House at State and Market Streets in Rochester fill all four crosswise seats of the coach. It's a bumpy ride, for the roads are full of pitches. But it is a fine spring day and the fields and woods all along the Buffalo Road are fresh and green. We are young in a young America that is not used to ease and luxury.

With a strident blast of coach horn, we pull up before a two story brick tavern where Union Street joins the Buffalo Road at North Chili. That tavern is a favorite stop for the drovers on their way to the Rochester market, only eight miles away. There they feed and water their cattle, swine and sheep. They find their own refreshment in the tap room.

North Chili in those days was a self-sufficient community with stores and mills. Its farmers bred fine road horses and cattle. That was before the first railroad train crawled through Chili town in 1837 on its way from Rochester to Batavia while the fences all along the line were packed with spectators. Today that pioneer railroad is part of the Main Line of the imperial New York Central.

They were gay times in the tavern, dances in the ball room, band concerts from the double tier porch that faced the Buffalo Road. But there were those in the neighborhood who shunned such frivolity. They were the New Englanders who built the white churches and their sons and daughters who were firm in the faith of the Puritans.

Stagecoach days were done but the tavern was there when in 1866 the determined leader of a religious denomination came to North Chili, seeking a location for a church school. He

was Bishop Benjamin Titus Roberts of the Free Methodist Church He liked the North Chili location, rural yet not isolated. But there was a tavern in the town and he wanted no such influences around his Christian school. So when he bought a plot of land for a campus nearby, he also bought the tavern - and promptly closed it. Before the first building was erected on the new campus, the four man faculty of Chili Seminary held classes in the erstwhile tavern, shorn of its bar and bereft of its music. Thus the first Free Methodist educational institution in America was born in a tavern.[\[58\]](#)

Mr. Roberts was not so sentimental about the tavern as to enthuse over its past "glories." He was interested only in turning it to practical purposes. Finding Mr. William Wallace, then in charge, who had not only run the saloon but who had built the big double porch on the second story where the band played every Saturday night, he made arrangements in 1867 to buy the property and the business. There followed youthful industry where once fun and frolic had reigned.[\[59\]](#) Mr. Anson H. Cady moved into the tavern and operated the farm for Mr. Roberts, and his wife became a very close friend of Mrs. Roberts. Mrs. Cady felt that she had received a call from Isaiah 53:5, 6, involving the undoing of heavy burdens. They left their home in Lyons, New York and made themselves available to Mr. Roberts to serve in whatever capacity was most urgent during the following years.[\[60\]](#)

5. Early Students.

Most of the early students, although their names are known, would not be of sufficient interest to the general reader to record. However, the record of how one student came to attend is of special interest because it was connected with the work of Mr. and Mrs. Roberts. In August of 1867, at a camp meeting in Illinois, when Mr. Roberts was endeavoring to raise money to erect the buildings at North Chili, one of the first to give was a bashful boy of about twelve or thirteen years of age "who had outgrown his clothes." Mr. Roberts related that "as trembling he placed a ten cent piece in my hand, a thrill went over me like a gentle shock of electricity," and a voice seemed to say, "If the children take such an interest, the school will be a success." Three years later, when Mr. Roberts was attending a camp meeting in New York, he mentioned this circumstance. Mrs. Roberts arose to explain that this boy was the son of a Free Methodist preacher in poor circumstances and asked if some one would not be interested in sending him to school. At the close of the meeting, Mrs. Joseph Mackey, wife of a New York business man, said, "Send for him to go to school, and I will pay his bills." When news reached the boy in Illinois that he was to receive an education, he was in the field hoeing corn. To express his joy "he turned a somersault and stood on his head." That boy was none other than Vivian A. Dake, the man who became founder of the "Pentecost Bands." Mr. Roberts said, "He came to our school at Chili, a bright, uncultivated, unconverted boy, thirsting for knowledge, ambitious to learn. He was clearly converted and became a power for good."[\[61\]](#)

In September 1869, Mrs. Roberts received a letter from a Sidney McCreery, stating that "Sr. Barney wishes me to say that Sister Warner's children and her Charlie are intending to go to school at Chili as soon as it opens." Also she wanted to know if there was "a chance to rent rooms to board themselves."[\[62\]](#) She further expressed a desire to "get Mattie in somewhere to school" as soon as it

commenced. This she was able to do as is indicated by the fact that "Mattie's" name appeared among the list of students published in the First Annual Catalogue.^[63] Through friendships, advertising in *The Earnest Christian*, as well as through personal solicitation and public presentation, the school was able to make a beginning, and fifty-six students graced its barren halls during the school term, 1869-1870.^[64]

C. FINANCES INVOLVED IN THE SCHOOL VENTURE

1. Promotion of School Finances

Mr. Roberts must be understood as the prime promoter of the school, and as the presiding officer of the several Conferences, to be behind the actions of the same to assist financially. Reference has been made that in 1865, the Genesee Annual Conference had voted to proceed at once to found an institution of learning, and that the sum of fifteen thousand dollars be raised for the purpose;^[65] Susquehanna Conference responded to Genesee's request for material aid by adopting their report. Other actions by the Genesee Conference the next year followed, including the approval of buildings as soon as ten thousand dollars could be secured in reliable subscriptions.^[66] The acquiescence of the Susquehanna Conference, and their more definite action of the following year that they would "present this project in some form" to all their societies soliciting their "prayers and contributions for its success,"^[67] indicated cooperative endeavor. In 1868, the conference assessed itself one thousand dollars for the school, the money to be raised "by the several stations and circuits," according to ability, to be determined by a committee. The responsible ministers were to collect the money and forward the same to Mr. Roberts.^[68] The Illinois Conference took a more guarded action by recommending the school to "the cooperation and patronage" of the people.^[69] The same year, the Genesee Conference pledged two thousand dollars, and apportioned an amount equal to one dollar per member including probationers, ordered a collection to complete the buildings, and the solicitation of individuals for larger donations toward the project.^[70] All of these conference actions are indications of what was taking place under the promotional work of their leader. In the Minutes of both the Susquehanna and Genesee Conferences, there are records of finances to date, showing approximately ten thousand dollars under subscription, over seven thousand expended, leaving an approximate need of three thousand dollars.^[71] Mr. Roberts reported in *The Earnest Christian* of the same year that he had become personally responsible for the amount of four thousand dollars for the new building begun the previous summer, and that two thousand dollars more were needed to finish the building, making the total deficit six thousand dollars. They had "assets, subscriptions and pledges" covering approximately one half of the amount, so that the need stood for about the same amount as indicated in the Conference, three thousand dollars.^[72]

As might be expected, Mr. Roberts, assisted by his wife, was doing his utmost to cover the amount needed by subscription. Mrs. Roberts wrote to their friend, the Rev. William Belden, one of the trustees for the year 1869-70, requesting financial help for the school. He wrote back:

After you wrote to me the inquiry 'Whether the Lord had shewed me any duty I might have in connection with giving money for the School' and particularly mentioned that it was

desirable that something be done for it, as a place to educate the children of poor ministers of the Free Methodist Church, I made up my mind to send you \$100.00.[\[73\]](#)

That same Congregational minister opened up his heart shortly after and wrote a short note in a beautiful hand in which he asked for acknowledgment of "my check in your favor for Five Hundred Dollars (\$500) in full for my subscription to the school to be established by yourself and Trustees named to act with you."[\[74\]](#)

H. A. Crouch had evidently been solicited by both Mr. Roberts and Mr. Mackey of New York. He acknowledged the receipt of both letters in his reply. Evidently being under some financial pressures he said, "I only send the tithes as yet (expressed through in advance of the freight);" and then added a note of hope, "When I can send you from the other part, it will help you some." Rather apologetically for the smaller amount, he added, "I know these little sums chink in, but don't get discouraged."[\[75\]](#)

It is always helpful in the midst of pressing needs to have someone to tell how the desired end should be accomplished. Pertaining evidently to the failure to get Mr. Mackey and Mr. Crouch to give as much as had been anticipated, Mr. James wrote, "I am afraid this looking to certain moneyed men, as Brother Crouch and Brother Mackey, is not of God, or it would have been more successful. The Lord doesn't lead his people into snares, and yet Bro. Roberts was ensnared by relying upon Brother Crouch." Then came the method propounded, "God's way of raising money is the old-fashioned one, Ex. 25:2, 1 Cor. 16:12 - 'Let every man' - Every pilgrim in the land should have a contribution in that school and farm, and then there would be a general interest in it everywhere." Then he returned to his main point, "When I see signs of this looking to certain rich men as I do sometimes, I think of the remark of Wesley, 'Woe unto the Methodist Church when rich men become necessary to it.' God's choice is seen in James 2:5. He still chooses the poor to do His work."[\[76\]](#) This must have caused a little twinge of conscience in Mr. Roberts, for he had written in somewhat the same manner about the necessity of depending on the rich when ornate churches were built, and had quoted more accurately Wesley's statement[\[77\]](#)

Mr. Roberts knew something about fair promises with small performance. In 1869, he wrote, "The charter has been granted. The building is nearly ready for plastering. We are greatly in want of means." Then there followed this information that must have startled his hearers or readers, "The Genesee Conference, last fall, pledged to raise over \$2000.00, of which about sixty dollars have been paid. The Susquehanna Conference pledged one thousand; they have paid about thirty." A short paragraph that followed might reflect the pressure he was under, "We are perplexed and embarrassed. If any who read these lines have any of the Lord's money that they wish to devote to a good cause, we know of no better. Send to us without delay."[\[78\]](#) Coming to the close of the year with the building completed, he acknowledged that the burden that had been upon him was still very great, "at times, almost crushing." No one had assumed any "pecuniary responsibility" besides himself. Enough to relieve him from present responsibilities had been "pledged - but not paid." He doubted not that they all had a good excuse for delaying but reminded his readers that it was better for each of them to carry a little than for him "to carry alone the accumulated load."[\[79\]](#)

However, from the report of the money that had already been turned in, it is evident that many were doing their best to help bear the financial responsibility of the new school building. At the Fox River Camp Meeting in Illinois, so far from the scene of their need, a circumstance occurred which Mr. Roberts declared he had never witnessed. A Love Feast, or testimony service, was in progress on Tuesday morning. Mrs. Roberts had been "led to speak of the necessities" of the school at Chili, "of the want of a school where our young people could be encouraged to enjoy religion," and of their "present embarrassment." Mr. Roberts reported that "she said but little, but the Lord was in it." A "brother" arose immediately and said, "the Lord wanted him to pay twenty-five dollars for that school." A "sister" followed with fifty. Then J. G. Terrill suggested that they follow the method of the colored people in the South, sing a lively hymn and invite the people to come forward to make their contributions. He "led off in singing" and the people "came forward with alacrity" to the stand. In a few minutes five hundred dollars were pledged, of which one hundred and seventy-five dollars were paid in cash at the time. Mr. Roberts gave his reactions, "Never was our unbelief so rebuked as on this occasion. Our wants were very pressing; but the times are hard, and we did not expect to raise anything. But God has wonderfully encouraged us to trust him." [\[80\]](#)

Another meeting, a little later than this period, called forth the acknowledgment, "We are a very poor hand to raise money, especially if it is going to lighten a burden that rests mainly upon our own shoulders. We prefer to crawl along under the load, in silence, as long as possible." [\[81\]](#) After the Rev. Gould had preached on the consecration of our substance to the Lord, and "Sister Freeland" testified to how she had gained in health when she went into the Seminary to teach, and the Rev. Albert G. Terry had followed with a morning sermon, a certain woman arose and said it had been on her mind all night that she should propose to be one of twenty or forty to give five dollars apiece for Chili Seminary. Out of this inspiration came a cash offering of \$467.95 and a subscription of \$404.35. Mr. Roberts added, "There was given besides, at the same time, three gold watches, one silver one, one valuable globe which cost sixty-five dollars, one revolver, and one pocket compass, the whole amounting to about one thousand dollars." [\[82\]](#)

2. Construction and Dedication of Building

(a) *Construction.* Reference has already been made to the construction of a building to take the place of the old tavern, which was considered but temporary quarters until something more suitable could be erected. The various pledges taken were for the new building rather than for the ten thousand dollar mortgage on the farm, with which Mr. Roberts struggled along for nearly twenty years. By the fall of 1867, ten thousand dollars had been pledged, and by the fall of 1868, the building was in process of construction. Its dimensions were forty by sixty feet, and it was to be four stories high. The lower story, or basement, was to be of stone, and the rest of brick. In February, 1869, the building was ready for plastering. In June of that year while he was away, Mr. Roberts wrote to his son, George, at North Chili advising him that he had sent a draft for one hundred and fifty dollars and asked him to give fifty dollars to Harvey Clarke, "to buy materials to commence plastering the Seminary," the remainder to be given to "Gordon to endorse on my note." [\[83\]](#) By September, Mr. Roberts could report that the building was "rapidly being completed" and that he hoped to have it ready by the first of November. [\[84\]](#) The next

month the day of opening was still fixed with "hope" at the same date. In connection with the same article, he mentioned a draft for fifty dollars sent from someone in Rochester, signed "One for whom the Lord has done much." He hoped God would do still more for him.^[85] In November, the month set for the completion, he was able to announce, "Our building is now completed." He said that "relying on God and the people" he had "pushed this enterprise to completion, believing that it was for God's glory and the good of souls."^[86]

(b) *The Dedication.* The dedication service was announced for the sixteenth of November, with the school term to commence the next day.^[87] The night before the dedication, a number of those associated with the school gathered together to consecrate themselves anew to God. Mr. George W. Anderson, who had been appointed principal, believed that God had "accepted them," filling their mouths with praises. He was also constrained to say, "Lord, I will and can do two men's work here, if thou wouldst have me." Immediately a passage of Scripture, "Be ye enlarged" was applied, and he reported, "I was, thank God!"^[88]

At one o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday, November 16, 1869, the dedication services took place. There was reported a good attendance "of pilgrims and of women and of young people from the community." Mr. Roberts reported that the exercises were of a deeply interesting character. He felt that God was there and that the offering was acceptable in His sight. One of the things particularly noted was the address by Dr. M. B. Anderson, President of the University of Rochester. Dr. Anderson was described by Mr. Roberts, in later years, as a man of pleasant address and imposing appearance, tall, straight, muscular, well proportioned, and with "a fine intellectual face."^[89] In his address, Dr. Anderson dwelt particularly upon the relation of Christianity to education, tracing the course of education under the Christian system. Coming to a close, he referred to the duty of instruction in science and literature from the Christian viewpoint, and concluded by observing the elements of power and permanency in Christian institutions in that "they and their founders were associated with the moral elevation and improvement of man."^[90] Benson Roberts, who attended the school, and was doubtless present at the dedication service, described Dr. Anderson as "a man of keen wit, giant mind and body."^[91] During his address, he turned to Mr. Roberts with words which were to have abundant fulfillment, and said, "You, sir, will find many who are willing to sacrifice you on the altar of Christian education."^[92]

An offering, of course, was taken. Mr. Roberts was not particularly happy that the audience was largely women and young folk. He rather caustically remarked, "In this country men go to auctions, where there is an anticipated chance to make money; women and young people, without money, go to dedications, where it is expected money will be called for."^[93]

A personal Incident is recorded by C. M. Damon, who had been recently assigned, to his "overwhelming astonishment," to the pastorate at Syracuse, New York, although he had wanted to take up his work in the West. He had written to New York concerning his contemplated marriage there, intending to leave immediately for Cannon Valley, Minnesota, where he expected to join the Conference. Receiving his appointment before his marriage, he was so downhearted that he explained, "I can't see any God in it."

He was greatly cheered by the arrival of Mr. Roberts, who performed the ceremony, and received ten dollars from the "very little store" of Mr. Damon. Then on his way to Syracuse with his young bride, he "took in the dedication of Chili Seminary." Although he confessed they "had but little in hand to begin housekeeping," when the pull for money came from that crowd so devoid of men, this poor young divine "made a sacrifice to the Lord amounting in the aggregate to about ninety dollars." Part of his offering was "a quite valuable watch, nearly new" which he surrendered. He then proceeded "cheerfully" to his church without any. A year later, to his entire surprise, he recorded that Mrs. Roberts "raised a subscription, bought the watch and returned it to me with the injunction not to give it away again, but keep it for the work of the Lord." When Mr. Damon published a book in 1900, he still had "the same works" of the watch he had given away so many years before.[\[94\]](#)

A week after the dedication, a number of those at the school met together for a class meeting in "the general study room of the Seminary." Mr. Anderson reported that "Heaven drew near" and they heard from the "excellent glory" the words, "Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise." He exclaimed, "O, that was a time long to be remembered!" He believed that if God's people could only "breathe these spicy breezes from heaven, and see how God endorses us in the work . . . they would take a wonderful interest in this school, and resolve to make it a success."[\[95\]](#)

School opened the day following the dedication with thirty-nine young people in attendance, a goodly number of them from the local community and surrounding towns. Mrs. Rebecca Woodruff, who was then a girl in the school, later recalled something of the living conditions inside the school thus:

There were two other girls in the same room, Arlie Olney and Densie Slocum. There were two trunks, and our store box we covered with a shawl and used as a table. There was no closet so we stretched a rope across the corner of the room back of the door to hang our clothes on. Our light was a small kerosene lamp. We had one chair without a back to it. On it was a wash howl that each of us had to take turns in filling, going to the cistern pump in the kitchen for water There was another bedroom off the kitchen where Ella and Hattie Warner, Mattie McCreery and Ida Collins Winget and Mabel Freeland occupied. The kitchen was the only room we had to eat, study and sit in by the warmth of the cook stove. There was a long table where about twenty, including teachers and matron ate.[\[96\]](#)

On the third floor there were two rooms with folding doors where the students sat, probably in a social hour. This was heated by a large coal stove. Across the hall were two recitation rooms with old settees and a table. (Were these the new ones which Mr. Roberts had bought, grown old in the thinking of Mrs. Woodruff, who was ninety years old at the time she wrote her recollections?) All the floors and walls were bare. There was a large bedroom on that floor for boys, though there were only three to occupy it that first year. On the fourth floor was a large closet where the girls had to hang some of their best clothes. On Saturday before dark, they would ascend to the fourth floor to select their dresses for Sunday. Also that floor was used for setting up exercises for the girls once a week.

Two pictures, the practical and the ideal, have been given of the outside setting of the Seminary. One of

the students of that first year of 1869 wrote realistically:

We arrived at the little station at dark. Charles Roberts [son of B. T. Roberts] was there with a one seated buggy. He asked if we were students, and said he would take us to the home of Brother Stoutenburg where our parents had told us we had better go first, as we knew him well. Charles surely was a furious driver. We were just covered with mud when we reached Brother Stoutenburg's home. In the morning we were shown to the Seminary. The building stood in an open field with no walks or trees, but plenty of mud.[\[97\]](#)

Miss Delia Jeffries, the first teacher of the institution, painted a somewhat different picture:

I enjoyed my work and felt my whole soul absorbed in your farm, Seminary, and matters that I saw God had laid upon you. I saw the glory about that Seminary just before I left, that I had never seen before. As I was walking out at evening in Brother W's yard I saw a brightness about it that reminded me of the buildings in the city of the new Jerusalem, not builded with hands, and since I have been here, I have seen it hidden away under the wing of the Almighty.[\[98\]](#)

D. THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

1. Organization of the School

(a) *Teachers and Curriculum.* The school year 1869-70, with the new building ready for occupancy, had a more formal announcement than any previously made, for then was published *The First Annual Catalogue and Circular of the Chili Seminary*. The staff was made up of George W. Anderson, Principal, and teacher of Latin and Greek; Miss F. F. Clement, teacher of French, Rhetoric, etc.; and Miss Mary Carpenter, teacher of Mathematics.[\[99\]](#)

A preparatory course of the common branches was first specified of the subjects followed by the text: "Reading - Sanders; Spelling - Sanders; Penmanship; Analysis - Town; Geography - McNally; Arithmetic, Mental and Written - Robinson; Grammar - Brown; United States History - Willson." Under "Plan of Instruction" it was emphasized that every student should obtain "a practical and thorough knowledge of the branches pursued."[\[100\]](#) It was further emphasized that no student would be encouraged "to leave the Elementary Branches, such as Reading, Spelling, etc., and pass to the Higher Branches, until the former had been well mastered."[\[101\]](#)

Following the "Preparatory Course" was the "Graduating Course, or Higher Branches," divided into Junior, Middle and Senior years, with the school year divided into fall, winter, and spring terms. For the Junior year, the subjects centered more particularly in the secular subjects, while the Senior Class studied religious and philosophic texts almost exclusively. The one major exception was surveying, listed for the winter term. Four languages, Latin, Greek, French, and German were offered. The following subjects

were listed for Juniors Fall Term "Arithmetic - Robinson's Practical; Algebra Robinson's Elementary; History - Willson's Outlines; Grammar Brown Winter Term. "Arithmetic - Robinson's Higher Algebra Robinson 5 University; History - Willson's Outlines Bookkeeping East man." Spring Term. "Algebra - Robinson S University History - Willson's Outlines; Physiology - Hitchcock; Rhetoric - Quackenboss." For the Middle Class, the following subjects were listed: Fall Term. "Geometry - Robinson; Rhetoric - Quackenboss; Natural Philosophy - Quackenboss." Winter Term. "Geometry - Robinson; Astronomy; Logic - Whately." Spring Term. "Astronomy; Botany; Geology - Hitchcock." The Senior Class subjects were as follows: Fall Term. "Elements of Criticism -Kames; Moral Science - Wayland; Political Economy - Way-land." Winter Term. "Natural Theology - Paley; Mental Philosophy - Upham; Surveying - Robinson." Spring Term. "Analogy of Religion - Butler; Evidences of Christianity - Paley; Review."[\[102\]](#) The students were urged to bring with them all the school books they could.

All the books in the library were listed in the catalogue. The library consisted of thirty-seven books from the library of the late William Kendall, twenty-seven books from S. K. J. Chesbrough, and several from D. F. Newton who had, for a time, been co-editor of *The Earnest Christian* and *Golden Rule*. At the close of the meager list, Mr. Roberts announced, "We earnestly solicit contributions of books from others."[\[103\]](#)

(b) *Regulations.*

(1) *Expenses.* This was designated by Mr. Roberts as "actual cost."[\[104\]](#) Board was to cost three dollars per week with fifty cents extra for tea and coffee.[\[105\]](#) Tuition, which was "at the usual rates" varied: for the elementary branches, five dollars; for the Higher Branches, eight dollars, and for the Classics, ten dollars. Students were asked to provide their own wood, light, etc. Rooms were to be furnished with bedstead, straw bed, chairs, wash stand, and stove. All other furniture had to be furnished by the student.

(2) *School Rules.* Two different sets of rules were listed. In the first set, it was stated that the exercises would commence each day with reading the Scriptures, singing, and prayer. No social intercourse was allowed to students during study and recitation hours. Students outside the building must observe the same study hours as those within. In case of "habitual delinquency" the student might be suspended or expelled. Under the second set of rules, students were required to retire at ten and arise at six. Every student "must strictly observe the Lord's day." They were required to attend public worship and were "not allowed to visit each other's rooms on this day, nor to be strolling abroad." Each one had to attend a Sunday afternoon Bible Class conducted by the Rev. Levi Wood who lived near the school. All were expected to go "promptly and quietly" to their meals, and "to observe a proper decorum at table."[\[106\]](#)

(3) *Grading and Deportment.* A record of recitations and deportment was kept daily for each student, and a report was prepared weekly for "the inspection of parents and guardians." For correct deportment and perfect recitations, the student was given 10. A failure was, of course, zero. There was a public examination of classes at the end of each term.[\[107\]](#)

That deportment was always perfect then is denied by Mrs. Woodruff, a former student who wrote the

following account in 1937 when about ninety years of age. She said:

The teachers didn't know all that was going on: some things were done on the sly. It was arranged one night that Benson Roberts [son of the founder] was to take my sister for a sleigh ride and Lemuel Halstead took Mabel Freeland. When the girls heard sleigh bells, they were to go out the back kitchen door, and the rest of us must not tell on them, but let them in quietly when they returned. One night Charles Barney stole away to a party and one of the boys was to let him in when he gave the signal. The boy did not hear him, but the Professor heard him and opened the door to his surprise. Another time when Mrs. Moore went to the pantry to get the turkey she had prepared for dinner, it could not be found. Someone had taken it to the cupola and hidden it. It was finally found since the boys did not want to miss their turkey dinner.[\[108\]](#)

2. Duties of Mr. Roberts

(a) *Detail Work.* Mr. Roberts was interested in some of the little details as well as matters of greater importance concerning the school. Mrs. Woodruff told that one Saturday "when Brother Roberts returned from the city in a lumber wagon," among a number of things that he brought back was a bedstead, and that she and her sister, Emma, "were not long in claiming it." They had been sleeping on the floor on a straw tick reinforced by a small feather bed which their mother had sent along in case of cold weather. She remembered, as a woman would, that Mr. Roberts also brought a dozen silver teaspoons marked C.S. [Chili Seminary].[\[109\]](#)

Mr. Roberts had to look after the farm hands too. He had acquired some knowledge of farming, and it was said that he prided himself on the straight furrow he could plough. Miss Delia Jeffries told how he had to check on the workers to see that their work was "well done." One time in her hearing, he said that those whom he employed seemed to think, because he was a preacher, that he did not know how work should be done, and this sometimes made it hard for him. One day she saw him take hold of the plow and go along with the plowman to see about the soil. A minister standing nearby observed

Is it true that
'He that by the plow would thrive,
Himself must either hold or drive'?[\[110\]](#)

During the construction of the Seminary building, it was Mr. Roberts who had to look after the workmen and see that all materials were on hand. He had to manage the farm, see that the crops were threshed, fall seeding taken care of, and all other work on the farm properly looked after. He did "a vast amount of preaching," making long journeys during the course of his work, superintended the general interests of the new church, edited a monthly magazine, and took care of the mailing of the many thousands of copies sent out each month. His home and family interests demanded some attention, and for many years he bore the heavy debts incurred in the founding of the Seminary. Miss Jeffries thought "he did more work than a man ought to do." One time, when unusually heavy duties were pressing, she asked him, "Is

it right for you to do and bear so much? Is it not duty to take things a little easier, and not wear yourself out so fast, as you must do with so many burdens upon you?" He replied, "I am bearing double burdens . . . because those whom the Lord calls to come to my help do not respond to His call, thus leaving me not only to bear my own burdens, but also to do the work they leave undone."[\[111\]](#) Mr. Roberts was also buyer for the school. A bill of sale from Charles J. Hayden and Company of Rochester, New York recorded the purchase by Mr. Roberts on January 22nd, of twelve setters, five and a half feet long, costing thirty-nine dollars and sixty cents.[\[112\]](#) G. W. Anderson, Principal of the Seminary, writing in the fall of 1870, evidenced the fact that he was depending on Mr. Roberts for many little details which he might well have looked after himself. He said, "How about stoves? Brother S. doesn't seem to be able to get the coal up. When shall I put down the matting? Brother Sellew wrote me the stove was on the way."[\[113\]](#) All these small duties generally try the soul of a man, but Miss Jeffries, who lived in the same house as the Roberts family, said, "I do not remember to have heard him speak one unpleasant, hasty or unkind word while I was there."[\[114\]](#)

(b) *Administrative and Spiritual Oversight.* Mr. Roberts wrote in the fall of 1870 to Mr. Anderson, the principal, about the work of the school. Mr. Anderson replied, thanking Mr. Roberts for his communication and reporting that "things go on quite encouragingly." After stating that they were having reviews every week in preparation for examination, he acknowledged that he had been "wonderfully tempted all around." It appeared to him that all the scholars were going to backslide, "Brother Perkins" became so sick that he went home, and for a time it seemed that everything was against them; but he reported "the atmosphere is now much clearer." He wanted Mr. and Mrs. Roberts to pray, for "the devil has not given up trying to run the life of religion out of the School." He gave to Mr. Roberts this consolation, "Through grace we are determined to conquer though we die."[\[115\]](#)

Mr. Roberts was greatly assisted in every part of the work by his wife. Benson, a son, remembers the "ceaseless energy" with which she devoted herself "to this great task, often carrying very heavy burdens because of my father's necessitated absence from home from which most women of her training would have shrunk." He said his mother knew "how to pray her way through."[\[116\]](#) From 1869 till near the close of life she was the appointed leader of the Tuesday evening class meetings at the Seminary.[\[117\]](#)

In addition to the duties already mentioned, Mr. Roberts had the responsibility of securing teachers for the school. In this, he felt himself to be divinely assisted. He later said about this phase of the work, "The Lord has raised us up teachers, thoroughly competent, wholly consecrated to Him who teach as true ministers of Jesus Christ preach, not to make money, but to serve God."[\[118\]](#) As soon as they were financially able, he set up an organization that would shift some of the responsibilities to others. Some time later, when he was again traveling in meetings, Mrs. Roberts expressed the confidence that "if God had a fair chance, He would bless you beyond what you have ever been blessed." Then she explained, "By a fair chance, I mean if you were out in the work of soul saving, where the people were hungry, and you did not have to think all the time of debts, and interest money, and mortgages, and shiftless hired men, etc., etc."[\[119\]](#) For years there was a struggle to meet the interest on the ten thousand dollar mortgage on the farm, to pay up the remaining debt on the building, and to meet the current expenses of the school out of its meager income. But he testified that God never failed in time of need, that "just

when the pressure is greatest God sends relief." [\[120\]](#) During those years, his critics were plentiful. Delia Jeffries said she used to feel that there was one woe that would never be pronounced upon him, and that was, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you." [\[121\]](#) Even after he was able to secure competent help to take over the work of the school, his heart was still with the institution he had founded, and he never lost interest in its progress to the end of his life.

ENDNOTES

[\[*\]](#) Now Roberts Wesleyan College, North Chili, New York.

[\[1\]](#) Theodore Roosevelt. Quoted in The Second Chance. a publication of the A. M. Chesbrough seminary, 1930.

[\[2\]](#) Minutes of the Genesee Annual Conference, 1868, p.?.

[\[3\]](#) Ibid.

[\[4\]](#) Annual catalogue and Circular of the Chili Seminary, (Rochester, New York: Earnest Christian Office. 1870), 7.

[\[5\]](#) Ibid.

[\[6\]](#) B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (July, 1860). 33.

[\[7\]](#) Annual catalogue and Circular of the Chili Seminary, 7.

[\[8\]](#) B. T. Roberts. The Earnest Christian, (September. 1868), 97.

[\[9\]](#) Minutes of the Genesee Annual Conference of the Free Methodist Church, (Albion, New York, October, 1865), p.19.

[\[10\]](#) Letter from Rev. William Holden to Mrs. Roberts, written from New York, April 14, 1867. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[\[11\]](#) B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (April, 1876), 136.

[\[12\]](#) Ibid.

[\[13\]](#) Combined Minutes, Genesee Conference, 1665, p.19.

- [\[14\]](#) B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (April, 1876). 136.
- [\[15\]](#) B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (March, 1876), 102.
- [\[16\]](#) B. T. Roberts. *The Earnest Christian*, (April, 1876), 136.
- [\[17\]](#) Combined Minutes, Genesee Conference, 1876, p.8.
- [\[18\]](#) Ibid.
- [\[19\]](#) Combined Minutes, Illinois Conference, (September 17, 1868).
- [\[20\]](#) B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (May, 1866), 160.
- [\[21\]](#) B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (November, 1868), 160.
- [\[22\]](#) Ibid.
- [\[23\]](#) Ibid., (May, 1866), 160.
- [\[24\]](#) Ibid., (November, 1868), 160.
- [\[25\]](#) J. J. Rousseau, *Smile*, translated by William H. Payne, (New York: D. Appleton, 1895), p.157.
- [\[26\]](#) B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (November, 1868), 160.
- [\[27\]](#) Genesee Conference Journal, October 24, 1861.
- [\[28\]](#) Combined Minutes, Genesee Annual Conference, October, 1865, p.19.
- [\[29\]](#) Combined Minutes, Genesee Annual Conference, 1865, p.19.
- [\[30\]](#) Combined Minutes, Susquehanna Annual Conference, 1865, p.31.
- [\[31\]](#) Combined Minutes, Genesee Conference, 1866, p.10.
- [\[32\]](#) Ibid., Susquehanna Conference, October, 1866, p.33.

[33] Combined Minutes, Susquehanna Conference, October, 1866, p.33.

[34] Facsimile of document, dated June 8, 1866, in the handwriting of B. T. Roberts is to be found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[35] Annual Catalogue and circular of the Chili Seminary, (Rochester, New York: Earnest Christian Office, 1870), 3.

[36] B. H. Roberts. Benjamin Titus Roberts, pp. 353-355.

[37] Delia Jeffries. Quoted by B. H. Roberts. op., cit., p.356.

[38] Letter from Delia Jeffries to Mrs. B. T. Roberts, written from Peoria, September 24, 1866. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.356.

[42] Edward B. Mathews, The Free Methodist, (January 9, 1889), 21.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] B. H. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 362, 363.

[47] B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.363.

[48] Edward B. Mathews, The Free Methodist, (January 9, 1889), 21.

[49] Delia Jeffries. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.357.

[50] Diary of B. T. Roberts, February 17, 1869. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.384.

[51] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (November, 1869). 163.

[52] Della Jeffries. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.356.

[53] B. H. Roberts. Quoted by Adella P Carpenter, *Ellen Lois Roberts*, p. 114.

[54] Ellen Lois Roberts, "Friendly Letters," *The Earnest Christian*. Quoted by Addis P. Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

[55] B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.360.

[56] B. H. Roberts. *The Earnest Christian*, (November. 1867), 161.

[57] Personal interview of James DeLello of Robert. Wesleyan College with Mr. Hubbard. old time resident of North Chili, New York.

[58] Arch Merrill. *Stagecoach Towns*, published by the Gannett Company. Inc., (Rochester, New York: Louis Heindl and Son). p.13.

[59] Personal interviews of Arthur Gailey and L. Perkins with early settlers In North Chili, New York.

[60] B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.364.

[61] B. T. Roberts. Quoted by Thomas H. Nelson, *Life and Labors of Rev. Vivian A. Dake*, (Chicago: T. B. Arnold Publishing Company 1894). p.19.

[62] Letter from Sidney McCreery to Mrs. Roberts, September 16, 1869. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[63] *First Annual Catalogue and Circular of the Chili Seminary*, (Rochester. New York: Earnest Christian Office, 1870). 5.

[64] *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6

[65] *Combined Minute.*, Genesee Conference, 1865, p.19.

[66] *Combined Minutes*, Genesee Conference, 1866, p.10.

- [67] Combined Minutes, Susquehanna Conference, 1867. p.29.
- [68] Combined Minutes, Susquehanna Conference, 1868. p. 21.
- [69] Combined Minutes, Illinois Conference, 1868. p.51.
- [70] Combined Minutes, Genesee Conference, September 24.1868, p.7.
- [71] Combined Minutes, 1869. Genesee Conference, p.10; Susquehanna Conference, p.38.
- [72] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (July, 1869). 33.
- [73] William Belden to Mrs. Roberts. written from New York, April 14, 1867. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [74] Letter from William Belden to Mr. Roberts, written from New York, July 11, 1867. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [75] Letter from H. A. Crouch to Mr. Roberts, written from Tarr Farm, Wisconsin, September 4, 1868. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [76] Letter from J. T. James to Mrs. Roberts, written from New York, January 14, 1869. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [77] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (March, 1861). 100.
- [78] B. T. Roberts. The Earnest Christian, (February. 1869), 66.
- [79] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (November, 1869). 163.
- [80] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (July, 1869). 32.
- [81] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (September, 1871), 98.
- [82] Ibid.
- [83] Letter from B. T. Roberts written to George Roberts, June 23, 1869. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[84] B. T. Roberts. The Earnest Christian, (September. 1869), 96.

[85] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (October, 1861). 131.

[86] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (November. 1869), 163.

[87] Ibid.

[88] The Earnest Christian, (December, 1869), 191.

[89] B. T. Roberts, The Free Methodist, (March 12, 1890), 8.

[90] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (December, 1869), 190.

[91] B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.361.

[92] Dr. M. B. Anderson, Address at Dedication of Chill Seminary. quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.381.

[93] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (December, 1869), 190.

[94] C. M. Damon, Sketches and Incidents, (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1900), p.117.

[95] George W. Anderson, The Earnest Christian, (December, 1869), 191.

[96] Letter from Rebecca Shriver Woodruff to Dean Howard E. Updyke, 1937. In possession of Howard E. Updyke, North Chili, New York.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Letter from Delia Jeffries to Mrs. Roberts, written from Peoria, New York, August 16, 1869. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[99] Annual Catalogue and Circular of the Chili Seminary. 1869-70, (Rochester, New York: Earnest Christian Office, 1870). 3.

[100] Ibid., p.8.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid., pp. 8, 9.

[103] Ibid., pp. 10,11.

[104] H. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (November, 1869), 163.

[105] Letter from Rebecca Shriver Woodruff to Dean Howard E. Updyke, 1937. In possession of Howard E. Updyke, North chili. New York.

[106] *Annual Catalogue and Circular of the Chili Seminary'*, 1869-70, (Rochester, New York: Earnest Christian Office, 1870), pp. 11,12.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Letter from Rebecca Shriver Woodruff to Dean Howard B. Updyke. 1937. In possession of Howard B. Updyke, North Chili, New York.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Delia Jeffries. Quoted by B. H. Robert op. cit., p.358.

[111] Della Jeffries. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 357, 358.

[112] Original Bill of Sale, dated February 15, 1870. Found among the personal letters' of the Robert, family.

[113] Letter from George W. Anderson to B. T. Roberts, October 6, 1870. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[114] Della Jeffries. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.351.

[115] George W. Anderson, Letter by B. T. Roberts, October 6, 1870. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[116] B. H. Roberts. Quoted by Adella P. Carpenter, *Ellen Lois Roberts*, p.114.

[117] Adella P. Carpenter, *Ellen, Lois Roberts*, (Chicago: Woman's Missionary Society, Free Methodist Church, 1926), p.84.

[\[118\]](#) B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (April, 1876). 136.

[\[119\]](#) Letter from Mrs. B. T. Roberts to her husband, written from North Chill to Coopersville, Michigan, February 21, 1872. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[\[120\]](#) B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (March, 1876), 101.

[\[121\]](#) Statement of Delia Jeffries. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.359.

EARNEST CHRISTIAN

CHAPTER IX

SUBSEQUENT WORKS

A. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC

1. Formation of the Farmers' Alliance
2. Later Attitudes

B. SCHOOLS

1. Aid to Chili Seminary
2. Spring Arbor Seminary
3. Evansville Seminary
4. Orleans Seminary
5. Gerry Seminary
6. Seminary in Virginia
7. Wessington Springs Seminary
8. Greenville College
9. Seattle Seminary
10. School Summary

C. WRITINGS, 1870-1893

1. The Earnest Christian
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D. MISSIONS

A. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC

1. The Formation of the Farmers' Alliance

Although Mr. Roberts was a minister of the gospel, he had come from a background of farm life, and during the entire period of his ministry, he was interested in farming and, until his death, had charge of the management of the Seminary farm. Reference has been made to his instructions, given in some of his many letters, to "buy seed wheat"[\[1\]](#) and to sow the rye and "timothy grass seed with it."[\[2\]](#) He prided himself on being able to "turn a straighter furrow" than most men could.[\[3\]](#) Hence, when he received an invitation to speak at the Monroe County Fair,[\[4\]](#) which his son designated the "Western New York Fair,"[\[5\]](#) at the invitation of the Agricultural Society of Western New York, he accepted. This, perhaps, arose as the result of his attendance at the Farmers' Club of Monroe County. He delivered an address entitled "A Conspiracy Against Farmers" on September 26, 1872. in that pamphlet, which was later printed by request and attracted wide notice, Mr. Roberts endeavored to show the obstacles which lay in the way of the prosperity of farmers, and hence of the whole country. He pointed out the "detrimental working of the various combinations and rings by which most all the business of the country except farming" was controlled. In the address, the question of grants to railroads, the bonding system, and the system of National Banks were discussed.[\[6\]](#) He endeavored to show the remedies for these evils, as restated in later years, to be: First, to restrict the franchises which the State distributed unwisely; Second, to repeal the high tariff on articles which the farmer must buy; and Third, to enact such stringent laws against trusts and combinations to control prices in the manufacturing enterprise "as would render them impossible."[\[7\]](#)

In connection with this address, he promoted the organization of the Farmers' Alliance in the state, and with the assistance of his son, organized the same. While in St. Louis in 1874, he went with "Brother Lovejoy to a meeting of the Farmers' Club at the court house." He said, "I spoke by invitation and urged upon them the importance of a general organization throughout the country."[\[8\]](#) Writing to his son George, a lawyer in Bradford, Pennsylvania, he said,

Our Farmers' Alliance that you assisted me to organize has already become a formidable power in the politics of this State. Through their influence a Bill has been introduced into our Legislature requiring the railroads of the state to carry a car load of the same freight between the same places for the same price for all parties. It is making a great stir. The Railroads oppose it with all the influence they can control. But it will ultimately carry, if not this session, yet at a future one.[\[9\]](#)

The Farmers' Alliance was the result of the discontent which arose following the Civil War, and was first organized in Chicago in 1870. While its object was to use political measures to benefit the farmer, it purposely avoided the secret society influence which made the Grange objectionable to some, and was "established as an open, free, American society." Its principles were approved by farmers everywhere, and the organization spread to North, West, and South. In the South, however, because the whites did not desire to have negro farmers a part of it, it became a separate organization with a ritual of its own and an obligation to secrecy.[\[10\]](#)

[2. Later Attitudes](#)

The farmers, working through the legislatures, especially in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and other western states, attempted to secure relief by the passing of laws regulating railway rates and the conditions of warehousing and transporting of grains.[\[11\]](#) The "Independent National" or "Greenback Party," so called because of its advocacy of paper money, entered into the picture in 1876, charging the Republican Party with placing the country on a gold basis and contracting the currency. Peter Cooper had been presidential candidate in 1876 on their ticket,[\[12\]](#) and although he polled but a few votes, he was still active. In 1877, Mr. Roberts, writing to his son George, enclosed a letter which Peter Cooper had written to him. He said, "I wish you would carefully read it and preserve it. I see the ruin which the depressionist policy has already wrought, more marked here than even at the west." He then stated that everywhere along the valley, large factories and mills were standing still. Then he judged, "I doubt whether such havoc was ever wrought in a time of peace and plenty since the world stood."[\[13\]](#) Mr. Roberts believed the depression was caused by three factors: 1) Over-production, by pushing industry seven days in the week and thus violating the Sabbath; 2) Extravagance of both the moneyed class and laborers. The former, he said, spent their money on "palatial residences, magnificent furniture, fast horses, trips to Europe, and splendid Churches," while the latter, with half the wages they should have, yet spent their money for "whiskey and tobacco; for the support of their fellow laborers in strikes; and to carry on a senseless war against capital." 3) Conspiracies to keep up prices. The high prices of our consumer goods shut us out of the markets of the world, and with the unprotected and deprived farmer the only buyer, the goods of the manufacturers remained unsold. Hence, the man who makes the goods, he said, is unemployed, and a general prostration of business results.[\[14\]](#)

The platform of the "Greenback Party" in 1880 included free coinage of silver, advanced labor legislation, the establishment of a national bureau of labor, a graduated income tax, and the regulation of interstate commerce. Though this party went to pieces after the campaign of 1884, the Farmers' Alliances sprang into greater activity and resulted in the formation of the Populist Party which in 1892 put forth what was then considered a radical platform, advocating government ownership of railways, telegraph and telephones, a graduated income tax, postal savings banks, and the free coinage of silver and gold at the legal ratio of 16 to 1.[\[15\]](#)

Mr. Roberts was proposing some of these ideas during that period. Paper money he favored if made perfectly safe for purposes of convenience. He said, "But paper money should be money, and not a promise to pay money. The money of a country, gold and silver and paper, should be incontrovertible; but neither kind should be redeemable. Payment of any kind of money should be final."[\[16\]](#) He thought all money should be issued by the National Government for the following considerations: 1) The government alone, according to the Constitution, has the right to coin money; 2) Such money, issued by the National Government, would be of permanent value since it would be based upon the entire resources of the country; 3) It would be a great savings to the country if the bills then issued by the National Banks were issued by the National Government, since, he argued, the bills by the National Government were secured by the bonds held by the banks, and on these bonds interest was paid by the people. "This drain from the pockets of the people into the pockets of rich capitalists should be stopped," he asserted.[\[17\]](#) 4) The release of three hundred and eight million dollars worth of the bonds tied up in the National Banks

would aid in developing the country.^[18] To make the government truly republican, no self-constituted class like that of the National Banks should have the power to control business, since they could "clog and stop the wheels of industry by contracting the currency."^[19]

Mr. Roberts also advocated the free coinage of silver, stating that the proportion then fixed by the government at the ratio of sixteen to one, was about the same in the days of Darius, mentioned by Herodotus, when the ratio was thirteen to one.^[20] He explained that the reason the large creditor class in this or any Country desired to make money scarce, which was the practical effect of driving silver off the market, was to raise the purchasing power of the dollar and hence benefit these men to whom debts were owed.^[21] He commented on the action of Congress in 1873 adversely, stating that through "ignorance or folly" the Legislature had passed an act demonetizing silver. It was said, he affirmed, that the President who signed the bill did not understand its import. The belief was then general that the bill had been passed through the management of the bondholders who wished to enhance the value of their bonds. In consequence of that act, and also in that of calling in a large amount of the greenbacks, there had followed a period of great distress, manufacturing was suspended, and men were out of work and tramping the streets. When silver was made legal tender, money became more plentiful and business began to revive. Hence, he advocated free coinage of silver. Mr. Roberts believed that the bankers and bondholders, though small in number, but because they were organized, controlled the two great parties of the country. "The farmers," he opined, "unorganized and undisciplined, are overpowered by money lenders though they greatly outnumber them."^[22] He thought that Wall Street was "directly in conflict with the interests of the great body of American citizens."^[23] He was an advocate of labor organizations, particularly for farmers, though opposed to elements of secrecy in them.^[24]

In 1889, he was still espousing the farmer. In a long editorial in *The Free Methodist* of that year, under title of "Protection of Farmers," Mr. Roberts contended that since nearly one-half of the population of the country were farmers, and since conditions were such that they were going into bankruptcy, there needed to be a proper understanding of the causes. He mentioned a Louisiana experience, referred to in the following chapter, where he viewed a number of deserted plantations. He learned that "they had been mortgaged to the commission merchant, sold on the mortgage, and bid in by the mortgagees." As they could not run them without loss, or sell them, those "great farms were left to grow up with weeds." The cause of this growing poverty was, he thought, "found in the combinations made by those engaged in other productive industries, and in transportation, by means of which the proper proportion" was destroyed between the prices of what the farmer had to sell and what he wished to buy. He illustrated by pointing out that hides were allowed to come into the country free of duty, while shoes had sufficient duty to keep the foreign market from underbidding the manufacturers. Hence, he said, the farmer got little money for his hides, but had to pay a high price for his shoes. The remedy was to break up the monopoly that controlled prices. He emphasized, "We do not need cheaper hides, but cheaper shoes; not cheaper wool, but cheaper woollens; not cheaper lead, but cheaper type" and added a note of warning, "If our present rulers do not give them to us, others will."^[25]

In another article entitled "Killing the Goose," Mr. Roberts further advocated the cause of farmers.^[26] Referring to Aesop's fable, the killing of the hen that laid the golden egg, changed by Tennyson to a

goose, he asserted, "The goose that, in this country, lays the golden egg, is the farmer," and added, "The master who appropriates the golden egg is the monopolist." He continued that the master who appropriates the golden egg might be a railroad magnate with an income twice as large in one week as that of the President of the United States for a year, with the ability to pay an imported cook ten thousand dollars a year; he might be a great manufacturer doubling his capital from his profits every year; or a sugar baron able to buy up governments; or a telegraph lord: yet in the end, "the farmer produced a large portion of the wealth which he has appropriated." He asserted that the farmer ought not to be "picked to death" by excessive taxes, and that they ought to have an income more in proportion to that of those engaged in manufacturing industries. Referring to how the Communists seized Paris and were saved by the farmers who rallied to restore order, he warned,

The help of the farmers will be needed in this country when the hordes of the unemployed, led by socialists and anarchists, constantly increasing in our cities, shall assail with dynamite the palaces of the rich, overthrow the civil authority, and seek to divide among themselves the property which has been so unequally and unfairly distributed.[\[27\]](#)

He closed by calling upon the monopolists to "lift the hand of oppression from the farmers."[\[28\]](#)

Crusading against high prices of goods, under the title of "Extortioners," augmented by trusts and monopolies, he had come to think that perhaps the only remedy, until there was a change in the civil administration of affairs, would be to buy as little as possible and to "live within themselves." He enforced this by stating:

Bring the old spinning wheel down from the garret and let the grandmothers teach the girls how to run it. It will be better for them to spin Stocking yarn than 'street yarn.' Darn and patch the old clothes instead of buying the new ones on credit. Wear on the farm, or in the shop, the old-fashioned, homemade blouse instead of a coat. Hire a carpenter to make the coffin; and leave the undertaker to his grave reflections.[\[29\]](#)

The basis for the socialized movement of the government began in the regulation of monopolies by a decision of the Supreme Court in the *Munn v. Illinois* case, and several that followed, establishing the principle that since the government could regulate the use of property for the public good, that the government was then necessarily a partner in public corporations.[\[30\]](#) Hence it became possible to legislate against monopolies. Mr. Roberts thought there should be "a constitutional enactment which would prevent the owners of the New York Central Railroad from owning any interest in the Erie or the West Shore. Let the special privileges which the state gives be divided among many." He inveighed against the control of the railroad corporations, which, he thought, controlled the "successive Legislatures, whether they be Republican or Democrat, in all matters affecting their interests, as absolutely as they do their engineers and conductors."[\[31\]](#) After quoting Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* that "it is industry which is carried on for the benefit of the rich and the powerful that is principally encouraged by our mercantile system. That which is carried on for the poor and the indigent, is too often either neglected or oppressed"; and commenting upon the same, he came to the conclusion, "Monopolies,

whatever may be their form, operate against the welfare of the community at large." [32] He maintained that "the monopolists to be dreaded are the men who have a monopoly of selling beer and whiskey." [33] He wrote, "Our nation needs a Cromwell" to apply the words he penned from Dunbar on his last signal victory gained over the royalists: 'Relieve the oppressed, hear the groans of poor prisoners. Be pleased to reform the abuses of all professions. If there be anyone that makes many poor to make a few rich, that suites not a Commonwealth.'" [34]

When the California Senator Leland Stanford, one of the "richest men in the United States Senate" introduced a bill in the Senate to loan money to farmers, from a minimum of two hundred and fifty dollars to one half the actual and assessed value of the land, Mr. Roberts approvingly said, that "it was very remarkable It shows that wealth does not always benumb the humane feelings and render its possessor insensible to the needs of his fellow men." Mr. Roberts argued for the bill inasmuch as the principle had been already settled, in that the government then loaned money to National Banks without interest up to ninety per cent of the value of the securities required. It would also help the farmers to come into the possession of the farms, relieve the farmers of heavy interest rates on mortgages already placed, and, since it would put into circulation a larger amount of money, it would raise the price of farm products as well as of farms. [35]

Mr. Roberts thought the church and the "great political parties" had both gone over to the control of mammon; the churches in that they sold the best seats to the ones most able to pay for them, and the government in that the moneyed men were being elected to office. "In the Senate of the United States," he wrote in 1890, "there are said to be sixteen millionaires worth eighty millions of dollars!" After referring to Rome where "mammon seized the reins of power," the State falling to pieces from its own corruptions, he warned, "Our nation is in danger, not from without, but from within." [36]

When Mr. Henry George introduced his "single tax" theory in his work, *Progress and Poverty*, Mr. Roberts reviewed it in a full page, four column editorial in *The Free Methodist*, and answered the propositions Mr. George held forth in its favor. Mr. Roberts pointed out that any measure to take all taxes away from the "processes and products of labor" and place them upon the land would do the exact opposite of that which Mr. George tried to prove. It would work a hardship on the farmer whose taxes had then increased fourfold in his own memory, drive the farmer to the city in increasing numbers and "rob many a hard working man of the labors of his lifetime." The foundation of the great fortunes which, he contended, Mr. George falsely diagnosed, lay rather in the "obtaining of public franchises and watering of stocks." Hence the remedy was in the proper distribution of franchises and in making the watering of stocks a "State's prison offence, the same as forgery." [37]

This warning against economic aggrandizement has been renewed recently in words from the pen of P. T. Sorokin:

In contemporary populations the economic chasm between the multi-millionaires and the poverty-stricken strata is as wide as it has ever been in any country. The consequence is an ever increasing class war between the rich and the poor strata. Strikes, lockouts, riots,

revolts, and revolutions have made this century more turbulent than any of the twenty-four preceding centuries. As long as this gulf persists, especially under the conditions of a decadent sensate culture, enmity and strife between the haves and the have-nots are bound to continue.[\[38\]](#)

B. SCHOOLS

1. Aid to Chili Seminary (Later A. M. Chesbrough Seminary)

B. T. Roberts was a constant promoter of the school through the years. In the early years, he made almost desperate appeals for money through the columns of *The Earnest Christian*, informing his constituency that he had had to spend a great deal of money to get the school started, and requesting their share in bearing the financial loads which he had personally assumed. In 1871, he wrote, "We urgently need it. We must have it [money] . . . if you have anything to do in this direction, let your contributions be forthcoming."[\[39\]](#) When planning to put a new wing to their building, he called for assistance thus: "Increased accommodations, by the erection of new buildings, is absolutely demanded by the increase of scholars. This must come by direct contribution."[\[40\]](#) He influenced the General Conference to pass a "resolution fully commending and endorsing his efforts in this direction."[\[41\]](#)

All through the years, wherever he went, he was not only making these direct appeals, but was also making solicitations and directing the finances. In 1881, he wrote about securing nine hundred and seventy-five dollars in cash and receiving a deed for a house and lot worth about two thousand dollars from a man named Pattrick.[\[42\]](#) Probably his close friendship with the Chesbrough family through the years brought the bequest, in 1884, of thirty thousand dollars from A. M. Chesbrough. This amount was used to purchase a farm of two hundred acres, and seven thousand five hundred dollars were placed on bond and mortgage for income purposes. This was realized in 1885.[\[43\]](#)

After the fire of 1890 which destroyed the entire Seminary building, Mr. Roberts personally solicited a Mr. Cox for help in constructing another building. He wrote to his wife:

I want you to pray for Brother Cox that the Lord will lead him to put up a building for us at Chili. He talked more like doing it than I have ever heard him. He inquired the cost, and when I told him about ten thousand dollars, he said, 'That is not much.' He said he would pray over it.[\[44\]](#)

He then requested his wife to cut out of "The Builder" the picture of the Seminary and mail it to Mr. Cox.[\[45\]](#) Mr. Cox did contribute eight thousand dollars to the project, and Cox Hall was built in 1892. Roberts Hall, which was constructed in the same year, was probably due to the inspiration of that gift. Others who had means were solicited. That he carried personally the financial load through the years is evident from a statement made after his death, printed in the official organ of the church, which read:

Brother B. T. Roberts has always been in the habit of accepting, personally, financial responsibilities for the seminary, and carrying them. This relieved the Trustees of some responsibilities, which, otherwise, would have been theirs.[\[46\]](#)

He not only managed the finances of the Seminary, but even when Mr. Stilwell was made Principal in 1878, and his son, Benson, later, he continued to carry much of the administrative load. He secured teachers when necessary, and was responsible for getting Adella P. Carpenter, who lived to serve the school forty years, to consent to go to North Chili as a teacher. Her letter of acceptance, dated November 21, 1876, follows:

Dear Br. and Sr. Roberts:

I received your letter to-night, and also the word you sent me by Br. Pulis. I am at liberty to accept your offer, and shall be happy to do so.

Believing this to be in the order of the Lord, I shall be perfectly satisfied with whatever wages you may be able to give.

Yours in Jesus

ADELLA P. CARPENTER[\[47\]](#)

About the time his son, Benson, was ready to leave Hanover, he wrote to his father with reference to teaching some classes in the Seminary. He requested, "Would you be able and willing to give me one or two classes in the Seminary, Greek, Latin or History?" Then he continued, "I could by being at home save \$75.00 or \$100.00."[\[48\]](#) Mr. Roberts had been thinking of Benson for Principal, and at a later time, he was able to bring him into that position, which he retained for twenty-five years. This, of course, kept the responsibility in the family, and perhaps made it imperative for Mr. Roberts to carry a heavier load. Mrs. Roberts evidently wanted him to bear that responsibility, however, for she wrote, "I want you to be Head Man about the Seminary while we stay here, and give orders."[\[49\]](#) Mrs. Roberts bore considerable responsibility during the absence of her husband. He wrote to her about repairs, "You did right about the putty coat on the chapel. You always do right. The Lord gives you an excellent judgment and safe instincts."[\[50\]](#)

Mr. Roberts kept preaching at the Seminary at intervals from the time of its founding until the close of his life. In a diary kept by a young man named Bronson who was a student at the Seminary at that time, there is a record of Mr. Roberts' preaching, lecturing, and conducting Bible readings, twenty six times from January, 1890 until July of 1892.[\[51\]](#) He seemed always glad when his wife wrote him of spiritual results in the school during his frequent absences. To one letter he replied, "I see more and more that God is in that school, and I want to do more and more for it personally than I have thus far been able to do."[\[52\]](#) He desired that not only "thorough educational benefits" should be received by the students, but that "the pearl of great price" should be "picked up within its walls."[\[53\]](#)

The name of the school has been changed to Roberts Wesleyan College, in memory of the founder who was, for so many years, its greatest promoter.

[2. Spring Arbor Seminary, Spring Arbor, Michigan](#)

This Seminary, which was opened in May of 1873, began largely through the efforts of the Rev. E. P. Hart, who later became the second General Superintendent of the church. In the fall of 1870, Mr. Hart had presented the idea of starting a school in the Michigan area.^[54] Mr. Roberts presided at the Annual Conference which was held in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Spring Arbor in 1871. There in the village stood the unoccupied buildings of a seminary or college which had been started in the year 1844 under the name of Michigan Central College.^[55] So favorably impressed was Mr. Roberts that he urged the matter of establishing a school upon Mr. Hart. In November, 1872, Mr. Roberts referred in *The Earnest Christian* to the fact that the Michigan people were planning to establish a school, and that he was gratified to learn that there was "every prospect of success." He retained no active relation to it, but did go back in January of 1883 to dedicate a new brick building which had been erected.^[56] In 1928, college freshman classes were offered, and the following year, both first and second year college classes were given. Since that time, the school has been continuously in operation as Spring Arbor Junior College.

[3. Evansville Seminary](#)

In the fall of 1880, through the efforts of the Illinois Conference, Evansville Seminary was opened in charge of Professor J. E. Coleman. Charles Roberts heard about the project and wrote to his mother in a letter, "Did you receive the paper . . . sent you about the new Seminary father is going to plant *out west*?"^[57] Professor Coleman wrote to Mrs. Roberts and asked about taking over a school already in operation under different sponsorship. He said he had written to the Wisconsin preachers in vain, but the Trustees of the school were willing to turn it over to the Free Methodists,^[58] and he wanted to know how the Roberts would feel about it. Mr. Roberts had presided at their Conference the month before when a committee had been appointed to "locate a school, to secure buildings, and receive contributions," with the possibility of obtaining that school in mind.^[59] He was now requested by Mr. Coleman to grant his permission to go ahead, since the Free Methodists would do nothing there until it was given. Permission was evidently given, and the school was begun under the auspices of the Free Methodist Church. Mrs. Roberts accompanied her husband there in 1886 and ate Thanksgiving dinner at the school. Mrs. Lucy Sellew Coleman, wife of the Principal of the new school, wrote to Mrs. Roberts at a later date, "I have always thought that our glorious winter term last year came from yours, and Brother Roberts' visit Thanksgiving time. Keep on praying for us, and for the Spirit to rest on Emory [her husband.]"^[60] In 1885 Mr. Roberts was at the school when over a thousand dollars were raised to apply on the indebtedness of the school.^[61] While holding a Conference at Evansville in 1889, he wrote to his wife, "I have had a good horseback ride and it has done me good. I have stood the Conference better than the last. I had a touch of life yesterday . . . we raised \$900.00 for the Seminary Friday."^[62] The school remained open during the lifetime of Mr. Roberts, and for many years following his death but was finally closed

after an unsuccessful effort to establish it on a sounder financial basis.

4. Orleans Seminary

While Mr. Roberts presided at the Kansas and West Kansas Conferences in 1883, several actions were taken with reference to establishing a school in their respective areas.[\[63\]](#) At the West Kansas Conference, they specifically stated an interest in locating one at "Orleans, Nebraska, a pleasant village of Harlan County."[\[64\]](#) Mr. Roberts wrote home,

We have had a very excellent Camp Meeting and Conference. They got pledges for their school amounting to twenty-six hundred dollars. Orleans in the edge of Nebraska, is expected to give them ten acres of land and two thousand dollars They are very enthusiastic over it, Bro. Damon especially.[\[65\]](#)

This C. M. Damon will be remembered as the young bridegroom who stopped at the dedication of the Chili Seminary and parted with his watch, which Mrs. Roberts later returned to him.

In 1885, Mr. Roberts recounted the spirit of liberality which actuated those people whom he denominated as "very poor." "The people were poor," he stressed. "They were, many of them, living upon homesteads, in sod houses. Only about once in three or four years had they been able, on account of droughts, to secure good crops. But that year they had rain, and have had it every year since." He thought at that time the school was "meeting with decided success."[\[66\]](#)

In 1890, these "very poor" people found themselves involved in debt, and Mr. Roberts called attention to their condition in the columns of *The Free Methodist*.[\[67\]](#) At the General Conference of 1890, it was voted to continue the school, inasmuch as the community had rallied to its support by making it the high school of the community, and someone had promised an endowment of fifteen thousand dollars if the ten thousand dollar indebtedness could be paid.[\[68\]](#) The school was opened in 1884 and did good work for a number of years. Finally it merged with what is now Central Academy and College, McPherson, Kansas.[\[69\]](#)

5. Gerry Seminary, Gerry, New York

Gerry Seminary which was founded by Walter A. Sellew in 1884, continued for a period of only four years, and was turned into an orphanage.[\[70\]](#) Probably its proximity to the Chili Seminary, which Mr. Roberts was sponsoring, made it impossible to continue.

6. Seminary in Virginia

Another school, founded in Spottsylvania, Virginia, by Walter A. Sellew in 1886, continued but a few years. Mr. Roberts visited the region that same year and thought it was an "ideal site."[\[71\]](#) Mr. Alexander

Beers, at the urging of Mr. Roberts, assumed the management of it. Mrs. Beers had been a teacher in the Chili Seminary, and Mr. Beers was a graduate of the same school. In 1892 when Mr. Roberts stopped to visit them, he commented, "Brother and Sister Bittle and Brother Beers are doing a good work here. The school is prospering."[\[72\]](#) However, by the end of his second year, Mr. Beers realized that the work was "missionary in character," and that it "had not been attended with cyclones or hurricanes."[\[73\]](#) The year of the death of Mr. Roberts, the school also went out of existence without the aim of its founders being realized.[\[74\]](#)

[7. Wessington Springs Seminary, South Dakota](#)

Wessington Springs Seminary began classes in the year 1887 with the small enrollment of six, but by 1897 had risen to one hundred and twenty-six. The Reverends J. B. Freeland, J. K. Freeland, J. S. Phillips and G. C. Coffee were instrumental in its founding, and Professor J. K. Freeland was in charge for a number of years.[\[75\]](#) Mr. Roberts went there in 1891 to hold the Conference, and the Combined Minutes for that year record, "Brother Roberts expressed himself as highly pleased with the progress the school has made, and asserted that its establishment and the erection of such a fine building in the face of such general financial reverses through the country was a miracle."[\[76\]](#) On October 7 of that year, he wrote to his wife a letter in which he gave a short description of the school.[\[77\]](#) Wessington Springs Seminary, although it has had a hard financial struggle through the years, is still in operation, under the name of Wessington Springs College.

[8. Greenville College, Greenville, Illinois](#)

When B. T. Roberts was holding the Illinois Annual Conference session of 1866, it was recommended that a committee be appointed to secure "a tract of land with suitable buildings erected, or to be erected, for the establishment of a labor school, where the physical, intellectual and spiritual being of our youth may be harmoniously developed and cultivated."[\[78\]](#) The founding of the Chili Seminary that year probably deterred them from further action in their own area. Commenting on the success of Chili Seminary six years later, and on the steps being taken in Michigan for a school, the Committee on Education called for "the establishment of a school of like character" within the bounds of their Conference.[\[79\]](#) Mrs. Roberts wrote to her husband the latter part of the decade, while he was in Iowa, "I think Illinois is the place to start a school. It seems more probable than California. I think it will be a blessing to the work there".[\[80\]](#)

In 1879, the men of the Conference having done nothing about the proposal, offered a long resolution coming to the conclusion that it was time to begin the institution One of these resolutions, coming at the close read

Resolved: That since the Senior General Superintendent Rev. B. T. Roberts, A M has been successful in establishing a school at North Chili N Y and having confidence in his judgement and ability to manage such an enterprise, we affectionately urge him to accept

the invitation already extended to him, at this and a previous session of the Illinois Annual Conference, to take up his residence within its bounds. and that to him be committed the general management of the school enterprise.[\[81\]](#)

Finally, a six thousand dollar gift from the sale of a farm was offered to F. H. Ashcraft by a Mr. and Mrs. Grice, members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the founding of a school.[\[82\]](#) At the urgent recommendation of Mr. Roberts, the offer was accepted. The Board of Trustees, elected for the proposed school, agreed to pay a stipulated annuity to Mr. and Mrs. Grice. The Trustees then proceeded to buy for twelve thousand two hundred dollars in cash an old Baptist school, called Almira College, located at Greenville, Illinois. Mr. Roberts, already carrying heavy responsibilities, could not accept the proposal of the Illinois Conference that he take over the management of the new school, but he knew the man he felt was able to do the job. Sitting in his study in Buffalo, New York, Wilson T. Hogue saw his wife enter with a telegram in her hand. Opening it, they read, "Will you accept the presidency of Greenville College? Bishop Roberts recommended you. If you can or cannot accept come at once for counsel." And so Mr. Roberts had his place of influence in the choice of the first president of Greenville College, and in the organization of the first school in the new church to attain college rank.

[9. Seattle Seminary, Seattle, Washington](#)

In June of 1891, Mr. Roberts presided at the session of the Washington-Oregon Conference.[\[83\]](#) Nils B. Peterson had donated a five acre tract of land to the Conference for the purpose of erecting a church school, with the understanding that the school should be missionary in character.[\[84\]](#) On June 19th, Mr. and Mrs. Roberts went out to Ross, a suburb of Seattle where Mr. Peterson lived, and selected the site upon which the school building was afterwards built.[\[85\]](#) Mr. and Mrs. Roberts were entertained at that time in the home of H. H. Pease, a man who later contributed so heavily to the school that he almost lost his home.

Mr. Roberts wrote concerning it, "Brother Nils B. Peterson offered a lot of five acres valued at \$8000.00 for a site for the school. Brother H. H. Pease subscribed \$2500.00 in money. Many other smaller subscriptions were made."[\[86\]](#)

On October 29th of that year, the ground was broken for the first building, and by March first when Mr. Alexander Beers arrived to take charge of the new school, the building stood complete.[\[87\]](#) There was evidently plenty of work to be done yet, for the Conference passed a resolution that "the work of constructing Seattle Seminary should be completed in time for the opening of school in September."[\[88\]](#) Thus began the school which today is the largest in the denomination, called Seattle Pacific College.

[10. School Summary](#)

By 1890, Mr. Roberts saw that though these schools were doing a good work, yet they were multiplying so rapidly as to endanger "each other's existence." He pointed out that a school located in one Conference

would be entirely adequate for the students from four or five adjacent Conference areas. If these areas, instead of trying to start a school of their own, would promote the one already established, it could become a "first class" school. But, he said, because of the unwillingness of some in one Conference to patronize a school in another's territory, they would by "herculean efforts get another school building under way" and so contract debts, meet the running expenses with difficulty, and so jeopardize the existence of two or three schools. He thought by the multiplication of unnecessary agencies there was not only a great waste of money, but also of talent, since a good teacher could, and would rather teach a class of thirty than three. He said he hoped the "godly ministers and members" would listen to what he had to say. Then he questioned, "Shall we continue this reckless waste of men and means? Can we do this and be clear in the sight of Heaven?" He enforced the whole by stating, "Let us have *no more schools started* till those we have are either paid for and well sustained or abandoned."[\[89\]](#) The General Conference followed his lead in the fall of 1890 by passing a resolution which he introduced that "no new enterprise of the rank of Academy or Seminary shall be started without the consent of the Executive Committee."[\[90\]](#)

Thus, before his death, the originator and promoter of schools, became also their regulator.

C. WRITINGS, 1870-1893

1. The Earnest Christian

(a) *Publication.* By 1870, Mr. Roberts had been editing and publishing *The Earnest Christian* for ten years. He first began its publication while he was living in Buffalo immediately following his expulsion from the Methodist Episcopal Church. Later, when he moved to Rochester, New York, he changed the place of publication for *The Earnest Christian* also. The operation of his own printing establishment was not without its troubles. In 1877, Mrs. Roberts wrote her husband, "George is having his usual troubles with the press. Let us get done with the world, and only do the one work to which you are called."[\[91\]](#) In 1879, they moved the printing establishment to larger quarters, because of a threatened raise in rent where they were then located. In the new location on Exchange Street, they had a room twenty-five by forty feet with fifteen windows, light on three sides, for two hundred dollars per year; all the rent was to be paid by printing at regular prices. The new location on Exchange Street was made more attractive by the fact that their landlord was to be George Stratton and Company, Paper and Stationery Dealers, and that the business they would give to *The Earnest Christian* Office would probably net several hundred dollars above the rent.[\[92\]](#) Because of pressing debts in 1880, Mr. Roberts thought of selling the office for thirty-five hundred dollars in order to build a new home,[\[93\]](#) but this was not done. In 1882, Mr. Roberts made the generous offer to donate the whole of his printing equipment to the church he founded, to help them establish a Publishing House, provided they would raise an equivalent amount to "provide it with a home."[\[94\]](#) The General Conference, by resolution, thanked him for his "generous" offer, but refused it because they did not feel that they were in a position to begin the publishing interests of the church at that time, and probably felt it would be difficult to raise an amount of money commensurate with the value of the equipment which would have been donated.

In 1883, Mr. Roberts "bought the Hudson place" at North Chili, New York, and also an old wagon shop in which some seminary students lived after it was fixed over.^[95] This old wagon shop, alias dormitory, was purchased from a Mr. Haight for about four hundred dollars, and moved on rollers drawn by horses up the old Buffalo Road a short distance to the property of Mr. Roberts. Mr. Roberts then equipped it with a Cambell-County press, Size 23 ½ by 38 inches, which cost approximately twelve thousand dollars. Two other small job presses, the one size 14 by 22, and the other 7 by 11, both Colt Armory, were installed.^[96] The money to buy these presses evidently came from the sale of his farm for fifteen thousand dollars.^[97] The ground floor of the newly purchased building was used as the press room and was heated by the steam from the boiler that ran the presses. The second floor was used as the composing and mailing room.^[98] Here not only *The Earnest Christian*, but the books which Mr. Roberts wrote, and the hymn books and Disciplines of the Free Methodist Church were published.

The letter which Mr. Roberts wrote, addressed to the Honorable Frank Hatton, First Assistant Postmaster General, requesting permission to mail *The Earnest Christian and Golden Rule* at the North Chili Post Office, and yet continue the nominal place of publication at Rochester, ten miles distant, is to be found among his personal papers. This permission could not be granted because it was contrary to the rulings of the Department except where the mailing facilities would be better.^[99] From then on, in order to be permitted to mail his magazine from North Chili, it was necessary for him to change the listing of place of publication from Rochester to North Chili.

It was a busy little office, and kept up considerable activity there at all times. In 1884, Mrs. Roberts wrote to her husband, "Ellen is at the office. E. Warner is stitching. Men are printing covers to *The Earnest Christian*. All is quiet and pleasant at Office."^[100]

(b) *Writing for The Earnest Christian.* *The Earnest Christian* was, in its average sized, yearly bound copy, a book of three hundred and ninety pages, double column. It is not difficult to see that Mr. Roberts spent most of his available time in writing, especially in view of the fact that during the early years, he had written copy for from one-third to one-half of the magazine him-self, while preaching every day, and sometimes more than once.^[101] Contributors took some of the burden from his shoulders as the years went by, but still he wrote much matter even then. In 1880, he noted that he had a quiet day, and rested well, and had written an article for *The Earnest Christian*^[102] It was not always that easy. While waiting a long period in St. Joseph, Mrs. Roberts wrote that Mr. Roberts had improved "every moment . . . in writing."^[103] He not only wrote much, but also read the proof. In 1872, he asked his wife to "bring all the proof of the September number that I have not read." Then he added, "I wish George and Mr. Smith could read the proof, but I fear mistakes."^[104] Later, Mrs. Roberts sometimes helped on that job. In 1886, she wrote, "I have been reading proof, attending to a few letters and sewing some. We take breakfast about half past seven, bread and milk at twelve o'clock, and have dinner and supper at five o'clock. It goes well, gives us more time for work and better appetites when we do eat."^[105] Mrs. Roberts had learned that she too must economize her time in order to be the helpmeet her husband needed.

(c) *Financing The Earnest Christian*. There were occasionally some hard times around *The Earnest Christian* Office. In 1884, the year after the purchase of the new presses, Mrs. Roberts wrote her husband that she did not "have . . . enough to pay office hands." Then she added:

Since you told me in Canada you got discouraged over your finances, I have been more annoyed than in a long time But I do not know where to make them less or how, only as I try to economize in our living. Yet I do not know how to do that unless I adopt the Canada style or Texas style. You will have to tell me where to begin.[\[106\]](#)

Perhaps there were too many subscribers like the woman who wrote to Mrs. Roberts that she would take several copies of *The Earnest Christian* for her friends so she would get the extra copy free, and then promised, "When Jesus puts the five dollars in my hand, I will forward to you."[\[107\]](#) Or perhaps there were too many like the lady that questioned, "Did you get the black tea that I sent you last? If you did, you may give me credit for *The Earnest Christian* next year, and I will pay for the rest of it."[\[108\]](#) Or it could have been that too many postponed payment for their account like the farmer who owed two dollars and seventy cents, and after twenty years paid up and included some interest. His wife wrote, "Many times when we were working hard to pay out the indebtedness on our home, has he said to me, 'If I do not get to pay Sister Roberts for the Earnest C. before I die, I want you to see that it is paid.' "[\[109\]](#) These were no doubt the amusing exceptions, and it is most probable that there was considerable income from the publication of the magazine, since its publication extended over a period of thirty-three years.

(d) *Character of The Earnest Christian*. The Committee on Publications of the General Conference of 1886 reported that they regarded this magazine as "one of the most able, thorough and progressive magazines published in the interests of Scriptural holiness."[\[110\]](#)

In reviewing its character in 1888, Mr. Roberts stated that when he first began its publication he had declared the wish to "minister to the spiritual needs of those who were in earnest to gain heaven"; that he wanted to insist upon a conversion that would make a man "willingly part with his sins, that would make the proud humble, the church liberal, the selfish generous, the slave-holder anxious to break every bond and let the oppressed go free"; that would change "the rumseller into an industrious and useful citizen," and that would transform the "dishonest and unjust into the righteous and upright"; further, to advocate "the doctrine of Christian holiness," sponsor the "claims of the neglected poor, urge the necessity of churches with free seats, and espouse plainness of dress." As he looked back over the twenty-eight years of publication he had "the blessed assurance" that the magazine had "held to its work."[\[111\]](#)

Mr. Roberts received a letter from a school teacher who stated that *The Earnest Christian* had been a great blessing to her, and that for over twenty years she had been a reader of "this best of magazines." The teachers in the school where she taught subscribed to various magazines and exchanged with one another. She said that she had examined "most of the religious publications of the American press," and was a subscriber to three of the largest publications of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Her conclusion was that for what the publication professed to be, "a magazine for the diffusion of Bible religion," *The Earnest Christian* was "beyond all question" so far as she knew, "the best, religious magazine in America."[\[112\]](#)

(e) *Influence of The Earnest Christian*. The influence of *The Earnest Christian* went out to all religious groups because it was not published on a denominational basis. Mr. Roberts affirmed that it had been made a blessing "all over the land" to many, and continued:

With a pure gospel it went to the wilds of the West before the days of the transcontinental railways; in the cabins of Oregon, in the dug-outs of Kansas, in the isles of the Pacific, in the busy streets of New York London and Edinburg.

It had helped, he claimed, to "keep alive the flame of love to God and man."[\[113\]](#)

Rev. E. P. Hart wrote from Salem, Oregon in 1886, that they were being entertained in the home of Father Schwatka, an "old Baltimore Methodist," father of Frederick Schwatka, an arctic explorer of "world wide fame" who was then in Alaska on an expedition. Father Schwatka had first seen *The Earnest Christian* twenty years before, and had become so interested he had taken it ever since. The Bible and *The Earnest Christian* had become his textbooks and daily comfort. Mr. Schwatka had derived "such light and food" from the magazine that his desire to see the editor amounted "almost to a passion." He said that Mr. Roberts had been preaching to him all through the years. Mr. Hart wrote that he had found evidences of the good being done by this "invaluable magazine" all over the land. He estimated that the magazine did the work of "a multitude of preachers."[\[114\]](#)

Mr. Roberts, in 1890, had an unusual experience resulting from the effect of *The Earnest Christian* upon a Presbyterian. One place where he got off the train, a man who was a stranger to him, met him and took him to his home to be entertained over night, and the next day drove him eight miles to his camp meeting. As he was leaving Mr. Roberts, he told him that he could not stay through the day, but if he would tell him the time when the meeting closed, he would send for him. Mr. Roberts said, "I do not understand all this kindness from a perfect stranger." The man replied, "Mr. Roberts, I consider myself under greater obligation to you than to any man I know." Then he told Mr. Roberts that both he and his father were elders in the Presbyterian Church, but said that it had been "almost impossible" to live with his father. His sister sent a copy of *The Earnest Christian* to his father, "and since he has read that," he asserted, "he has been pleasant and kind to all." He thought the change in his father was greater than generally took place in a man at conversion. Also, he had a sister who was a member of the Presbyterian Church In Mobile, Alabama. When she received *The Earnest Christian* and read the view of Mr. Roberts on women speaking in church, it had so changed her attitude that she would "give testimony in social meetings." Then the man remarked, "You are doing a great deal more through your influence on other denominations than in your own."[\[115\]](#) Mr. Roberts commented on this statement. He said that when he began publishing his paper, there was hardly a church that had free seats. One day he noticed an appeal in a New England paper for a free church in Boston. He read it over and found that "nearly every word of it was from *The Earnest Christian*."[\[116\]](#)

[2. Books](#)

(a) *Fishers of Men*, 1878.

(1) *Circumstances of Writing*. As early as 1872, an action of the Michigan Conference was recorded, in which a request was made, by unanimous vote, that B. T. Roberts publish a book composed of "articles selected from the editorial department of *The Earnest Christian*." [117] Prior to 1877, Mr. Roberts had been requested to occupy the last fifteen minutes of each sitting of the Annual Conference with an address to preachers on some phase of their work as ministers. Some of these talks were reported and were thought "most useful." Mr. J. G. Terrill said that the views of Mr. Roberts so closely paralleled his own that some thought that he had talked with Mr. Roberts before his addresses were made. Later conversing on the subject while on their way from Conference at South Elgin in October, 1877, Mr. Terrill suggested to Mr. Roberts that he put these addresses into permanent form, and have them in the Course of Study for the preachers. Mr. Terrill said, "He instantly drew from his pocket a block of paper, and before the train had reached Chicago, a distance of thirty-five miles, the titles had been written and the arrangement made." Later in the season, Mr. Roberts went to California, and while in a series of meetings, he developed the various chapters. The following June, Mr. Terrill saw Mr. Roberts at the St. Charles Camp Meeting where he read the manuscript, and but two chapters had been added to the original plan. [118] Not all the work, however, was done in California. Mr. Roberts wrote to his son, George, in July of 1878, "I am working early and late on my book. We have it nearly done. Two forms yet to set up. I have nearly one of them written. I hope that we shall be able to get it out in good shape the first of September." [119] A letter dated the next day, written by Mrs. Roberts, read, "Your father is home now and working incessantly on the Book which he wants to . . . finish by the first of September, by the time the Conferences commence. There are about two chapters more to write and your Father begins one of these this hot afternoon." [120]

(2) *Purpose of the Book*. Mr. Roberts had in mind stirring up every Christian to the work of "soul saving," to a "more lively appreciation of their duties," and to furnish them with "strong incentives to their performance." Also, he thought that inasmuch as in this country among all the denominations, the people had more or less influence in selecting their ministers, they should be furnished with some guide as to what they should expect from a minister. He thought his book would assist them "in coming to a just decision" in that "important matter." He placed first the thought that God called men of different degrees of talent and culture to preach his gospel. The book was designed to encourage all to believe that they could be successful. He believed this treatise would "help them in their great work." [121] The father-in-law of Dr. B. L. Olmstead, who lived in the home of B. T. Roberts for some time, said that he had heard Mr. Roberts say in substance, "The Lord helped me in writing that book, and I am confident that it will help you." [122] In the Preface of Mr. Roberts, he declared it was "written from a deep conviction of duty, and with an abiding sense of the presence and help of God." [123]

(3) *Content*. Most of the material was "written expressly for it." However, when treating of a particular subject, he would occasionally find what he wished to say in articles he had already written for *The Earnest Christian*, and these were transferred with suitable alterations to the pages of *Fishers of Men*. [124]

(4) *Estimates of the Book*. The book ran through three editions during the lifetime of Mr. Roberts. When the second edition was published, a sheet carried the expressions of opinion of those who reviewed the book. Dr. Cullis, Editor of *Times of Refreshing* headed the list, followed by statements from *The Christian Voice*, *The Church Advocate*, *Buffalo Express*, *the Evangelical Messenger*, J. P. Blanchard, Editor of *The Christian Cynosure*, *Christian Standard and Home Journal*, *Rochester Union and Advertiser*, *American Wesleyan*, and *The Free Methodist*. The *Buffalo Express* noted that it could be "read with profit by everybody, regardless of creed. or lack of creed." Mr. Blanchard thought it was "exceedingly able and instructive . . . and generally, judicious and sound." He considered it worth "many times its price" of one dollar. *The Rochester Union and Advertiser* opined that "the entire collection" merited "earnest praise for purity of purpose and effectiveness in style, and the volume should find a place in every library."[\[125\]](#) The fact that the book went through three editions during the lifetime of Mr. Roberts and has been republished in 1930 and 1948 is a comment in itself.[\[126\]](#)

Dr. B. L. Olmstead believed his comments on "Success a Duty" were rather extreme, feeling that Mr. Roberts did not take into account the difficult circumstances under which a person may work.[\[127\]](#) When Mr. Roberts was in California in 1880, he addressed a meeting of Methodist ministers in San Francisco, and his statement to them was a recognition that one does not have equal success in every circumstance. He said there, "I am surprised, brethren, that you have accomplished as much as you have. It is the hardest rock I ever drilled in."[\[128\]](#)

In 1890, the following quotation from the Bombay, India, *Guardian* appeared in *The Free Methodist*:

While Rev. Arthur W. Prautch was on furlough in America recently, he met with two books which greatly impressed him, viz.: 'Fishers of Men' by Rev. B. T. Roberts; and 'Faith Papers,' by Rev. S. A. Keen. He purchased one hundred copies of each with a view to giving them to his constituency in India, and is now offering them at cost price. The choice of these works does credit to Mr. Prautch's judgment. They're invigorating reading, and their circulation will undoubtedly do much good in this country. As the number at present is limited, purchasers should well lend their copies.[\[129\]](#)

In the General Conference of 1890, attention was directed to the fact that the Rev. W. J. Gladwin, editor of the *Oriental Evangelist*, was translating *Fishers of Men* into the Marathi language. A resolution was passed recommending that the Free Methodist people contribute to a fund then being raised to assist in the translation.[\[130\]](#) Perhaps not all were as greatly enthused as the man in Iowa, about whom Mr. Phillip Hanna wrote, who had "bought three copies to send out, one in the name of the Father, one in the name of the Son, and one in the name of the Holy Ghost."[\[131\]](#)

(b) *Why Another Sect, 1879*.

(1) *Occasion of It*. When Bishop Matthew Simpson of the Methodist Episcopal Church published his work, *The Cyclopedia of Methodism*, he included an article on the Free Methodist Church. Those in the Free Methodist Church who read the article felt that it did not represent the truth in the matter. When the

General Conference of 1878 met, the Committee on Publications reported as follows:

Your committee, having read the article in Bishop Simpson's Encyclopedia of Methodism on the Free Methodists, and believing that it does us as a body great injustice: We hereby recommend that Brother B. T. Roberts be requested to write and publish a full refutation of the untrue statements and misrepresentations contained in that article.[\[132\]](#)

On motion, the report was adopted.

(2) *Method of Treatment*. Mr. Roberts began the book which was ordered by the General Conference, with a discussion of the article in *The Cyclopedia of Methodism*. He did not charge the Bishop with "wilfully misrepresenting a single fact." Before the date of the General Conference, Mr. Roberts, on reading the article, had written Bishop Simpson in which he called attention to the assertion in the preface of his work that his aim was to "give a fair, and impartial view of every branch of the Methodist family," and his assertion that "contributors and correspondents had been selected . . . who were identified with the several branches . . . who by their position, were best qualified to furnish information as to their respective bodies."[\[133\]](#) Mr. Roberts informed him that "no such selection had been made from the Free Methodist group," or the information which was furnished, with the exception of the bare statistics, "was not given to the public in that article." He asked, "In either case what becomes of the claim of fairness?" Mr. Roberts told Bishop Simpson that some "fifteen statements or re-statements" were "utterly untrue" and some five or six statements, which though true in a sense, but misleading from the manner in which they were made, were contained in that one article. Mr. Roberts asked Bishop Simpson if he were furnished with proof satisfactory to candid minds that the statements referred to were untrue and misleading, if he would correct them in the church periodicals, and in future editions of the book.[\[134\]](#)

Bishop Simpson replied that he had returned from a long trip to find the letter of Mr. Roberts, "complaining of inaccuracies" but "without specifying what those inaccuracies are." He contended that he was "not aware of any incorrect statements in the article," and that if Mr. Roberts would furnish him with the corrections, he would "gladly make any alterations in a future edition." He concluded, "I desire to have perfect accuracy in every article, and it will give me as much pleasure to correct, as it can you to furnish the corrections."[\[135\]](#) Although the book went through several editions, the changes made only added insult to injury, according to Mr. Roberts. In 1881, Mr. Roberts was elected a delegate to attend the Ecumenical Council or Conference of Methodism which met in London in September of that year. Mr. Roberts did not go, giving as one of his reasons the fact that Bishop Simpson, its most important leader, who was to be there, had never retracted the statements objectionable to Mr. Roberts and the church he had helped to organize.

The book, *Why Another Sect*, contained a full discussion of the background of the entire trouble in the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Church, which led up to the formation of the Free Methodist Church.

(3) *Reactions*. At the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church in 1882, the Committee on

Publications congratulated Mr. Roberts "on the success of his reply to the article of Bishop Simpson, which article appeared in the first and second issues of the *Cyclopedia of Methodism*." They "heartily" recommended the circulation of the book in the denomination. They also requested Mr. Roberts, as soon as possible, to arrange for issuing a cheaper edition.[\[136\]](#) The Committee on Revision of the Course of Study included this book in the Course of Study for preachers.[\[137\]](#)

When the Rev. Joseph McCreery, who was expelled from the Methodist Church the same year Mr. Roberts was expelled, read the new book, he wrote a lengthy epistle of twelve closely written pages giving his reactions, and furnishing some material which he wished Mr. Roberts to have. One interesting bit of information had to do with the name "Nazarites," which had been given, as was commonly thought, as a term of stigma. He wrote:

As to the name Nazarite I think no one now living but myself knows how it came to be given to the Genesee pilgrims. it was on this wise; at one of the Canton Camp Meetings, I think it was the first, I am not sure, Father Coleman, George Estes and myself were in one of the Lyndonville tents talking about the several names that the pilgrims were being called by in several localities. Father Coleman said they were called 'Redfieldites' in the West and by the N. Western Advocate of Chicago. At Albion they were called Kendallites; at Brockport and around they were called Robertsites, and at Lyndonville they (especially br. Chamberlyn) called them McCreeryites. Father Coleman remarked that the enemy would soon conjure up some ridiculous name and fasten it on the pilgrims as a reproach; that in England the Primitive Methodists were called Ranters to this day by their enemies; that Dr Bond then Editor of Christian A and Journal of N. York persisted for years in calling the Wesleyans Scottites, to convey the stigma that they were mere man followers instead of being led by anti slavery principles I then said, that as we must be called some kind of it I propose we take our choice as to what kind of it it shall be 'Your enemies will see to that' said Father Coleman 'You will have to wear the badge they see fit to put upon you 'I'll have a voice in that matter' said I 'They shall give us the name I choose. I'll spread the plaster and they shall stick it on!' It was finally concluded that the name Nazarites was expressive of our ascetic style, and also of our relation to the M. E. Church, being to all intents and purposes a religious order within the church. Thus the name was agreed upon by us three After this, Bro. Kendall and I made out a list of hymns, tunes, books and tracts the hymns and tunes to help in restoring congregational singing which had fallen into complete disuse throughout the land and the Books and Tracts, for one purpose to show that we seconded the pure Methodist works of the fathers I headed the selection 'Nazarite Selection' which Bro. Kendall got printed. I sent several copies to Bro. Hornsby with instructions to leave one incidentally at the headquarters of the Regency, which he did; and the next issue of the Buffalo Advocate gave us the name of Nazarites. That's how the name came to be applied. I used the word as 'the so called' Nazarites.[\[138\]](#)

Many of the people, feeling the name was a term of reproach applied by the so called Regency, thought the name should be repudiated. Thus it may be seen that Mr. McCreery coined the name which was not meant to be a stigma, but which became so.

(c) *Hymn Books, 1879 and 1883.* In 1879, Mr. Roberts compiled a hymn book entitled *Spiritual Songs and Hymns for Pilgrims*. This book of two thousand and twenty-eight hymns grew out of the discussion at the General Conference of 1878 which arose from the report of a committee that the time had not yet fully come for the publication of a hymnal.[\[139\]](#) However, a substitute carried to have a committee of fifteen prepare a hymn book of no less than six hundred hymns.[\[140\]](#) Mr. Roberts was nominated chairman of the committee and asked to publish the same. Though some work was done by the committee during the quadrennium, the book was not published. Mr. Roberts then issued this book, *Spiritual Songs and Hymns for Pilgrims*, of his own compilation.

In 1882, the General Conference again ordered that a new hymn book be compiled, modeled after the Methodist Episcopal Hymn Book of 1849, and the Old Wesleyan Hymn Book of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of England, and that the new committee meet "often enough" and "long enough" to accomplish properly their work.[\[141\]](#) Mr. Roberts was authorized to publish the new hymn book.

Of that book he later wrote, "The Hymn Book is an almost steady burden on my mind." Concerning it, he instructed:

There is an index prepared by Brother Gould. The pages will need to be corrected. I wish you would have Clara make up a book as far as it is printed and from it correct the index. She can sew on that part of the book which I left on my table.[\[142\]](#)

The Rev. William Gould prepared the copy with much labor. The book, entitled *Hymn Book of the Free Methodist Church*, satisfied the members of the ensuing General Conference, according to their action, in which it was noted that the hymnal had been published in two editions and sizes with an "excellent" selection and arrangement of hymns. There seemed to be only two causes for dissatisfaction, expressed in the following words., "We would suggest, however, that in future issues greater care be exercised for the avoidance of typographical errors and that they be more substantially bound."[\[143\]](#) The enforced absences of Mr. Roberts were probably too long for him to exercise as close supervision as was necessary in such a work.

(d) *First Lessons on Money, 1886.*

(1) *Purpose.* Mr. Roberts, in the preface to his book, asserted that his brochure on this subject began when silver had been demonetized, and that he had hoped that it would be unnecessary to write upon the subject. However, he had come to the conclusion that the money question would not be settled until "THE PEOPLE" settled it. For the preceding twenty-five years he had mingled with "common people from New England to California, and from Dakota to Texas" and had "witnessed the distress which the bad management of our finances by our National Government had produced," as well as the injury that had been done by the same cause to "religious and benevolent enterprises." Hence, he presented his views for their solution believing that they were "in advance of the times."[\[144\]](#)

(2) *Contents.* Mr. Roberts pointed out that the money question was comprehensible to the common man and in the first five chapters he discussed "Gold and Silver," and "Paper Money"; also "Banks" the amount of money that was needed, elastic currency, and the distribution of money, concluding with a chapter on "How to Make Money." The last chapter does not seem out of place when his own financial record is examined. Among the personal papers of the Roberts family is to be found reference to a property Mr. Roberts sold for fifteen thousand dollars in 1881, and another in Chicago in 1887 for eighteen thousand dollars.[\[145\]](#)

The conclusions of the treatise he gives in short as follows:

1. Every citizen needs to be informed about money.
2. All money is constituted so by the law of the land.
3. Both gold and silver should be used in the coinage of money.
4. All paper money should be issued by the National Government.
5. There should be an ample supply of money to meet the needs of the people.
6. Our laws should make it difficult for one man to amass a vast fortune and keep it in his family from generation to generation. The property of the country should be held by the people at large.
7. The people should see to it that their representatives in Congress pass laws in their interest, and not in favor of the moneyed class and rich corporations to the injury of the community generally.

He closed with the quotation: "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."[\[146\]](#)

(3) *Evaluation.* Benson Roberts stated that the book had "a rapid sale and was read widely, especially in the West where the financial distress was felt the most keenly."[\[147\]](#)

(e) *Ordaining Women, 1891.*

(1) *Purpose.* The beliefs of Mr. Roberts with reference to the ordination of women, which he advocated throughout his ministry, are found within the compass of this book. Perhaps the immediate circumstances which stimulated him to write it was the action of the General Conference of 1890. A vote for the ordination of women was referred to the several Annual Conferences for approval. Mr. Roberts believed that this question should be decided by a majority at the seat of the General Conference. On October 11, 1890, Mr. Roberts presented the following resolution:

Resolved, that the gospel of Jesus Christ, in the provisions which it makes, and in the agencies which it employs for the salvation of mankind, knows no distinction of nationality, condition or sex: Therefore, no person who is called of God, and who is duly qualified, should be refused ordination on account of sex, or race or condition.[\[148\]](#)

The final action that was passed was to ordain women, providing the several Annual Conferences approved the same, which deferred final action until the next General Conference. Mr. Roberts wished to

have a most thorough presentation of the issues involved, believing that the truth would prevail.[\[149\]](#)

He had no fears that woman suffrage would adversely affect the affairs of the nation, and he quoted United States Senator Carey as saying, "Their influence was exercised always on the side of good government and for the selection of the best men for office."[\[150\]](#)

(2) *Conclusions.* After arguing the subject, Mr. Roberts came to the following conclusions:

1. Men and women were created equal, each possessing the same rights and privileges as the other.
2. At the fall, woman, because she was the first in transgression, was made subject to her husband as a punishment.
3. Christ re-enacted the primitive law and restored the original relation of equality of the sexes. The objections to the equality of man and woman in the Christian Church, based upon the Bible, rest upon a wrong translation of some passages and a misinterpretation of others.
4. The objections drawn from woman's nature are fully overthrown by undisputed facts.
5. In the New Testament Church, woman, as well as man filled the office of Apostle, Prophet, Deacon or preacher, and Pastor. There is not the slightest evidence that the functions of any of these offices, when filled by a woman, were different from what they were when filled by a man.
6. Women took a part in governing the Apostolic Church.[\[151\]](#)

His final conclusion was:

The Gospel of Jesus Christ. in the provisions which it makes, and in the agencies which it employs, for the salvation of mankind, knows no distinction of race, condition, or sex; therefore, no person evidently called of God to the Gospel ministry, and fully qualified for it, should be refused ordination on account of race, condition, or sex.[\[152\]](#)

The attitude of Mr. Roberts toward women doubtless grew partly out of his regard for his wife, to whom he dedicated this book. His feeling in the matter is emphasized by an incident in connection with the nomination of Garfield for the presidency. He said:

When Garfield was, unexpectedly to himself, nominated for the presidency, the first thing he said was, 'Telegraph this to my wife. She ought to know it.' When I read that, I said, 'If I vote, I shall vote for Garfield. A man that under such circumstances, thinks of his wife first, must be a good man.' The man that loves his wife above all other women, and is always faithful and kind to her, will be better to all mankind than one who looks upon all women alike. His devotion to one affords a strong presumption in favor of his loyalty to all.[\[153\]](#)

(3) *Reactions.* A pamphlet was published by A. H. Spring-stein in which he endeavored to meet what he thought was the basic fallacy of Mr. Roberts, by proving that woman was still, since the fall, subject to man. One can discover the "strength" of his arguments from his statement, "In the preface [of Mr. Roberts' book] , he tells us that woman suffrage in Wyoming has proved satisfactory. Does not the

wisdom which is from beneath always prove satisfactory to the children of men?"[\[154\]](#)

B. H. Roberts stated that "one of the noted Baptist divines, president of a theological seminary in high repute, himself the author of one of the ablest treatises on theology of this quarter of the century said, 'I read the book with great care and confess my views of the subject were materially modified by its arguments.'[\[155\]](#)

The Free Methodist Church has admitted women to ordination as deacons and given them a voice and vote in the church, but has not gone the full mile which Mr. Roberts advocated in granting ordination as an elder, and so the full right to rule. Women in general, however, have come into a realm of more generally recognized equality since he wrote in 1891.

One of the last, if not the last decision that Mr. Roberts made was in favor of granting Maggie Cook a local preacher's license, an appeal that had arisen from a refusal of the fourth Quarterly Conference of the Macksville District, West Kansas Conference, to renew the license of the said lady. Being asked, while presiding at the Annual Conference, if the decision of the Quarterly Conference were correct, Mr. Roberts ruled that "sex in itself is not, according to our Discipline and usages, a sufficient reason for withholding a local preacher's license." He then added as his grounds., that from an early period of our denomination, women had, from time to time and in different conferences, been licensed as local preachers. He argued that since there had been no change in the Discipline unfavorable to such license since then, that it was a violation of our Discipline to refuse to renew the license of the person in question, solely because she was a woman.[\[156\]](#)

The Committee on General Superintendency of the next General Conference the year following the death of Mr. Roberts, disapproved of this ruling, and Mr. Roberts, not being present to defend the issue, it was lost by a vote of forty-five to twenty-six.[\[157\]](#)

(f) *Holiness Teachings*, 1893. This book is a compilation of the articles and editorials of B. T. Roberts on the subject of holiness, found in *The Earnest Christian* from 1860 to 1893. It was published by Benson H. Roberts following the death of his father, to meet a demand for a collection of the editorial writings of his father. Comparing this book with those written by Mr. Roberts, there is little doubt that it would have been better organized if it could have had the attention of the author.

(g) *Pungent Truths*, 1912. *Pungent Truths* is a compilation of the editorial writings of B. T. Roberts while he was editor of *The Free Methodist*, the denominational organ, from 1886 to 1890. It was compiled and edited by William B. Rose, who selected six hundred and forty-one editorials and arranged them alphabetically from "Accurate Statement, Importance of" to "Zeal, Properly Balanced." The compiler supplied most of the titles. Mr. Rose said that he found "the scope of these editorials exceeding broad" and was "surprised . . . to find . . ." that although the author had written upon a number of the same subjects during the period of four years, "yet each writing presented some phase of the subject not treated elsewhere."[\[158\]](#)

3. The Free Methodist Paper

(a) *Early Status of the Paper.* At the General Conference of 1870, Mr. Levi Wood, the editor, because of his lack of success in the financial management of *The Free Methodist*, offered it for sale to the General Conference.^[159] His offer was accepted, and the Rev. Epenetus Owen was elected editor, but resigned the following day.^[160] In this dilemma, Mr. Joseph Mackey of New York, a U. S. Economist and Dry Goods Reporter, offered to assume the debt upon it and publish it for the church.^[161] This generous offer was accepted. Mr. Roberts ran a notification in *The Earnest Christian* that the paper would be published from 88 White Street in New York.

A communication sent to Mr. Roberts the next year indicated that Mr. Mackey was having to put "most if not all of his time" into the work, and that it was "harder to run than all his other publications." Also material was not forthcoming to make it a live paper and he was having to fill it with articles from *The Earnest Christian*.^[162] The following month, Mr. Mackey wrote to Mr. Roberts, stating that the paper was costing him six hundred dollars per month to publish, and only sixty dollars had been received. He wondered whether the Lord required him to spend that much money, especially in view of the fact that he did not have time to edit it himself. He told Mr. Roberts he thought there was "none save yourself" who was capable of running it. He said he thought the paper needed a "big editor," a "strong man with means and brains," one who could "pitch into every thing and everybody."^[163] His difficult experience had led him to the conclusion that Levi Wood had made a mistake in starting the paper. The last issue Mr. Mackey published was dated December 7, 1871.^[164] Mr. Lewis Bailey bought and published the paper for two years until his death.^[165] Following that, the Rev. John A. Murray managed, for the widow of Mr. Bailey, the publication of the paper. The Revs. D. P. Baker and T. B. Arnold then purchased the same, and in 1880 moved the place of its publication to Sycamore and later to Chicago.

(b) *Election of Roberts to Editorship of Free Methodist.* Although the people were aware of the heavy responsibilities carried by Mr. Roberts as General Superintendent of the Free Methodist Church and as editor of *The Earnest Christian*, yet there was a growing sentiment that he was the man who should be editor of the official church organ.^[166] In 1882 Joseph Travis was elected editor, with only five more votes than the number received by Mr. Roberts.

During this editorship, Mr. Roberts felt that he was misrepresented by the editor on the question of prohibition.^[167] On one occasion, after such a "misrepresentation," Mr. Roberts wrote to his wife, "If Brother T. does not publish my correction I do not know but I shall make *The Earnest Christian* a weekly."^[168]

However, the next General Conference gave to Mr. Roberts thirty out of fifty-four votes cast on the second ballot, and the former editor received but four votes.^[169] Mr. Roberts stated that up to the time of the election, he had not "the slightest thought of being elected to the responsible position of editor." Some had spoken to him of the possibility of his election, but these he had considered merely complimentary expressions. He thought, however, that "the election was so clearly providential that to decline appeared

improper."[\[170\]](#)

A number of incidental actions also played a part in his election to the editorship of *The Free Methodist*. That year, 1886, the General Conference deemed it advisable to take over the publishing interests of the church. The Committee appointed by the General Conference to consider this matter interviewed Mr. Roberts to ascertain what contribution to this venture he would make, and brought back the report that he would donate certain equipment including plates and copyrights for the two hymn books and Discipline, as well as type and fixtures necessary to its printing. If the Committee decided to purchase elsewhere, he would donate five hundred dollars. The committee considered this offer generous, and thought it should be very thankfully received.[\[171\]](#) At that General Conference, George W. Coleman was elected General Superintendent to help share the increasing load that had been resting upon the other two. This election also helped lighten the responsibilities of Mr. Roberts in one direction, although they were increasing in another. His editorship also involved promotion of *The Free Methodist*.

Mr. Roberts received a salary of five hundred dollars a year for his work as editor.[\[172\]](#) He felt that he was working for almost nothing and declared it was "a losing business financially." What he received did not pay the extra expense of "living in a very plain manner in Chicago." He had to leave his spacious and comfortable home in North Chili, built only five years before.[\[173\]](#) He asserted that he would not have edited the paper for any other party except the church for four times the amount he received. The fact that the church itself had become the owner of the paper was an incentive to continued work.[\[174\]](#) Both Mr. Roberts and Mr. Arnold had contributed five hundred dollars toward the purchase price of the paper, but the necessary balance seemed slow in coming.[\[175\]](#) He urged the preachers to do their part in helping to raise the necessary fund, stating, "What needs to be done, can be (done. Take hold of it with a will, and in faith you will succeed."

The unprecedented action of electing Mr. Roberts as editor of the official church organ while he was General Superintendent, brought some repercussions. Mr. Roberts had probably foreseen this, and when elected, he had offered to resign either job the General Conference would specify. Since no objection was offered by the men sitting in session at the seat of the General Conference, Mr. Roberts continued in both positions. The objection which later arose lay in the fact that this action constituted him chairman of the board to which he was responsible as editor. Mr. J. G. Terrill answered the objection by noting that Mr. Roberts had an executive committee to "officially watch over him," and probably enough unofficial observers to "keep him straight." He thought there was little need of "losing any sleep over the matter" inasmuch as the people who had elected him had indicated their confidence in him by giving him a "very large majority."[\[176\]](#)

(c) *Editorial Duties and Policy*. The duties of his new office were entered upon in the month of November, about two weeks after his election. With his wife accompanying him, he arrived in Chicago and was met at the train by T. B. Arnold who escorted him to his office and gave him a "cordial welcome." One of the first things to call forth his favorable comment was a prayer service conducted at noon for the office force by Mr. Arnold. Mr. and Mrs. Roberts set up housekeeping in two furnished rooms until they could decide what they would do.[\[177\]](#) Mrs. Roberts wrote to their son George from

their two rooms "facing west" that his father was taking his work "as easy and naturally as if he had always been doing it," and thought it would be better for him than traveling so much. She said she was there to take care of him, and, affirmed, "*I am doing it.*"[\[178\]](#)

Mr. Roberts announced that his editorial policy would follow along the line of the policies already adopted with "no new revolutionary departure." He aimed to promote "the peace and prosperity of its readers in this world" and their "eternal happiness in the world to come." The influence of the paper would be exerted in favor of moral reforms and of the extension of the missionary enterprise. Religious, denominational and general news would be presented.[\[179\]](#) He warned against controversy, and instructed contributors to be certain of their facts, to avoid offensive personalities, to omit slang words or phrases, to send in short articles, to verify their quotations from the Scriptures, and to write on practical subjects.[\[180\]](#)

His correspondents did not always live up to his advice. In 1890, he wrote that he was in danger of a breakdown through overwork and excessive correspondence augmented by "belligerent articles." He felt like resigning the editorial chair at once if there were not some cessation from this controversial spirit. He plead, "If we cannot have peace, let us have a truce until General Conference." He said, somewhat facetiously, "A little rest will enable our controversial writers to contend more vigorously." He noted that the apostles did not attack Homer and Horace and Socrates and the rabbins, but contented themselves with "stating the truth as it is in Jesus." He pointed out that Peter did not think that the writings of Paul were "as clear as a sunbeam" but held the reader, and not the writer, responsible for the bad construction sometimes placed upon them. Moreover, Peter used no approbrious epithet but called him "our beloved Brother Paul."[\[181\]](#) "With what a kind spirit he apologized for Paul's letters being misunderstood!" Nor did Paul ever make a reply. He concluded, "Let our polemical writers profit by this example."[\[182\]](#) He further asked his contributors to confine themselves to matters "relating to experimental or practical godliness," to "avoid metaphysical subtleties and profitless speculations," and not to "meddle with matters too deep" for them. He thought it best to leave the beast with "seven heads and ten horns alone . . ."[\[183\]](#)

In an editorial address to preachers, Mr. Roberts gave the following advice:

If you are to preach come before the congregation full of matter. Make no apologies, no delays. Dive into the merits of your subject at once. Speak plain words and to the point. Get clear ideas of your subject and present them in a clear and forceful manner. When you get through, stop. Do not keep the saw running when the log is sawed.[\[184\]](#)

Of this period of carrying a double load of editorial work, Mr. Roberts wrote:

I have traveled no less, and preached no less than I did before. But to write as I am doing for the paper, and to carry on the correspondence, and do the other work necessarily connected with it, doubles my labor. I have to 'write on the cars, in the intervals of meetings, and everywhere I go.'[\[185\]](#)

(d) *Retirement from Editorship*. By the time the General Conference of 1890 had arrived, Mr. Roberts was broken in health, and asked to be excused from further labors in the editorial field. He said at that time:

I only want to say, 'I don't want you to count me in. Several years ago I had a very hard time of it attending conferences Then I sometimes had to change cars three times, be on four trains in one night, perhaps preach three times on Sunday and at the end of the time I found I was very nearly used up. I came very near dying - I can do some work but I don't feel as if I can do all the work We have a large number of names to select from . . . I want you to vote for some of them and not vote for me.'[\[186\]](#)

The General Conference acquiesced in his desire, and elected Burton R. Jones to fill the office. The editorship of Mr. Roberts might have ended more happily had not one member of the General Conference said before the body that he hoped that under the "new management" the editor would give them an opportunity to express their opinions freely upon the issues that were before them and the world. Perhaps his statement had reference to some of the articles which Mr. Roberts had considered controversial and had therefore returned without publishing. Mr. Roberts arose "to say one word." He maintained he had tried to keep the paper open to all who disagreed with him, but that he had rejected "political or partizan" contributions due to the action of the preceding General Conference. He said, "I have had more trouble in that direction in one week than I have had with *The Earnest Christian* during all the time that I have published it."[\[187\]](#) Perhaps he should have heeded in 1886 the advice his wife had given him in 1878:

You know I don't want you to take that F. M. paper I don't want you ever to undertake that. You know it is hard work. You would not be supported in it as well as the present publishers, because you are more sensible, have broader views, less sectarianism about you, etc., etc. I think you have outgrown or grown beyond a Free Methodist Paper. Dearest, don't you think of it. I would rather start or help start another school. Let the rest of the Church have the Paper. You are not good at dunning people. I beg of you do not think of that over night.[\[188\]](#)

Announcing his departure from the editorial field of *The Free Methodist* in his closing issue, dated November 5, 1890, Mr. Roberts stated that he had endeavored to be "considerate of all" and affirmed that he could "confidently say" that he had not "written a word in malice or ill-will." Then he petitioned, "If we have needlessly hurt the feelings of any. we assure them that it was unintentional and we ask them to forgive us. We hope we part with all the readers of *The Free Methodist* on the most friendly terms."[\[189\]](#)

D. MISSIONS

In 1866, Mr. Roberts had been given "charge of all missions outside the bounds of the Annual Conferences."[\[190\]](#) In 1874, he was one of three members of a committee on missions.[\[191\]](#) That year

the General Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church was organized and it was specified that a Superintendent should be chairman.[\[192\]](#) Little was done as a general church until the meeting of the missionary board in 1884 when it was decided to "inaugurate the work at once." Several missionaries were sent to Africa and two to India the following year.

Mrs. Roberts organized one of the first missionary societies of the church in North Chili, New York, under the name "Mary E. Carpenter Foreign Missionary Society."[\[193\]](#) Mary E. Carpenter was one of the missionaries who had sailed for Monrovia, West Coast, Africa in 1885.

Mr. Roberts favored the organization of a woman's missionary society and became "one of the leaders of their organization throughout the whole church." Although Mr. Roberts encouraged the organization of local missionary societies throughout the denomination, there was no general organization until the year following his death.[\[194\]](#)

In 1885, Mr. Roberts reported that the Missionary Board had been reorganized and additional power had been given it to "render it more efficient."[\[195\]](#) When editor of *The Free Methodist* he took his position against independent missions,[\[196\]](#) and also wrote strongly the year following the expiration of his term of office in favor of the same position he had taken earlier.[\[197\]](#)

When the General Missionary Board met in 1891, Mr. Roberts was appointed to take the general oversight of the mission work which involved appointing the missionaries to their field of labor,[\[198\]](#) and giving them instructions and general directions.[\[199\]](#)

At the Seminary he founded in North Chili, they sometimes had a missionary class-meeting. One evening after a number had spoken of their call, Mr. Roberts said that he didn't know but that he would have to go yet. Mr. Roberts looked as though he wanted to go, one of those present thought. At the last meeting of that kind which he attended on February 21, just a few days before his death, they sang the song, "We'll girdle the globe with salvation." On the way home, he commented to his wife that "if Adelbert Dake had done nothing but write that piece, his life work was a success."[\[200\]](#)

ENDNOTES

[\[1\]](#) Letter from B. T. Roberts to wife, August 30, 1872. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[\[2\]](#) Letter from B. T. Roberts to wife, October 8, 1872. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[\[3\]](#) Adella P. Carpenter, Ellen Lois Roberts, p.79.

- [4] The Free Methodist, (August 9, 1910), 501.
- [5] B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.529.
- [6] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (November, 1872), 163.
- [7] B. T. Roberts, The Free Methodist, (March 20, 1889), 8.
- [8] Journal of B. T. Roberts, March 7, 1874. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p. 467.
- [9] Letter from B. T. Roberts to George Lane Roberts, March 11, 1880. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [10] B. T. Roberts, The Free Methodist, (April 8, 1891), 8. Review made from article in Christian Cynosure.
- [11] Charles A. Beard, American Government and Politics, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918), 121.
- [12] Ibid., p. 122.
- [13] Letter from B. T. Roberts to son, George, from Lambertville, New York, August 10, 1877. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [14] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (February, 1876), 64.
- [15] Charles A. Beard, op. cit., p.122.
- [16] B. T. Roberts, First Lessons on Money, (Rochester, New York: Earnest Christian Office, 1886), 66.
- [17] Ibid., pp. 70, 72, 73.
- [18] Ibid., p.75.
- [19] Ibid., p.76.
- [20] Ibid., p.49.
- [21] Ibid., p.35.

[22] Ibid., pp. 38, 39.

[23] B. T. Roberts, The Free Methodist, (December 22, 1886), 8.

[24] Ibid., (April 8, 1891), 8.

[25] B. T. Roberts, "Protection of Farmers," The Free Methodist, (January 16, 1889), 8.

[26] B. T. Roberts, The Free Methodist, (March 20, 1889),

[27] B. T. Roberts, The Free Methodist, (March 20, 1889), 8.

[28] Ibid.

[29] B. T. Roberts, The Free Methodist, (November 5, 1890), 8.

[30] Americana Encyclopedia, (New York: Americana Corporation, 1941), XIII, 132.

[31] B. T. Roberts, First Lessons on Money, (Rochester, New York: Earnest Christian Office, 1886), pp. 128, 129.

[32] Ibid., pp. 137, 138.

[33] B. T. Roberts, The Free Methodist, Editorial quoted in Pungent Truths, William B. Rose, (ed.), (Chicago: The Free Methodist Publishing House, 1912), 293.

[34] P. T. Sorokin, Reconstruction of Humanity, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948), p.166. (ed.), Pungent Truths, p. 166.

[35] B. T. Roberts, "For the Farmers," The Free Methodist, (June 18, 1890), 8.

[36] B. T. Roberts, The Free Methodist, (May 7, 1890), 1.

[37] B. T. Roberts, "The Single Tax," The Free Methodist, (September 10, 1890), 8.

[38] P. T. Sorokin, Reconstruction of Humanity, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948), p.166.

[39] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (June, 1871), 189.

[40] Combined Minutes, New York Conference, October 24, 1874.

[41] General Conference Minutes. (October 24, 1874), 109. Found at Denominational Headquarters, Winona Lake, Indiana.

[42] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, May 21, 1881. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[43] Combined Minutes, 1884, Genesee Conference, (September 17-20, 1884). 72.

[44] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Chicago, December, 2, 1891. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[45] Ibid.

[46] The Free Methodist, (May 24, 1893), 4.

[47] Letter from Adella P. Carpenter to Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, November 21, 1876. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[48] Letter from Benson Roberts to his parents, from Hanover, New Hampshire, October 1, 1875. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[49] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, October 2, 1878. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[50] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, September 10, 1890. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[51] Diary of a student named Bronson, January, 1890 to July, 1892.

[52] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Marengo, Illinois, October 1, 1874. Quoted by B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

[53] Combined Minutes, Susquehanna Conference, (September, 1875), pp. 21, 22.

[54] Spring Arbor Chronicle, (August, 1905), 3.

[55] Mead W. Killion, "A History of Spring Arbor Seminary and Junior College," (Master of Arts Thesis,

University of Michigan, 1941), p. 5.

[56] Spring Arbor Chronicle, (November, 1898), pp. 2, 3.

[57] Letter from Charles Roberts from Iowa City, to his mother, October 19, 1879. Among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[58] Letter from J. E. Coleman to Mrs. Roberts, October 28, 1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[59] Combined Minutes, Wisconsin Conference, September, 1879, p.86.

[60] Letter from Mrs. Coleman to Mrs. Roberts February 1888 Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family

[61] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian (October 1885) 129.

[62] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife September 28 1889. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family

[63] Combined Minutes, Kansas Conference (August 29-31, 1883), p 136 West Kansas Conference, (August 22-25, 1883) p 142

[64] Combined Minutes, west Kansas Conference (August 1883). p 142

[65] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife from Lawrence Kansas August 27, 1883 Found among personal letters of the Roberts family

[66] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian (September 1885), 98

[67] B. T. Roberts, The Free Methodist, (January 15, 1890), 8.

[68] General Conference Daily of the Free Methodist Church, 1890, p.169.

[69] Spring Arbor Chronicle, (November, 1898), 2, 3.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, March 31, 1886. Found among the personal letters of the

Roberts family.

[72] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (April, 1892), 128.

[73] Alexander Beers, *The Free Methodist*, (June 24, 1891), 388.

[74] *Spring Arbor Chronicle*, (November, 1898), 2, 3.

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] *Combined Minutes. South Dakota Conference*, October, 1891, p.115.

[77] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, October 7, 1891. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[78] *Combined Minutes, Illinois Annual Conference*, September, 1866, p. 19.

[79] *Ibid.*, October, 1872, p.35.

[80] Letter from Mrs. B. T. Roberts to her husband, July 28, 1878. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[81] *Combined Minutes. Illinois Annual Conference*, October, 1879, p.95.

[82] Wilson T. Hogue, *History of the Free Methodist Church*, II, p. 330.

[83] Adelaide Lionne Beers, *The Romance of a Consecrated Life*, (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1922), p.95.

[84] *Ibid.*

[85] *Ibid.*

[86] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (July, 1891), 32.

[87] Adelaide Lionne Beers, *op. cit.*, pp. 95, 96.

[88] *Combined Minutes, Oregon and Washington Conference*, (1892), p. 13.

[89] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*, (February 25, 1890), 8.

[90] *General Conference Daily*, (October 21, 1890), 168.

[91] Letter from Mrs. B. T. Roberts to her husband, September 18, 1877. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[92] Letter from Benson Roberts to his father, April 8, 1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[93] Letter from B. T. Roberts to son George, April 5, 1880. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[94] *General Conference Daily*, (1882), 7.

[95] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Lucy Coleman, April 19, 1883. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[96] Statement from old resident of North Chili, in personal interview with John T. Donnelly. student at Roberts Junior College.

[97] Letter from B. T. Roberts to son George, February 3, 1881. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[98] Original Paper by student at Roberts Junior College. (No name given).

[99] Letter from James M. Mann, Secretary to Assistant Postmaster General, July, 1883. Among personal papers of B. T. Roberts.

[100] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, July 1, 1884. Found among the per-anna] letters of the Roberts family.

[101] B. H. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 539, 540.

[102] Letter from B. T. Roberts to wife, October 15, 1880. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[103] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her son. Quoted in *The Earnest Christian*, (October, 1888), 131.

- [104] Letter from B. T. Roberts to wife, from Napoleon, Michigan, August 22, 1872. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [105] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, January 12, 1886. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [106] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, October 16, 1884. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [107] Letter from M. Humphrey to Mrs. Roberts, January 22, 1877. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [108] Letter from Mrs. F. Preston to Mrs. Roberts, December 17, 1876. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [109] Letter from a subscriber to Mrs. Roberts, April 22, 1901. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [110] General Conference Minutes, 1886, p.42.
- [111] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (November, 1888), 161.
- [112] Letter from schoolteacher; quoted by B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (February, 1880), 67.
- [113] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (November, 1888), 161.
- [114] Letter from the Rev. E. P. Hart; quoted in *The Earnest Christian*, (August 1886), 66.
- [115] Quoted by B. T. Roberts, *General Conference Daily*, (October 12, 1890), pp. 96, 97.
- [116] *Ibid.*
- [117] *Combined Minutes, Michigan Conference*, (1872), p.77.
- [118] J. G. Terrill, *The Earnest Christian*, (April, 1893), 112.
- [119] Letter from B. T. Roberts to son George, July, 1878. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[120] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Anna Roberts, July 20.1878. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[121] B. T. Roberts, Fishers of Men, (4th ed.), (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1948), (Preface), 7.

[122] Ibid., p.5.

[123] Ibid., p.8.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Advertising sheet printed at time of second edition of book. Found among personal papers of B. T. Roberts.

[126] B. T. Roberts, Fishers of Men; (Foreword to the New Edition by B. L. Olmstead), p.6.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid.

[129] The Free Methodist, (February 12, 1890), 1.

[130] General Conference Daily, (1890), 162.

[131] Phillip Hanna. The Earnest Christian, (March, 1879). 96.

[132] General Conference Minutes, (October 16, 1878), 189. Denominational Headquarters, Winona Lake, Indiana.

[133] Matthew Simpson, The Cyclopedia of Methodism, Preface. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p.16.

[134] Letter from B. T. Roberts to Bishop Matthew Simpson, September 13, 1878. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, pp. 16, 17.

[135] Letter from Matthew Simpson to B. T. Roberts, October 23, 1878. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, Why Another Sect, p.17.

[136] General Conference Minutes. (October 21, 1882), 291.

[137] General Conference Minutes, (October, 1882), 303.

[138] Joseph McCreery, Letter written to Mr. Roberts from Alma City, Nebraska, August 7, 1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[139] General Conference Minutes, (1878), p.212.

[140] General Conference Minutes, (1878), p. 190.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from St, Elmo, Missouri, August 18, 1883. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family,

[143] General Conference Minutes, (1886) p.42.

[144] B. T. Roberts, First Lessons on Money Preface pp iii iv

[145] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his son, George, October '24,. 1887. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[146] B. T. Roberts, First Lessons on Money, pp. 158-160.

[147] B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.529.

[148] B. T. Roberts, General Conference Daily, (October 11, 1890), 43.

[149] B. T. Roberts, Ordaining Women, (Rochester, New York: Earnest Christian Publishing Company, 1891), p.8.

[150] Senator Carey. Quoted by B. T. Roberts, Ibid., p.7.

[151] B. T. Roberts, Ordaining Women, pp. 158, 159.

[152] Ibid., p. 159.

[153] B. T Roberts, The Free Methodist, (January 19, 1887). 8.

[154] A. H. Springatein, "A Review of Rev. B. T. Roberts, A.M., on Ordaining women," (Pontiac, Michigan: Kimball and Turner, Job Printers, 1891). Bound together in Ministry, ZKC, p.v.2. New York Public Library.

[155] Quoted by B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.531.

[156] General Conference Daily, (1894), 239.

[157] Ibid.

[158] William B. Rose, (ed.). Pungent Truths, (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1912). p. V.

[159] The Free Methodist, (November 6, 1936), 4.

[160] General Conference Minutes, (1870), pp. 66, 69.

[161] The Free Methodist, (November 6,1936), 4.

[162] Letter from S. Irwin to B. T. Roberts, April 27, 1871. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[163] Letter from Joseph Mackey to B. T. Roberts, from New York, May 4, 1871. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[164] The Free Methodist, (November 6, 1936), 4.

[165] Ibid.

[166] General Conference Minutes, (October 21, 1882), 299.

[167] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, October 29, 1884. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[168] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, November 1, 1884. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[169] General Conference Daily, (1886), 9.

- [170] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*, (November 17, 1886), 8.
- [171] *General Conference Minutes*, (1886), p.43.
- [172] *The Free Methodist*, (December 1, 1886), 1.
- [173] Adella P. Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p.79.
- [174] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*, (December 22, 1886), 1.
- [175] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*, (December 8, 1886), 8.
- [176] J. G. Terrill, *The Free Methodist*, (November 24, 1886), 5,
- [177] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*, (November 17, 1886), 8.
- [178] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to son George, November 24, 1886. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [179] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*, (November 17, 1886), 8.
- [180] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*. Quoted by William B. Rose, (ed.), *Pungent Truths*, (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1912), pp. 105, 106
- [181] 2 Pet. 3:15, 16.
- [182] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*, (February 19, 1890), 8.
- [183] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*, (March 5, 1890). 1.
- [184] *Ibid.*
- [185] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*, (August 10, 1887), 8.
- [186] B. T. Roberts, *General Conference Daily*, (October 23, 1890), 208.
- [187] B. T. Roberts, *General Conference Daily*, (October 24, 1890), 213.
- [188] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, July 3, 1878. Found among the personal letters of the

Roberts family.

[189] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*, (November 5, 1890), 8.

[190] General Conference Minutes of the Free Methodist Church, (October 18, 1866).

[191] *Ibid.*, (October, 1874), p. 87.

[192] Mrs. M. M. Robinson, *Free Methodist Missions and Missionaries*, (Chicago: W. M. F. Society), p.1.

[193] Original Minutes of "Mary E. Carpenter Foreign Missionary Society." Filed at Roberts Memorial Library, North Chili, New York.

[194] Mrs. M. M. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p.7.

[195] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (November, 1886), 161.

[196] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*, (June 4, 1890), 8.

[197] B. T. Roberts, *The Free Methodist*, (July 1, 1891), 408, 409.

[198] *The Free Methodist*, (November 11, 1891), 712.

[199] Letter from B. T. Roberts, November 6, 1891. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[200] May S. Willard, "At Chesbrough Seminary," *The Earnest Christian*, (May, 1893), 154.

EARNEST CHRISTIAN

CHAPTER X

SUPERINTENDENCY, TRAVELS, AND POST OBITUM 1870-1893, 1910

A. GENERAL CONFERENCE THROUGH THE PERIOD

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[A. GENERAL CONFERENCES THROUGH THE PERIOD](#)

[1. Fourth General Conference](#)

The fourth General Conference of the Free Methodist Church met at Albion, New York, October 14, 1874. Mr. Roberts did not arrive the first day, so the Rev. Epenetus Owen was elected chairman until his arrival. That year, the Committee on Superintendency recommended the election of a second General Superintendent because of the growth of the work.[\[1\]](#) The phrasing of the recommendation carried a statement that they were "heartily pleased with the very able and efficient manner" in which their beloved Superintendent had labored among them. On the first ballot, Mr. Roberts received twenty-six votes out of a total of thirty-four votes cast, while E. P. Hart received twenty. Both were declared elected. Mrs. Roberts wrote to her husband, "I feel better and better over your being released from so much traveling. It will prove a blessing and help. You must sit down in quietness and think and write and rest. I believe God is in all you felt in reference to this matter."[\[2\]](#)

The recognition of women as evangelists that year was doubtless due to the influence of Mr. Roberts, who strongly favored using women who were sufficiently talented for Christian service.[\[3\]](#)

[2. Fifth General Conference, 1878](#)

The General Conference session of 1878 met on October 9th at Spring Arbor, Michigan. In the balloting for General Superintendent, Mr. Roberts received only one vote more than his younger co-worker, E. P. Hart. However, both of them had a great majority of the votes; Roberts received forty-nine and E. P. Hart forty-eight votes out of a total of fifty-three cast. After the election, the doxology was sung.[\[4\]](#)

Mr. Roberts was the first named on the Board of General Missions, and was named chairman of a committee to compile a hymn book.[\[5\]](#) He was also made one of the members of the Board of Trustees of the General Church.

The Committee on Superintendency reported that they found the administration of their General Superintendents during the past four years had been "faithful and efficient." The Iowa, Wisconsin, and North Michigan Conferences had been organized since 1874, making the total number of conferences ten, with 313 preachers and 233 local preachers. The salary of the superintendents was reported as \$526.15, which was above the average salary of \$200.02 received by the preachers.[\[6\]](#)

That Conference was composed of men who had become Sunday School minded. They made it a part of the duties of the General Superintendents to attend and assist in Sunday School Conventions.[\[7\]](#)

One other action of that Conference affected the life of Mr. Roberts the following year. A resolution was passed that a general superintendent should visit the Pacific coast and look after the denominational work there.[\[8\]](#)

3. Sixth General Conference, 1882

The sixth General Conference was held at Burlington, Iowa, convening October 11, 1882. General Superintendent B. T. Roberts was once again elected to the same office, that time with the highest majority possible, having received fifty-seven votes out of a total of fifty-seven.[\[9\]](#) At this General Conference a more adequate provision was made for the salaries of the two Superintendents, the amount being set at eight hundred dollars and traveling expenses, the amount being pro-rated to the several circuits. It was carefully specified, however, that if anything was received "properly chargeable against his salary," it should be reported and deducted from the amount issued by the newly elected treasurer of this account, S. K. J. Chesbrough.[\[10\]](#)

The Committee on Superintendency brought in a report censuring Mr. Roberts for a decision in which he had stated that inasmuch as two members of the North Michigan Conference had been transferred to the Michigan Conference, having been counted in the basis of representation to the General Conference, first from the former, and after transfer to the latter, that the said Michigan Conference was entitled to one more ministerial and one more lay delegate. After much debate, the committee report was lost, and Mr. Roberts was sustained.[\[11\]](#) The same committee brought in a motion of censure for his action in receiving a certain Septer Roberts into the Michigan Conference "on a letter of withdrawal from the Conference and church." This motion was changed to apply to the Michigan Conference rather than to the General Superintendent.[\[12\]](#)

The report of the Committee on Reforms was tempered with the views of Mr. Roberts on prohibition, for although the committee deemed it advisable to assist those who were "struggling for prohibition," they specified "voting only for such men, irrespective of party, as we believe will promote and maintain righteousness instead of mere party interests."[\[13\]](#)

As president of the fully organized Board of Trustees of the new church, the duty of conveying real estate for the Board fell upon Mr. Roberts. The General Conference also assumed the direction of *The Free Methodist* paper at that session, thus preparing the way more fully for additional duties for Mr. Roberts at the next General Conference session.[\[14\]](#)

The organization of the Ohio, Central Illinois, Texas, and Louisiana Conferences reflected the labors of Mr. Roberts during the quadrennium immediately preceding the General Conference of 1882.[\[15\]](#)

The membership of the movement had increased to 11,705 full members and 1854 probationers, served by 336 preachers and 321 local preachers. The Sunday Schools, which the General Superintendents had, by General Conference action, promoted, had increased to 425 schools with 2671 teachers and 14,800 scholars. Property had increased to more than half a million dollars[16]. An item on general missions was listed for the first time, reflecting the increasing consciousness of the church. A Missionary Board was elected.[17]

That General Conference of 1882 marked the peak of the popularity of Mr. Roberts as evidenced by his unanimous reelection, and by the fact that no action was allowed to go directly against him. He was then a man fifty-nine years of age, with twenty-two years of experience in the Superintendency behind him.

4. Seventh General Conference, 1886

The time for the seventh quadrennial session of the General Conference was imminent. Mrs. Roberts, wishing her husband to be at his best, exhorted him, "You must breathe in more life. Take more by faith. The quickening power of the Spirit I trust will keep you fresh and rested." Then she added her underlying reason, "I do not want you to come to the General Conference *jaded* and *worn*. I do not expect you will." [18]

The General Conference met at Coopersville, Michigan, October 13, 1886. One of the first motions of Mr. Roberts there was to observe a day of fasting and prayer on the following day, which was carried.[19] He also offered a resolution to the effect that the denomination at large become responsible for a church in our national capital, which was referred to the committee on church extension. Today the beautiful B. T. Roberts Memorial Church stands in the nation's capital in his memory.

The report of the Committee on the State of the Work, headed by Mr. Roberts, dealt with insubordination severely, specified many wrong practices that should be shunned, inveighed against a "freedom of the spirit" which was virtual anarchy, advocated real conversions, a rational standard of holiness (not too high or too low), and emphasized that every preacher should be a revival preacher. The Conference ordered the report published in tract form, and that B. T. Roberts should see to it that the preachers had sufficient to supply each family in the church with one copy.[20]

At that General Conference, a third General Superintendent was elected, taking the increasing load once again from his shoulders. For the first time, B. T. Roberts received less votes than his younger fellow Superintendent, E. P. Hart.[21] The salaries of the Superintendents were raised to a thousand dollars and traveling expenses.[22] It would appear that Mr. Roberts had passed the peak of his popularity, but only slightly, for that year, in addition to the heavy responsibilities he was already carrying, he was elected editor of *The Free Methodist*, the official church organ. Upon his election, he immediately arose and said, "Brethren, you have now chosen me to two of the most responsible positions in the Church, and I am ready to resign whichever one you may designate." As no desire for his resignation from either office was specified, he functioned in both capacities, in addition to his editorial work on his own magazine,

The Earnest Christian.[\[23\]](#) At the preceding General Conference, he had come within one vote of being elected to the editorship of *The Free Methodist*. For a long time, it had been felt that his literary culture should have been utilized more fully by the church, and also there was a growing feeling that the church paper had become too political in character, and that Mr. Roberts would curb the increasing tendency.[\[24\]](#) It had always been the position of Mr. Roberts that the church should not align itself with any one political party, but be free to vote for the best candidates for office, regardless of party affiliation.

5. Eighth General Conference, 1890

During this general gathering of the Church, which was held in Chicago in October, 1890, Mr. Roberts and his wife were entertained at the home of M. C. Baker, 3235. Wood Street. The duties of this, his last General Conference, occupied his attention. As an administrator, he objected to making unnecessary changes. When a Brother Gaffin proposed to change the word "men" to read "persons" (in the Discipline) in order to include the opposite sex, Mr. Roberts objected, "I wish brethren would not propose such changes. If you do this you will have to change the Bible. 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved' must be made to read, 'He or she that believeth.' " His evangelistic friend, Cusick, spoke up at that juncture and said, "They haven't been through the hopper," referring to the possibility that such a proposal would be killed in committee.

In that Conference, quite a discussion took place about the words "obey him and serve him" in the marriage ritual. After the question had been divided as to striking out the above words, and the vote had been taken favorably to strike out the words "serve him," B. T. Roberts arose and offered as a substitute for the whole the words "comfort him." After considerable discussion, the proposal was voted down. The final solution was to ask essentially the same question to the woman as to the man.[\[25\]](#)

At that Conference, the old debate on committing the General Conference to the Prohibition Party was continued. Mr. Roberts alone made a speech against doing so. The editor of the *General Conference Daily* stated that it was a surprise to many to see the Report on Reforms containing a committal of the church to the Prohibition Party, adopted almost unanimously, with only one speech against it (by B. T. Roberts), and none in its favor.[\[26\]](#) Mr. Roberts was ready to oppose what he thought was bad policy even though almost the entire church was against him in it. It was during this period that he said, "I have seldom been with a majority."

In a case that came before the General Conference with reference to a change of venue for a new trial in the appeal of a certain man, Mr. Roberts arose and said,

Sometimes feeling runs high in a society, and for this reason a person should be allowed to go outside of the society to select a committee; and in the second place it is in accordance with what has been long settled in civil courts of justice We are all liable to be in the minority and we are all liable to have strong feelings against us in a Conference.[\[27\]](#)

He then referred to his own request for a change of venue in his trial in the Methodist Church which was refused, and stated that a minister in another Conference had told him, "If you had belonged to our Conference, we would have given you a vote of thanks instead of expelling you." He added that he understood that the right to a change of venue was then included in the rules of the M. E. Church, although such was evidently not the rule at the time of his own trial and expulsion.[\[28\]](#)

When the election of an editor for *The Free Methodist* paper came up, his failing health caused him to refuse further duties.

The General Conference of 1890 was a hard one for Mr. Roberts, not only from a consideration of his physical condition, but also from the standpoint of the actions taken by the body. He unsuccessfully espoused the cause of the Pentecost Bands which he wished to conserve to the church. Their leader, the Rev. Vivian A. Dake, had been a student in the Chili Seminary and was a close friend of Mr. Roberts. Others in prominence in the church felt these Bands were a divisive element in the church and were able to secure their exclusion from it.[\[29\]](#) Mr. Roberts also sponsored, as was his custom, the right to ordain women, but was, as usual, strongly opposed. The first vote taken was in accordance with tile position of Mr. Roberts, but by a subsequent vote for reconsideration, it was lost by a small minority.[\[30\]](#) The Rev. R. W. Hawkins, a personal friend of Mr. Roberts, was up for trial for writing a book on *Redemption or The Living Way* which was believed to contain error. Mr. Roberts knowing of his positions on the subject, had advised him not to write his views and after the book had been published Mr. Roberts had noted the publication, with a mention of the deviation of position from that recognized as the church position Now however Mr. Roberts advocated a conciliatory attitude but his advice was not heeded The condemnatory action of the General Conference resulted in the loss of Mr. Hawkins to the church, and brought pain to their senior Superintendent.[\[31\]](#) At the close of the Conference, he said, "I do not know that I want to attend another General Conference," and he never did. He wrote to a minister, the Rev. W. P. Ferries, "The General Conference left me in such a state of mind and body that I felt I was not wanted anywhere very much."[\[32\]](#)

In connection with the General Conference, Mr. Roberts preached the dedicatory sermon for the new Free Methodist Church in Chicago. In the course of his address, he told them of a camp meeting he had held that fall, previous to the General Conference date, where the townspeople had taken unusual pains to show courtesy to the campers. They had built a sidewalk half a mile from the town to the campground, and had dug wells for their convenience. The meeting had been "a time of power" with a "good deal of shouting." Then he commented, "If you want to get into a noisy meeting just go up to North Michigan among the ox drivers." At the close of the meeting, the town officials came to the service, the president of the town board made a short address and invited them back each year for the next ten years. Mr. Roberts, upon inquiring into the cause of all the cordiality, received the reply, "There is not one of these Free Methodists but pays his bills."[\[33\]](#)

B. TRAVELS IN THE STATES

1. Midwestern Tour

The itinerary of Mr. Roberts took him to the field of the labors of the Rev. William Hart, to the Maple Grove Church in Saginaw, Michigan, which had been raised up through the labors of a farmer's wife. She was not then a member of the church, but she wanted to see a church built. This woman persuaded her husband to give two acres from the corner of his farm, and every tenth day's work. The consent of her husband she took as an answer to her prayers and as an evidence that the work was of God. She then solicited the neighbors, taking everything they would contribute from one cent to a bed quilt and exchanged everything for lumber. She herself, wrote Mr. Roberts, gave every tenth pound of butter and every tenth dozen of eggs. An irreligious man told her she had "church on the brain," but said she could have an old debt at the mill if she could collect it. This, the mill men readily granted her, giving the entire amount to her in lumber. Mr. Roberts was called to dedicate the church on August tenth. He described it as a "neat convenient edifice, thirty by forty feet, well built, and nicely painted." The dedication services which commenced on Thursday and lasted over Sunday were described as "seasons of wonderful power . . . The people came for miles and pitched their tents around the church." Mr. Roberts thought conviction rested upon the people in "the whole region."[\[34\]](#)

From a Michigan Camp Meeting, Mr. Roberts wrote to his wife that "Brother Hart seems quite satisfied with having you at the Coldwater Camp Meeting." He had told Mr. Hart, who had wanted some one to help him over the Sabbath, that he believed "the Lord would help" his wife to "talk to the people." He then made arrangements to meet Mrs. Roberts at Coldwater. He asked her to tell Benson, their son, who had recently professed faith in Christ, to write to Miss Carpenter, because she "greatly rejoiced at what the Lord had done for him."[\[35\]](#) The next day on his journey from Napoleon, Michigan, the Rev. William Hart "and all the rest of them" insisted on his staying for the dedication. He thought Michigan a "fine country" and liked the people "very much."

He arrived at the camp on August 29th and found himself "tired, sleepy, and cold." The meeting started "off dull," probably because they seemed less lively here than in many parts of Michigan, and partly because of the discomforts of the cold weather. His wife for some reason did not arrive, but because of the poor weather conditions, he told her it was best. He did miss their little tent which he had wanted his wife to bring with her. A draft for fifty dollars was sent home for seed wheat for the farm and he told his wife that he "loved her dearly" and "missed her much."[\[36\]](#) After a cold uncomfortable ride disturbed by the noise of; the passengers so that he could not sleep Mr. Roberts wrote a short letter informing his wife that he was expressing though for one of their friends, "a bottle of ague cure that was said to be sure and safe." He reported a chill the night before Per haps he took a dose of the ague cure, for he wrote that he felt better that morning.[\[37\]](#)

In October, he was on his way to Crystal Lake, riding on a slow train all the way from Buffalo to Chicago. Writing from Chicago, he asked to have George, his son, take care of the Susquehanna and Genesee Conference Minutes as soon as they arrived, for he had the responsibility of publishing the Combined Minutes of the various conferences of the church. He also wanted to have a description of his land in Iowa, copied from the deed which had been left at home, sent on to him so that he could go and

see it while he was there.[\[38\]](#) From Crystal Lake, Illinois, he wrote about appointments, and his future course to Belvidere and Iowa, and then requested her, or someone at home to attend the auction which was being held at Syracuse by Mr. Hicks, the class leader of the Free Church there. Intimating that he had been reproached by his beloved, he answered, "Darling, I love you very dearly. I am sorry that I was not a greater help to you, and hope I shall be a greater help after this."[\[39\]](#)

The next day Mr. Roberts reached Belvidere and stopped at the home of his wife's brother, Charles and Melissa Stowe, who had been especially close to him since 1860 when they attended a meeting held by Mr. Roberts at Bonus Prairie. At that time, Mrs. Stowe had consecrated herself as fully as she knew how to the Lord. From there, Mr. Roberts sent his wife a draft for one hundred and fifty dollars which he said she might keep until he got back.[\[40\]](#)

He wanted his wife to feel the importance of her mission at the school to "such a degree" that she would not feel troubled by the deportment of a certain troublesome teacher at the Seminary. He excused himself for unwittingly imposing such heavy burdens upon her. Turning to a description of his surroundings, he said that the Iowa country was fine, and "much like Minnesota." He reported, "The weather was cold this morning, but the sun now shines out quite warm." The Rev. T. S. LaDue was the entertaining minister. Roberts wrote to his wife, "You are dear to me I love you fervently and want to do all I can to help you." With "love to the children," and a "continue to pray for me" he closed affectionately.[\[41\]](#)

2. Far Western Trip

As far back as 1873, Mr. Roberts had written of the many urgent calls that were coming to him to send a preacher to the Pacific Coast.[\[42\]](#) He thought free churches were needed in California as well as on this side of the mountains. "Even in the land of gold, the poor are found, who cannot afford to buy or rent a seat in the popular churches. The services are too expensive for their limited income. The surroundings are too gorgeous for their plain and cheap attire." He thought that whatever might be the longings of the poor man for something better, he would feel in the bitterness of his heart that no man cared for his soul. Rev. G. W. Humphrey and wife had felt for some time that they should go, and asked only for transportation there. Mr. Roberts called for this money so they could be sent in October.[\[43\]](#) In November, he reported that the Rev. G. W. Humphrey, a member of the Genesee Conference, had been sent to California "for the purpose of planting churches on the Pacific coast."[\[44\]](#)

In 1879, Mr. and Mrs. Roberts went together to the "land of sunshine." They had been in correspondence about the proposed trip while he was away, and she had finally written back that she thought it was best to go. A gift which he received at that time probably helped on their expenses. She wrote him that she felt "blest" but couldn't sleep. Evidently she felt considerable excitement about the long journey.[\[45\]](#) On the first lap of their trip, they stopped in Chicago, where Mr. Roberts preached three times. Near Kellogg, Jasper County, Iowa, they stopped and Mr. Roberts preached twice on the Sabbath. Coming in on the close of a four weeks' revival, results were forthcoming and the altar "was filled with seekers of pardon and purity." They stayed in the home of their friend, Abram Moore, formerly from western New York.

They had "a season of refreshing at their hospitable home." They went on from there for Omaha, by way of the Union Pacific "through the frost and snow of the Rocky Mountains." By January third, they were as far west as Nevada. Mrs. Roberts, writing back to Mrs. Cady, mentioned seeing "mountains piled on mountains, towering to the skies." She thought the Rockies immense and grand and said she was "glad to feel" that her Father "made them all." Probably because the love of level country was ingrained in her system, she added, "I am satisfied with mountain scenery." Mrs. Roberts stated that on their way out, "for five nights I did not take off my clothes. I slept on the seats, and five and a half days I ate my meals from a lunch basket, except one meal, and when I landed I felt well and not much tired." She said, "You can never conceive how extremely *dirty* we got on the cars. They burned soft coal and it was *fearful*." [\[46\]](#)

They arrived in Oakland, California, on the fifth of January. Mr. and Mrs. M. F. Bishop met them at the station and took them to their home at Alameda. Mr. Roberts commented that Oakland was a city of some ten thousand inhabitants which was on the mainland across the bay from San Francisco. He said that the railroads terminated there, and that the passengers were transferred by ferry across the bay about four or five miles to the larger city. Alameda, south of Oakland, and separated by only a narrow ship channel from the bay over which the cars passed on a drawbridge, was a growing town. Many of the business men of San Francisco resided there. [\[47\]](#)

Mr. Roberts began his activities there in a small way, preaching the day after they arrived, to a few people who gathered in the home where they were staying, that day being Sunday. He also preached there on Tuesday evening, and wrote that one backslider had been reclaimed. On Thursday evening, they went across the coast range of mountains to a small town, eighteen miles distant, named La Fayette, where he preached to a "small but attentive congregation." Then he traveled eight miles up the valley to Pacheco, a town of three or four hundred people in "Contra Costa County." A Mr. Horton had gone there and found that no regular services were being held in the town. There was a Presbyterian Church, "a cheap temporary building" in which visiting ministers occasionally held a service. In contrast to this was a "substantially built Odd Fellows Hall, in which meetings were regularly held." Mr. Horton had been able to stir up sufficient interest there that "some of the leading Odd Fellows became converted and left the lodge." Out of that meeting a small Free Methodist Church was organized, the Presbyterian Church was reorganized, and a Congregational Church was formed and a pastor settled. Mr. Roberts held a quarterly meeting there over the Sabbath, and there was sufficient interest shown for him to remain throughout the week with the result that a "few young persons . . . were saved." [\[48\]](#) Going back to Alameda, he preached in the Methodist Episcopal Church and reported that "the truth was well received." [\[49\]](#) He said he had "abundant invitations to preach in other churches" but that he had not been sent there for that purpose. [\[50\]](#)

The great need of "earnest Christian effort" was matched by the obstacles which were "great and powerful," Mr. Roberts said. He thought organized opposition to the New Testament was so strong that the churches made no effort to meet it, but lowered their standard to avoid all issues "with the numerous and powerful secret societies." He also noticed a "general indifference" to religion that he had never seen elsewhere. Sabbath desecration was common. The fine, sunshiny weather permitted the people to be out of doors. He thought that the country which had been originally settled by the Roman Catholics, with

their ideas of the Sabbath as a day of recreation, had an influence for evil. Many of the permanent residents were old miners who came to dig for gold. They had lived so long without the Sabbath and without the restraints of Christianity that they did not like to assume them now. However, the people were awakening to the importance of the temperance questions, he thought, and temperance meetings were becoming common. Since the people went there to make money, of course they could not look with favor upon any religion that interfered with the purpose that brought them there. His faith arose, however, above all obstacles to assert that he believed that "this beautiful land may be redeemed to Christ, because we believe in the Holy Ghost."[\[51\]](#)

Mrs. Roberts brought in a note of their home surroundings and of her reactions to California. She evidently felt that the people who entertained them, not being accustomed to company, were finding it somewhat difficult. She wrote from a bedroom where there had been no fire all winter, but the sun had shone in all day. Nights and mornings it was so chilly that "one needs a fire" she confided. The weather was mild but it seemed to her sometimes that she "would like one breath of good freezing air." She thought the climate was not as bracing to the nervous system. Mr. Roberts was having difficulty, she wrote, getting over a cold he had taken on the way out.[\[52\]](#)

The indifference of the people to religion was very hard on Mr. Roberts, but he expected God to come in power so that they could "break through the crust."[\[53\]](#) A group of friends finally rented the Second Advent Church on Eddy Street in San Francisco for twenty-five dollars a month, and continued their meetings there, beginning February second. The attendance was small and those who came were for the most part members of the various churches. Only a few were helped spiritually. Mr. Roberts commented that men out for riches and to enjoy the pleasures of the world would not respond. "Men but a few steps from the grave," he mourned, "with a full knowledge of their condition, will tell you with the utmost coolness" that they do not want religion.[\[54\]](#)

The Roberts rented a moderate sized, furnished room in which they were keeping house. He said it seemed a little awkward at first to have but one room for "kitchen, dining room, study, and bedroom," but they were getting along quite well. "It is a beautiful country," he concluded, "now in the middle of February. The fields are green; pinks, roses, and other flowers are in bloom: it seems like May at home." Then he exclaimed, "O that this pleasant land might be won back to God."[\[55\]](#)

The new living quarters they had secured were described by Mr. Roberts in a letter to his daughter-in-law. He said:

You would be amused to see us living in our little room about fourteen feet by fifteen. This answers for cooking, sleeping, writing and all the purposes of a house. Like a good husband as I am, I get up in the morning, make a fire, and put on the tea-kettle. Our water we bring upstairs in a quart pitcher and a three pint tin pail. The most of our wood I bring from a carpenter's shop about a quarter of a mile distant. We are learning and practicing economy. I find, since admitted to the kitchen cabinet, that housekeeping is a great art. What we fail in variety we make up in honey. I got sick of paying a bit a pound, so went

among the Commission men to buy some. The first inquiry was, 'How much do you want, two or three tons?' I bought a can of sixty pounds, nice strained honey for 5½ cents a pound.[\[56\]](#)

Mrs. Roberts also commented on the simple style of their living in this "hired room." She said they enjoyed this far more than moving about from place to place among the people. Up to that date, the people had taken care of their expenses. This, they considered good in view of the "hard times" there, for many were out of work. Most people there, she said, "take it as easy as they can." Some very fine families were there from the East. A good many of them who had been there for a long time, had fallen into California ways, which, she thought, resulted from their mining habits. "Very many seem as if camped down for a season." Many rent furnished rooms and live out at restaurants, she asserted. They had tried restaurant fare for a season, but because they wanted to have a little bit of "home feeling" they had decided to cook for themselves. Evidently she was quite pleased that they were able to find a room to themselves, however inelegant it might have been. She wrote, "Our room does seem like *home indeed* to us. I can never tell anyone how thankful we are for it." She told her husband that they were prepared by that experience to live anywhere.

The kindnesses of the people were appreciated. A "sister" washed their "flannels," and their other clothes they had done by a chinaman. Many things had been sent them to eat. "Some things we have a good laugh over and others we eat with great thankfulness. Praise God. This is the most of a faith home I ever got into." She continued her letter to her son George, telling him that the week before she thought that they were living on pretty short rations, so decided to ask the Lord for help. As she prayed, she became bold and said, "Lord, we want a *good many things*." She said they had had so little variety that she began to desire something "more than usual." A basket full of different things was in her mind's eye. "Right away," she recorded, "there came a basket with a beautiful baked fowl and bread with it, and jelly. Another brought pie and cake and butter, etc." This reminded her of the man who said he never spoke to the Lord about his wants, but He gave him so much it made him ashamed.[\[57\]](#)

The wickedness of the city called forth the anathemas of Mr. Roberts. He denounced:

This is the most outrageously wicked city I was ever in. The Jews "Covenant Hall" as they call it, or "Synagogue of Satan" as I call it, has a dance in it nearly every Sunday night. The last Saturday night we were waked up and kept awake an hour or more by loud singing in their saloon. I looked at the watch. It was half past two A. M. Tonight they are to have played in their theatres the Crucifixion of our Savior, a piece of blasphemy so daring that it was not permitted in England or France. I hope the city will not sink till we get out of it.[\[58\]](#)

He also noted the monopolies developing there. "This is a singular country," he commented. "Everything goes by extremes. This is more of a tendency to monopoly here than in the East." Though raw sugars were imported from the Sandwich Islands free of import duty, yet refined sugars were twenty per cent higher than in the East. There was but one refinery, and they, of course, made large profits. Petroleum

retailed at fifty cents a gallon, though there were oil wells farther south, but, he judged, they lacked oil refineries.

Concerning the gambling interests there, he wrote, "In San Francisco, as in New York, and other cities, the leading business of the leading men appears to be stock gambling." He thought they were like "successful robbers" for what they gained others lost. He told of their procedure when a new mine was discovered. If the owners were satisfied with legitimate profits they did not put stock on the market, but worked the mine to best advantage and divided the proceeds. But if they were gamblers, they put a part, less than half the stock, on the market, being careful to keep the control in their own hands. They then made large dividends so that the stock sold at a large price. When all the stock had been disposed of, they would break their machinery or have the mine flooded with water, and so find it necessary to make an assessment. The holders were, under those circumstances, anxious to sell, and the promoters would then buy back the stock at a nominal price. "It is said by those who claim to know" he asserted, "that the stock of a good mine, honestly managed, is never put upon the market."[\[59\]](#) Mrs. Roberts wrote to her daughter-in-law, Anna Roberts, that some of the old Californians wonder how "your father got so correct an understanding of the stock business."[\[60\]](#) In a letter to his son George, Mr. Roberts said "one of the old Californians" told him he gave a better account of "how stocks are managed here" than he could have given himself.[\[61\]](#)

Mr. Roberts also had some comments to make about land and landowners. The best of the land, he asserted, was owned by only a few, comparatively. Some owned ten thousand acres and some more. A farm of one hundred and sixty acres would be assessed at fifty dollars an acre. One of a better quality of land and improved, and ten thousand acres large would be assessed at five dollars per acre. The house of Mr. Crocker, the great railroad magnate, who had recently died, was assessed at only twenty-five thousand dollars, which, he thought, was not a quarter of the cost of the wall around his grounds. The whole, he judged, would have cost a million dollars. These injustices had stirred up the working man, and had made Dennis Kearney a leader. Though he did not have sympathy with him, yet he thought there were great wrongs which ought to be redressed. He thought the press in San Francisco was "venal and corrupt." Politics did not escape his notice. "Corruption holds such fearful sway that one can hardly touch politics without being polluted," he asserted.[\[62\]](#)

Going back to the religious work they were attempting, some account is given of the meeting. On March third, Mrs. Roberts wrote that Mr. Roberts had been "very much blest in his preaching." Also she reported that "a good many had been saved and very many had been blest and encouraged in the way to heaven." The house of worship was "well filled."[\[63\]](#)

In the April issue of *The Earnest Christian*, Mr. Roberts noted that he had then preached forty-two times, and had spoken to the largest congregation to date on the previous Sabbath evening. He referred again to the low standard of religion the people held. Many did not see "any inconsistency in being very wicked" and at the same time "very religious." When he approached a leading merchant of the city and coast about seeking the Lord, the man who had then lost everything through drink replied, "O, that is not what I want; it is to stop drinking. I am religious now." A young man who had sought religion at the altar, but

who had not been seen for several days, was approached by Mr. Roberts and asked how he was getting along. "O," he replied, "I am all right now. I have stopped drinking and swearing, and Sabbath-breaking. I have only one bad habit, smoking, left, and I intend to quit that." One of the great obstacles to the establishment of a work in that "metropolis on our Pacific Coast" was "the enormous valuation put upon real estate in the city." Mr. Roberts was anxious to stay until he could see a church permanently established.[\[64\]](#)

The protracted meeting in San Francisco was closed the last day of March. During that two month period, Mr. Roberts had preached twice a day with the exception of Saturday. He reported "a goodly number of conversions." From there, they went to San Jose for about a week and preached in the "Friends Meeting House," which had been "kindly opened" to them. A rainy time and small congregations did not look so encouraging, but he left the results to the Lord, he said. The city itself was "beautiful."[\[65\]](#) Mrs. Roberts said she had never seen roses until she went there. They grew so finely, in little trees, she wrote, and large bushes, and climbing to the tops of the houses, all kinds and colors. Over against the flowers, however, were the fleas. She said, "I have had terrible times with them in some places."[\[66\]](#) Mr. Roberts wrote that San Jose was then a town of ten thousand inhabitants, had many fine residences with yards full of shrubbery and flowers. He noted that the Jesuits had a college there, as well as a Catholic convent and college for young ladies. Also the Pacific University of the Methodist Episcopal Church was located there. The next Sabbath he expected to commence a "protracted meeting" in Alameda.[\[67\]](#)

The meeting at Alameda was not too successful but some members of other churches who attended received help, Mr. Roberts thought. He was so impressed with the weather that he said he wished sometimes he were located on the west coast. He was deterred, however, by the consideration that every kind of business operated on the principle of making the "rich richer." He felt the foundation of a good work religiously had been laid, and he was then making his plans not to remain there longer than the latter part of May.[\[68\]](#)

After the Roberts left, they received letters telling them that the work was encouraging. Word came from Pacheco that another had been converted. Mr. Horton wrote that the work in San Francisco gave cause for encouragement, and Mrs. Bishop wrote that the meetings in Alameda were "gaining in interest."[\[69\]](#) Mr. Bishop wrote that many had inquired about them after they left, and thanked God that they had ever "come to the coast."[\[70\]](#) Toward the close of the year, Mr. Horton wrote an appeal for Mr. Roberts to return, or at least to send "Brother Vorheis" temporarily. Some were not joining the new church because they had no permanent help of the right character. There was not strong insistence upon the return of Mr. Roberts just then for fear it would interfere with a permanent move there to which they looked forward.[\[71\]](#) That Mr. and Mrs. Roberts did think of going back to California soon is evident from a letter she wrote him in which she said, "In reference to our going to California I think in some respects, there is a greater cross in it than there was before." She thought, though, that perhaps they ought to go. She was anxious, she said, that the Lord would make the path of duty very plain to her husband.[\[72\]](#)

On their way home from California, they stopped over at Salt Lake City, and attended two Mormon

services, one in the Tabernacle in the afternoon and another in a smaller church in the evening. Mr. Roberts published in *The Earnest Christian* a description of the region, the city, the Mormon Temple, and their worship in two Methodist churches in the city.^[73] He thought the Mormons then were mostly from the "ignorant masses" though occasionally there were persons of intelligence among them. About two-thirds of the twenty-five thousand inhabitants were Mormons. The remarkably quiet Sabbath, with stores closed and no amusements, impressed him with its having more the appearance of a Christian city than some which laid claim to the name. He was sufficiently impressed with the oval shaped Mormon Temple to give its dimensions, and something of its construction. He thought it was capable of seating twelve thousand persons, and was informed it could be vacated in one and a half minutes. The great organ with three thousand pipes, and the elevated dais on the west end where sat the President, twelve Apostles and the Bishops, were noted. The worship service was much like a common Protestant service, with a sermon somewhat evangelical, followed by an exhortation which was distinctively Mormon in doctrine. Going in the evening to one of the churches located in each of the twenty-two wards, he was introduced more clearly to the distinctive doctrines of the sect. "Sealed marriages" that made the union eternal, the adherents becoming gods and peopling new worlds, the possibility of accepting Mormonism after death to become servants of the others who had accepted the doctrines in life, were all referred to by the speaker.^[74] Mr. Roberts commented, "All religions are to be rejected which make our future felicity depend, not upon what we do, but upon what a priest does to or for us."^[75] and then quoted, "We have a great, high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God."^[76]

3. Northwestern Trip

In the latter part of June, 1882, Mr. Roberts went to Minnesota to help in meetings. When almost to his destination, he wrote back to his wife, "I love you, have fellowship with you, prize you, honor you, and in some measure appreciate you."^[77] The following day he wrote again that he had arrived the night before in time to preach. William Cusick was urging him strongly to go up north, informing him that the meetings he had held in Alexandria two years before were still being talked about, and had "made a great stir." So earnest had Mr. Cusick been in his desire, that he had obtained a pass from St. Paul to Winnepeg for both Mr. and Mrs. Roberts. Then Mr. Roberts wrote about the duties at home. He asked his wife to see about putting the "plaster" on all the corn and potatoes, assuring her that he expected "to find a fine looking garden" when he got back.^[78] With reference to his wife's advice on preaching, he wrote her, "I preached twice on Sunday and stood it well. I tried to obey your direction about my elocution and to let my voice fall and not speak on the same key."^[79]

The next day while passing through Minneapolis, he marveled at the rapidity of the city's growth; the people then claimed seventy-five thousand for the population. He also thought it was "astonishing what a fever possesses our American people to get away from home in the summer" with comfortable nights there, yet the cars were "crowded" with people going to the much advertised lake resorts.^[80]

He then referred to a letter from his wife, in which she had mentioned attending meetings conducted by a Mrs. Beckman in Chicago. He added:

The fact is, though I enjoy hearing Mrs. Beekman, yet I am afraid of these deep experiences that people can enjoy while living in manifest violation of the plain command of the Bible. If we can set aside one command as unimportant. why may we not another? While we may lay too much stress upon externals, is it not an equal mistake to lay no stress upon them?[\[81\]](#)

He thought that it was "time that a proper attention to these matters" should be placed "among the rudiments of a Christian life." Then he asked, "But are we to get beyond the rudiments in the sense of neglecting them? Are we not to get beyond them as we get beyond the alphabet in the Bible?" He added, "I would like to be a symmetrical Christian, perfectly developed in every particular."[\[82\]](#)

Mr. Roberts went on to Clear Lake, Minnesota, where William Cusick had made a preaching appointment for him. The day following, he was "out on the prairie drinking in the pure air" and trying to find some prairie flowers to send his wife. After having a "delicious nights sleep" he had a breakfast of fresh fish and boiled eggs. The night before he had preached a sermon "with comparatively little power in it." He asked his wife by letter if there were not danger of his being so careful not to hurt himself that he did not help others as he should.[\[83\]](#) Doubtless his wife had been admonishing him not to exert himself too much because of his failing health.

He then went on to Alexandria where he had preached two years before. He arrived on Thursday at three o'clock to find "truly Western improvidence." There was no team to meet him, but a boy was there who told him to go on the "Omnibus." He hesitated on account of his baggage but was assured that it would "come right along." It didn't, so he sent a team for it, but the man had waited to do his chores before he went. About seven o'clock the Omnibus man came along with his baggage. William Cusick helped him to get his tent erected. A bed was "already made" which was covered by a "nice feather bed" which one of the campers had contributed. He thought that was one of the best beds he ever had on a campground. Replying to a statement of his wife, he said, "I think you are right. We need something more than emotional religion, but it seems to be a fact that even intelligent people will not move till moved upon. It does not seem to be enough to convince. I convince, but I do not get people to act." He confessed, "There is where I fail." He thought he "certainly ought to do better" than he had ever done, but he did not know that he would succeed.[\[84\]](#)

Of special note to Mr. Roberts was the fact that the Methodist and Congregational preachers were in the audience in that camp meeting. He thought that since he had preached twice without taking a rest the day before, and had come to the close of the day without being especially tired, it indicated he must be getting some "resurrection power." Again, William Cusick pressed him to go on for another meeting, that time to Motley. He wrote that he would not go there if he could well get out of it, but Mr. Cusick had "advertised extensively" that he would be there, and it seemed unwise not to do so.

Back home, Mrs. Roberts was overwhelmed with duties and responsibilities which she bore to lighten the load for her husband. They had just moved into their new home in North Chili, built on the highest land in that characteristically level country. She wrote to Lucy Sellew Coleman, "It is very evident that I have

not moved into heaven. I have too much of worldly matters to look after. I cannot get them all *moved in*, so I go *in* and *out*." Besides carrying out her husband's instructions which came to her by mail, she was busy with guests in the home almost constantly. She wrote her husband of the many burdens that pressed her, and in reply he acknowledged that he felt the "care of home matters a good deal."[\[85\]](#)

At Alexandria, Mr. Roberts did not go out to the evening meetings, but retired at 8:30 and slept right on through the meetings, evidencing the fact that his natural vigor had broken somewhat under the strenuous labors of his life. He was keeping warm in the somewhat cool weather with "woolen drawers, thick coat and overcoat" which he wore both morning and night.[\[86\]](#)

His course to Motley evidently took him through Fargo and Manitoba. His next communication reported that he had reached there on the sixth of July. There, the man of many religious duties, had a day of sport. "Yesterday," he said, "I went fishing and caught seven great, nice fish and had all I could eat for supper and breakfast." This experience and the beautiful lakes of the region so enthused him that he remarked, "I have not got the Western fever but if I were a young man, I think I should try it in some of these new places which are springing up like magic all over this great Northwest."[\[87\]](#) He exclaimed about the exquisite beauties of the Red River valley, its rolling prairies, without a tree or a shrub, as far as the eye could reach. The people were "flocking from all lands." He did not close, however, without enclosing a special note on business, in which he asked her to send books on to "Brother Bradfield," since the ones he received had evidently not been properly bound; to be sure that Charlie got that "plaster" for the garden, and to see that Julius would "cut out, hoe out, or pull out all the weeds."[\[88\]](#)

Then Mr. Roberts found himself in a dilemma. He had received a letter from Professor Clark Jones at Spring Arbor Seminary to hold a Quarterly Meeting for them, and he wrote an acceptance of the date. Before he mailed it, however, a letter from his wife had come, and so great was her insistence that he return home that he decided not to mail the letter to Professor Jones. He left the letter in his tent, evidently already addressed, and someone who came by, wishing to do him a favor, took the letter and mailed it for him. Then he had received a dispatch from Professor Jones that they would be expecting him. He promised his wife to try to get a substitute for the meeting, but if he did not succeed, he said resignedly, "I suppose I will have to stop over for it." Then he added, "Do not feel hurt over this blunder and lay it up against me, for it will be a greater disappointment to me not to get home this week than it possibly can for you."[\[89\]](#)

After spending some time at home, another western tour took him to his Conferences. While in Waterloo, Iowa, enjoying the company of the Rev. William Gould, one of the prominent men of the church, he mentioned the fact that they had difficulty in getting the men to preach, "so he had set the girls to it." He said,

I like their appearance and their spirit very much. They come the nearest of any I have seen to the description in the song,

They

look
like
men
in
uniform
They
look
like
men
of
war.

They all wear black clothes and black hats. They dress neatly with a plain, very narrow standing collar. They have a plain ribbon around their hats.

The reports from these young ladies indicated they were doing "a good work," he said.[\[90\]](#)

That year he wrote in The Earnest Christian that he had probably spent more time at camp meetings than ever before in a single summer, and that not one of them had been "unfruitful in good results."[\[91\]](#)

4. Eastern Work

In July of 1883, Mr. Roberts was in New York City holding meetings. While at the home of the Mackeys, he was somewhat amused by the way "Aunt Jane" was so "eloquent in the praises of her daughter," evidently hoping for something by way of attention from his son George. He said, "I did not 'let on any' but congratulated her on her success with her children." Then he added, "I presume the daughter is a nice girl, but New York has gotten so bad that I almost feel like asking 'if any good thing' can come out of it." It appeared to him that the best of it had gone out of it long ago.[\[92\]](#)

With a Mr. W., with whom he was staying at Brooklyn, he had a little pleasant recreation. "In the afternoon," he wrote, "he and I went to Coney Island. I told him it seemed to me there like a carnival of hell. But the ocean was nice and though there was not much surf, I had a good swim. It seemed to do me good and give me life and vigor."[\[93\]](#) On the 26th he again "had a good swim." He commented, "The breakers there do not amount to anything."[\[94\]](#)

While there, he visited Jerry McCauley of the Water Street Mission and described him as "tallish, raw-boned, Scotch-Irish, shrewd, ignorant, and I believe honest." He commented, "I am surprised at his success and hardly know how to account for it."[\[95\]](#)

Mr. Roberts was preaching at Brooklyn during this period, and in the services one day of that meeting, he felt that his "commission was renewed."[\[96\]](#)

In February, 1884, he attended and lectured at a Prohibition and Anti-Secrecy Convention held at the National Capital in Lincoln Hall. Frederick Douglass gave an address the first evening on civil rights, "a masterly defense of the rights of the colored people," Mr. Roberts thought. In the afternoon of the 21st, Mr. Roberts "spoke in favor of Prohibition," followed in the evening by an eloquent address by Dr. Miner. At the dedication of a new building purchased by the Christian Association, Secretary Dr. Stoddard, President Blanchard and ex-Senator Pomeroy made remarks. Ex-Senator Pomeroy was nominated for President. Mr. Roberts thought "a great and powerful party embracing all the best elements of society should be organized," but added, "whether those who have taken it in hand possess the organizing ability to do it, remains to be seen." The man who sponsored the rights of women in his own church noted particularly "the absence of those generally recognized as ladies of the Prohibition party."[\[97\]](#)

While in Washington, he visited Congress and the Senate The House made a favorable impression upon him and the Senate he characterized as "a dignified, orderly body of men. He listened with interest to a debate on the "money question" which might have been an added incentive to finish his book on *First Lessons on Money* which appeared two years later. He preached three times to a "small band of pilgrims" at the Free Methodist Church, and to a larger congregation at Alexandria, Virginia, whom he characterized as "heroic."[\[98\]](#)

5. Southern Trip

In 1881, Mr. Roberts had spent some time in the southland. Once again, in 1884, he was on his way to Texas and Louisiana. He traveled to Texas by way of St. Louis and was heartened by the Christian conversation of several of the preachers and their wives who rode with him on their way to their appointments. "Christian conversation," he said, "interspersed with spiritual songs, made the journey seem short." Commenting on the preachers he said, "These devoted soldiers of the cross go with joy to toil, to suffering and to victory." On the Missouri-Pacific train enroute to Dallas, Texas, he noted the "turbulent Missouri River, the beautiful prairie country" settled with a thriving population. Sitting up because he thought he could not afford a sleeping car, he passed the night in comparative comfort, to wake up in Indian territory. This section, he related, was divided among the Creeks, the Choctaws, Cherokees and Chickasaws. They were partly civilized and had fair houses and flourishing schools and churches. "Thanks to our national government," he said, "they have no saloons." He thought it indicated a "lack of a decent standard of morality" on the part of the whites to try to dispossess the Indians simply because their lands were desirable. He thought if their lands "were a thousand times more valuable" than they were, there would be no adequate reason to rob them of their homes.[\[99\]](#)

At Dennison, Texas, where the train stopped over, he ate in a "French Restaurant." His "tolerable 30 cent dinner" which began with "ox-tail soup" and included lettuce, which seemed out of season in December, sufficed until he reached Ennis that night at eleven.[\[100\]](#) He arrived there in time to conduct the infant Conference which was composed of fifteen men and seven women. He said, "They have the best spirit in doing improper things of any people that I ever saw."[\[101\]](#) A Brother Phillip Allen had held up the

passing of "Brother Matterby's character" because he was "too formal and had not the Spirit." Mr. Roberts said that after a long discussion it appeared that the accused preacher had done about the best of any of them. He commented the next day, "This Conference is not doing very well. A spirit of judging has crept in among them and there is something brought against several of the preachers." His reaction to all this was, "I do not like Texas as well as I did when I was here before."[\[102\]](#) Probably the harder times affected them. There were great cracks in the ground caused by the heat "so deep that a ten foot rail" could be run down into its whole length. As a consequence, their staple product, cotton, was only about a quarter of a crop.[\[103\]](#)

Mr. Roberts attributed the backwardness of the work to circumstances that were entirely out of their control. A fine impression of holiness work had been created by a holiness camp meeting held five years before by G. R. Harvey and Dr. Bush of the Methodist Church South. The meeting had been eminently successful, resulting in four hundred conversions, and two hundred professions of holiness. People were favorable to holiness, until a Rev. Richard Haines, of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, who professed and preached the experience of holiness, had followed the above mentioned camp meeting, and preached that people should come out of all the churches, claiming that the church was an instrument of the devil. This man professed unusual spiritual gifts and had indulged in the "wildest excesses," including waiting in an upper room with some of his followers for translation. He died and his body was kept for days awaiting the resurrection until finally police discovered it and forced burial. Mr. Roberts said, "A perfect revolution took place in the minds of the people, and the doctrine of holiness became as unpopular as it had been popular before."[\[104\]](#)

While at Ennis, he mentioned receiving twenty-five dollars for advertising in *The Earnest Christian*. He also revealed some of his personal habits. He said, "I go to bed about nine or half past and generally get up after seven. I seldom omit my morning bath."[\[105\]](#) He did not get the "hang" of the meeting house there. They had a big tall stove in the middle of the church floor which he got them to move. Then, evidently with fire going, they threw open six big windows and three doors, giving ventilation from side to side and from end to end.[\[106\]](#)

Before leaving Texas on his way to Louisiana Mr. Roberts wrote his wife, "Shall I bring you a darkee from La If so what kind?"[\[107\]](#) His wife replied to this sally Was it a darkey or a donkey you asked about? I conclude the former Well you may decide the kind. I guess a girl" Then she became suspicious, and asked, "But do you really mean it? What if I could not get along with them? I should want one well recommended as to disposition, etc." Again she faltered, "But if you prefer a boy, all right. Maybe a boy would be of most service as he could work out of doors." She added in some doubt, "But you may not want either."[\[108\]](#)

On November fifth, he left Corsicana for Welcome Home, Louisiana, to hold his last conference of that year. The sparsely bearing fields of cotton through which he passed drew forth the comment that farmers had to mortgage their cotton crops for means to live on, even while they were raising it. Hence, the poor yield meant "hard times for all the people." A closed cotton factory at Terrill as he traveled east, the vast prairies with great herds of cattle, miles of woodland, the soil of deep red clay, were points of interest

and emphasis before he arrived at Marshall, Texas. From that old town of five thousand inhabitants, which had formerly been the capital of the state, he went on to Shreveport, another old city, founded by the French, and which still had French-speaking people.[\[109\]](#)

He had been concerned about the presidential election before he left Corsicana, admitting that he felt an "unusual anxiety" about this one. He declared if Cleveland were elected he would feel almost like leaving the country.[\[110\]](#) On his way across the state of Texas, he had read a Texas paper which claimed that Cleveland was elected. He bantered his wife, "If so I want you to sell out if you can before I get home. Let's go to England!" Abruptly turning to nature, he told his wife he was disappointed at not getting a mocking bird, but that it was against the law to catch them. Probably thinking of his penciled epistles, vacillating between politics and nature, he queried, "Do you get tired of my letters? Tell me honestly if you do." Then he explained, "I write every day as a boy whistles going through grave yards, in part at least, to keep my courage up." Then he admitted, "I get such a longing at times to be at home once more." On November sixth, the certainty that Cleveland had been elected brought the reaction that it was "a national calamity and a national disgrace."[\[111\]](#)

Arriving at Monroe, a town of three thousand inhabitants, located on the Ouachita River, he had to ride in a buggy thirty-eight miles farther to Columbia. Riding down the river valley, one of the most prosperous portions of Louisiana in the days of slavery, he noted that the buildings were then dilapidated in appearance. One informed planter told him that they were all poorer than they had been ten years before, and that they were growing poorer. He analyzed this poverty as being due to two causes: first, that the negroes were not as enterprising then and could not be counted on to do the same work as during slavery; and second, that since 1880, the Mississippi had been overflowing its banks and doing immense damage. He noticed water marks on some of the trees, four to eight feet above the ground.[\[112\]](#) There were about ten negroes to every white and they did not seem to be doing much, he thought, but "*enjoying their freedom.*" He noticed several of them milking their cows that morning between eleven and twelve o'clock.[\[113\]](#)

On November the tenth, he was at his destination, Welcome Home, and was up and dressed by seven o'clock writing by the light of a blazing pine knot. One side of him was hot and the other side was cold, but by "frequently turning around" he managed to keep comfortable. Sitting down after breakfast, he jotted down that the dining room was in a building about a rod from the house, the kitchen in the back end, and that there was a rousing fire in the fire place. The outside doors were wide open and the windows with their sashes were out entirely. The family were then seated at the table, and two colored boys were standing before the fire. The fare, he said, was "nice baked sweet potato and hot biscuits, boiled rice and hot corn bread, milk gravy with no meat, butter or syrup." They ate their potatoes with salt and their biscuits plain. He took tea while the rest had coffee. He reported that he "made out a good breakfast" and felt thankful, no symptoms of dyspepsia.[\[114\]](#)

While there he made some observations and comments on the surrounding country. This he viewed while taking a "delightful" horse back ride of eight miles over the country. He wrote that cotton was raised until the fields were exhausted and they then threw it out "to commons." These soon grew up in weeds, but

piners covered the hill country quickly. Where cotton had been grown ten or fifteen years before, he saw pines twenty to thirty feet high. He thought that the girdling of pine trees, planting cotton among them, waiting until they were dry enough to burn, was wasteful. Many such trees, he estimated, which would be capable of making from five hundred to a thousand feet of lumber, stood within three miles of the Ouachita River, navigable for rafts and boats to New Orleans. As he traveled from one plantation to another, he observed that they hardly ever joined, but each was a world "by itself and within itself." [\[115\]](#)

A good meeting was in progress, according to Mr. Roberts, with forty or fifty attending. It was held under a roof built on large oak posts, and open all around. This might have been part of the church which he mentioned that they were building on a "nice elevation at the edge of a small clearing surrounded by woods" almost two miles from a public road. To it the people came on foot and on horseback. The ladies, too, rode on horses, and there was not a "wheeled vehicle to be seen." He thought it too bad for them to have to send to New Orleans to obtain window sash when these useful trees surrounded them, some from eighty to one hundred feet high, and three feet or so through.

Some spiritual good was done, he thought. One day, two backsliders had been reclaimed, and an elderly lady was "gloriously saved." Her expressions of joy "touched" all of them. [\[116\]](#)

He had taken a stroll that day among second growth pines, in an old cotton field which had been "left out," that is, not cultivated. He was being entertained in a home where the man was his age but his wife was young. They had three small children. He wrote, "I have lived with babies ever since I attended the Illinois Conference." At this home where he said the man owned a thousand acres, they did not have a carpet on the floor, and he thought they had no broom. Finally he did see one with a broken handle. They swept the floor with a "handful of tasseled rods." Because he arrived a little early, he had a little time for rest and relaxation. He remarked, "I have had two good seasons of prayer today in the woods." Mr. Roberts played the doctor while there. He heard his host and wife talking about giving the baby calomel for colic, but he suggested catnip tea, about which they had never heard. The baby slept all night, so that it got up in the morning bright and good-natured. He conceded, "My reputation as a doctor for babies is established." [\[117\]](#)

Lighted to the meetings each night by pine torches, riding through the woods by trail and bridle path, commenting on the pines and the tall beeches, eating the beef that had been killed for the occasion, he came to have a sympathy for these "poor but pious" people. "The people appear kind and religiously inclined," he commented, "but they lack in health." "No one says he is well." The common expression with them was "tolerably well," but he said, "I tell them, *I am well*." He was told that three out of five white children died before the age of twelve. Malaria abounded. [\[118\]](#) He felt "a good deal drawn out to them and for them." Everywhere in the South he said he was treated "with kindness and consideration."

The meetings there attracted people from quite a distance. During that period, five hundred people who attended, some drawn forty miles in wagons by ox teams, were lodged and fed free of charge. Before he left, Mr. Roberts organized a Conference, and appointed nine preachers to circuits. Fearing that their relation to the North might be a hindrance to them, he urged them to go back to their own church, but

they thought otherwise. The last Sabbath he was there he preached three times "out of doors."[\[120\]](#)

On his way home, he rode forty miles in a buggy, and was three nights on the cars, traveling about fifteen hundred miles. He recounted that the Lord had wonderfully kept him, and that he could not say that he was tired. He reached home on Saturday, November twenty-second, and went to church on Sunday. Since the previous June, he had attended nine camp meetings, had held ten conferences, and had "worked hard at each." He claimed he had nothing of that "jaded feeling," and when urged to preach his first Sunday back home, he "could not resist."[\[121\]](#)

C. FOREIGN TRAVEL

1. The Occasion for It

The Centenary Conference on Foreign Missions was held in London, June 9 - 19, for the purpose of helping to solve the problems on the missionary field, and to advance the cause of missions. The Conference had engaged the attention of the American churches for some time previous to the date of the meeting, through the visit of the Organizing Secretary who came to this country in November preceding and visited the various missionary societies in the United States and Canada.[\[122\]](#) Whether Mr. Roberts was one of the fifty-seven Secretaries visited in the United States is not known, but the interest of the Free Methodist Church in the enterprise is evidenced by the action of the Missionary Board which met in January 25, 1888 at Franklin Street, Chicago. A communication from William Kincaid was read, as well as from others, relative to the proposed World's Missionary Convention, requesting the Board to elect delegates to the said Convention. By a rising vote, unanimously chosen, B. T. Roberts was elected, and also T. B. Arnold. Both of these men "generously proposed" to take care of their own expenses.[\[123\]](#)

2. Preparations for It

Mr. Roberts received information from Bywater, Tanqueray and Company from Victoria Street, London, concerning the purchase of his ticket at a reduced rate because he was a member of the conference, and also that the company was throwing open "the spacious offices" of their "Missionary Agency" at 17 Water Street, Liverpool, and 79 Queen Victoria Street, almost opposite the British and Foreign Bible Societies House, for the *free use* of all delegates. Appended in ink on the bottom of this communication is the information, "We believe several of the missionaries of your esteemed society have been in business relations with ourselves."[\[124\]](#)

When Mr. Roberts arrived in New York, he wrote to his wife on stationery of Gray Bros., Steam Job Printers, informing her that "the Lord brought me through here in peace and safety." He had purchased his ticket to England and had a room with but one other in it. On the ferry boat, he said he found himself unconsciously singing,

All the world is dark and dreary

Where'ere I roam,
Oh, brother, how my heart grows weary
Longing for the loved ones at home.

But then, he reflected, how glad he was that he "could sing at all." He called at the office of "Brother B." and was to have dinner with him. He had received a reduction of two dollars on his ticket to New York which he used to pay for the sleeping car. At that late date, about ready to sail, he wrote his wife how much he loved her, and appended, "If you want me not to go, send telegram."[\[125\]](#)

On the same day, he jotted down a few words to his son, Benjamin, who had written to him about selling his horse, Ned. Mr. Roberts told him he thought he might be able to sell Ned for him. He referred to another horse owned by the son of a Mr. Winchester which had brought an offer of seven hundred dollars, and said that horse was handsomer than Ned, but he did not think any better. He told Benjie to ask Mr. Hovey what he would charge for taking Ned over for a month and putting a little flesh on him. He then told him to be careful in going to Chicago and "avoid danger, and fight shy of strangers." "The Lord bless you and take care of you," he prayed; then added, "I will try and take good care of myself."[\[126\]](#)

Mrs. Roberts was much concerned that her husband should look his best at the London Conference. After writing to him about making some adjustment of date for the Canada Conference, and to be sure to buy some oranges and lemons, she said solicitously, "I wanted to tell you that your coat looked well unbuttoned, as you unbuttoned it a little while before you left. Benjie thought the same, but keep the fold in the collar just as Taylor H. pressed it." She was evidently watching the weather reports too, for she noted that there had been a "bad storm on the Atlantic." Trying to calm her own fears, she exhorted him to be "full of courage today."[\[127\]](#)

On the same day, Mr. Roberts was engaged in busy activities both religious and business, preparatory to his trip. He had called on Judge Davis and Mr. McCrossan, and had taken dinner at the home of Hannah Bowns and her husband, called at Louise's, and had then gone to see Mr. Winchester. While at McCrossans he had traded a three years' subscription for *The Earnest Christian* for "a good waterproof coat" for which he asked "Benjie" to make note and credit the same to his account. The day before he had preached, and five young ladies knelt at the altar for prayer, four of whom professed "to find the Lord."[\[128\]](#)

On Saturday before sailing, he attended the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church which was meeting in the Metropolitan Opera House in New York,[\[129\]](#) and which was then coming to the close of its long twenty-seven day session.[\[130\]](#) Of the four hundred and sixty-three members of the Conference,[\[131\]](#) he saw no one whom he knew well. He was present when J. M. Buckley was elected editor of *The Christian Advocate*. Frances Willard, a delegate from the Rock River Conference, received over a hundred votes. She was one of the five lady lay delegates who were affected by the adverse ruling that, though regularly elected, they had no seats in the conference; still she had retained this popularity.[\[132\]](#) Missionary Bishop William Taylor, whom Mr. Roberts had expressed the desire to see,

was on the stand. While Mr. Roberts had been in his San Francisco meetings, previously related, he had mentioned the work of Bishop Taylor there in the same city some time before, and stated that his congregations had kept dwindling until the people reported the congregations were no larger than those of Mr. Roberts during his stay. This, Mr. Roberts said, was due to the thorough going type of gospel Bishop Taylor preached.[\[133\]](#)

Mr. Roberts, writing to his wife from "Brother Gray's office," evidently the same Gray Bros., Steam Job Printers, previously mentioned, said he had not as yet seen his steamer berth, but intended to go and see it that day. He later described it as a state room, shared with the leader of a Welsh band of singers. Already, before even sailing, he was making plans to get back earlier than he had anticipated, telling Mrs. Roberts that he would try to get around and visit London during the conference, thus making it possible to leave sooner.[\[134\]](#)

The next day he wrote again that he had received both the letter and telegram from his wife, and that he had completed his preparations, having bought himself a "good chair, lemons, oranges and bananas." He had reached Winchesters that afternoon, and had "reckoned up his accounts," made some lemonade, and was then sitting down to write to his "beloved." He wrote that Judge Davis had given him a very excellent letter, evidently a letter of introduction to prominent people whom he wished to solicit for help for Chili Seminary. He solicited "Mr. Depew," who informed him that all applications for help should be addressed to him personally, in writing. He said, "I think I shall write him." Trying to solicit help from Mrs. Russell Sage, he had been refused; and Mrs. Marshall Roberts, from whom he had some hopes, had gone to Europe so he was unable to see her. He added, "We must hold on for that fifty thousand dollars from Philadelphia." He then boarded the ship before the letter was sent, and wrote with his customary indelible pencil the following note:

On Board Ship: Brothers Gray and Eakins came with me. My quarters are tolerable. I shall get along all right.

Yours in Jesus
B. T. Roberts

Then he put a P.S.

I wrote above in such haste that I signed it mechanically. I love you very, very dearly, and shall be glad to be back with you again. My own dear one, pray for me.

Your own,
B. T. Roberts[\[135\]](#)

Writing the day her husband was scheduled to sail, Mrs. Roberts noted, "You have been about two hours on the water, if you left at the expected time," and then informed him, "I felt helped in praying for you this morning and can but feel you are blest and more courageous than when you left us." She referred to

the negro spiritual which he said he had sung, stating, "I trust you had a better song than the one you mentioned as singing on Saturday." She then wished for the Lord to make him "glad and happy all the way" knowing that if he were "safe and happy" she would be satisfied. She added, "I never feel it is the Lord's order for us to be very long separated. And he can make this time seem short." She wanted him to "enjoy all and everything in Him" and to let the trip be a change that would rest him even if there should be less of comfort in some ways. Before closing she declared, "I live for you mostly." The following short paragraph on beauty and love was then penned:

The apple blossoms are falling fast, the ground is white in places with the blossoms. The greatest beauty is past. Beauty is short lived any way, wherever we see it. Yet my husband is ever beautiful to me. The soul's eyes see what is far beyond the power of the natural eye to see, or discern. Dearest, I will be with you daily on the Ocean, and Jesus will be nearer than all.[\[136\]](#)

3. Ocean Voyage

On the thirtieth of May, the ship sailed out of New York harbor. Four days previously, his wife had written:

After you get out a day or so, look 'sharp' for any little token of remembrance in the pocket of your satchel. Now I beg of you do not economize on yourself this trip and while in London. Just as far as you can, go and see other places. Do not calculate on bringing home a cent of money but send for more. You always pinch yourself. Don't on this trip.[\[137\]](#)

Mr. Roberts carried with him, perhaps in the pocket of his satchel, a little message from his wife for each day of the voyage. On the envelope was marked, "Letters to the dear Father from E. L. Roberts to be read on the ocean." On the top of one of these notes is written "First Mail at sea for my husband," and reads:

My dearest one,

Be of good cheer. Look up and expect greater blessings of your Father. Do not look behind you, at your home or friends. See God in everything and everywhere.

I commit you to him who controls the waves and my prayers for your safety will ascend continually. God will bless and care for you.

In the greatest love ever
Your own,
E.L.R.[\[138\]](#)

The same day that Mr. Roberts sailed out on the Atlantic for a ten day trip, his sister-in-law, Melissa

Stowe, who had received

spiritual help in meetings he held at Bonus Prairie, Illinois, in 1860, sailed out on the wider ocean of death. A letter written by her husband told that just before she became unconscious she raised both hands and seemed to be looking at something above her, while one of the most "heavenly smiles" rested upon her. Her husband asked her, "Melissa, what do you see?" She replied, "What do I see? A land of rest, the saint's delight, a heaven prepared for me," and repeated the last expression three times. An attendant expressed hope that she would have rest. She replied, "Yes, rest in heaven." Then, sometime before morning, she uttered the words, "Very soon."[\[139\]](#) Mrs. Roberts recounted the scene in a letter to her husband.

Mr. Roberts did not receive the sad news before sailing, but was rather taken up with his ocean voyage. On Monday, June fourth, when he was about half way across the ocean, he wrote that the sea had been smooth and the "weather quite comfortable on the whole." The first two days had been foggy but at that time it was clearer though still somewhat cloudy. He was not particularly enthusiastic about the comforts of his passage and perhaps his "second cabin bill of fare" on this White Star Line, and wondered why people wanted to cross the ocean for pleasure. He thought it well that his wife had stayed at home since the discomforts were "so many and so great." Just what the inconveniences were he forgot to say. Perhaps he didn't like the "sea pie" or the "sago pudding" served at noon that day, or perhaps it was the "scones, cold meats, jam and gruel" of the evening.[\[140\]](#) Or it might have been the upper berth wasn't conducive to rest. He was a good seaman, being sea sick only "a little once."

As usual, he was engaged in religious activities. Three other delegates to the Missionary Conference were also in the second cabin as well as his cabin mate, the Welsh singer, who had just completed a singing tour of America. On Saturday evening, they sang hymns together in the cabin, and Mr. Roberts particularly enjoyed the Welsh singing, perhaps because of his own Welsh ancestry. He then read the Bible and prayed and two others followed. The captain of the vessel was approached for permission to hold services with the steerage passengers on the Sabbath, but the request was not granted. However, services were permitted in the first cabin, and Mr. Roberts listened to Dr. Taylor preach "a good, serviceable, practicable sermon." Perhaps this was Bishop William Taylor who was to be a speaker at the Missionary Convention.[\[141\]](#) In private, Mr. Roberts read a chapter in his Greek Testament, and followed by perusing a History of England, probably brushing up in preparation for the days he would spend in England.

He spent most of his time on the deck until his face was "burned very red" and was "very sore." "I can hardly bear to touch it," he wrote.

He penned an expression of appreciation to his wife for the notes she had sent with him, one marked for each day. One designated for the fifth day was written on very tiny note paper, folded into a petite linen envelope. a beautiful gray in color and diagonally striped, measuring about one inch by two and a half inches in size. He said, "Darling, your letters are a great comfort to me. They are such beautiful notes - like you."[\[142\]](#) Her fifth note began, "Dearest One, I shall have hard work not to *wish* I was with you.

But I expect we shall cross the Ocean together some time." She reminded him that his hymn for the voyage was "How Firm a Foundation." She exhorted him, "Give to the wind your fears if tempted to have any. Let your faith be in full exercise." Then she exclaimed, "Oh, it seems to me to be out on the Ocean would seem like being surrounded by the Infinite One." Another longer note contained a paragraph that even the sixty-five year old Roberts must certainly have read more than once:

The best of my married life is the oneness of spirit I feel with you. You are my God-given husband and I expect better and better days with you. You are dear and very precious to me. I love you always and with an unceasing love. My love is like a deep well. I cannot show it all. I cannot bring it all to the surface. But I do always feel a deep supply on hand.

Evermore in deepest, truest, tender love, your
E.L.R.[\[143\]](#)

In a little note written "Near Queenstown," Mr. Roberts informed his "darling one" that it was then 5:40 P. M., Thursday and that the mail was about to close. Rain had been falling all day and the waves had been running high, but he added, "I have enjoyed it." With more masculine brevity, he closed with, "Darling, I love you so dearly" and signed it "Your own, B. T. Roberts."[\[144\]](#)

4. In England

Two hours after he landed, he wrote, "We reached here this evening about eight o'clock." In order to correct any wrong ideas about time, he told his wife that it was then 5:10 P. M. in North Chili, New York. His passage had been "prosperous" but he was not able to say that he enjoyed traveling; yet being there, he was prepared to make "the best of it." Doubtless his poor health had something to do with the change in his usually interested attitude when traveling. Perhaps his experience in getting to the Lawrence Hotel had exasperated him some. He had started to walk but was "so beset by boys and men *determined*" to carry his baggage that finally, to protect himself, he hired a "hack" at a shilling to convey himself and baggage to his destination. Another annoyance to him was a big envelope which a representative of Bywater, Tanqueray Company had handed to him as soon as he landed from the boat. It was postmarked Chicago, had five stamps on it and six letters in it. Doubtless they came from the publishing house in Chicago where he had been editing *The Free Methodist*, and carrying on other official business for the church. Thinking he had left some of his cares behind, he said rather curtly, for which he apologized quickly, "I hope it is the last of them here." He had made this trip for pleasure and he did not want to be reminded of business.[\[145\]](#) The four who were traveling together planned to leave for London, the seat of the Missionary Conference, at nine o'clock the next morning.[\[146\]](#)

That meeting was heralded in the papers of America, Mrs. Roberts wrote to him, as "the most important in this century," and that it was "an honor to be a delegate."

Mr. Roberts, still suffering the effects of his burn on the deck of the ship, proceeded to the Conference with his face "as red as if I were an Englishman and drank beer." He and his companions traveled along

the coast of Wales and England on their way, and were near enough to the shore to see the houses and wind-mills, and to view the green fields." [\[147\]](#) He arrived at his destination at five o'clock Saturday afternoon in time for the evening session. The Right Honorable the Earl of Aberdeen presided. The first session was of a social character. The hall was laid out with a great variety of shrubs and flowers. Tea was served under the gallery and on the platform. The delegates, especially those from America and the Continent, were introduced to Lord Aberdeen, as President of the Conference. [\[148\]](#) Mr. Roberts referred to the Earl, who presided that evening, as "an intelligent, modest appearing gentleman of about thirty or thirty-five years of age." His address of welcome, he characterized as "cordial, sensible and appropriate." Dr. A. C. Thompson of Boston, Chairman of the Prudential Committee A.B.C.F.M., with others, gave the reply. [\[149\]](#) Appropriate hymns were sung by the evangelistic choirs of London. The climax came when "the great assembly, which filled the large hall, with one heart and voice sang the Hundredth Psalm." [\[150\]](#)

Mr. Roberts was entertained in the home of Mrs. I. L. Frere, of 30 Palace Garden Terrace. Mrs. Frere impressed him as "a deeply devoted Christian lady." She was the widow of a vicar, "thoroughly evangelical" and "full of missionary zeal." A daughter, a young lady about twenty-five years of age, was also at home. These folks, who lived in style, with two servants, made their guest feel at home. As with most travelers, the British accent bothered him at first, but soon he could say, "I am getting the hang of their English so that I understand them tolerably well." He was located in the pleasant part of the city. A great park two miles long with beautiful trees and shrubs was near by. Instead of mowing the grass, he explained, they turned loose a "hundred great fat sheep." [\[151\]](#)

Mr. Roberts did not spend all of his time at the Convention. The very next day, he was off to the Wesleyan Church at St. James Hall to hear the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse. In the evening he attended St. Mathews, a parish of the Church of England. He was struck by the evangelical character of the Rector's message, stating that "he urged that people should know their sins forgiven." Besides attending the two services, he walked that day about six miles. London he liked "very much." It seemed "more sensible than our American cities," with a people who were "more substantial," plainer and "steady - not so fast." [\[152\]](#) The city was "wonderfully clean." The buildings were "generally plain and substantial" from three to four stories high. He mused that he might like to live in London. The only drawback to him was their brogue; "if only they spoke our language," he lamented. [\[153\]](#) Walking about the city again, he noted that some of the streets were broad, but that some important streets were so narrow that there was room for only one cart so they made them one way streets. Such was the character of Paternoster Row, he said, on which were so many publishing houses "known throughout the world." Many of these lanes, on which were shops and stores, were not wide enough for teams, only for pedestrians. However, they were nicely paved and were kept "neat and clean." On these thoroughfares were the "homes of the *poor*." Everywhere he went the streets and lanes swarmed with people. He also visited the grounds of Kensington Palace where the Marquis of Lorne and the Princess Louise lived. These grounds, covered with "great oak trees and flowering shrubs and beds of beautiful geraniums and other flowers" were what he thought at first to be a park, near the home where he stayed. [\[154\]](#)

The next day, his curiosity having been somewhat satisfied, he attended the Missionary Conference. This

he characterized as "full of interest." The second paper of the afternoon was read by the Rev. James Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, who had spoken on the evening before also on the first General Survey.[\[155\]](#) Mr. Roberts later wrote a report on the meeting in which he said that he had become "greatly interested in the China Inland Mission" by the address of Mr. Taylor on the "condition of China." The personal aspects of Mr. Taylor's call, leading up to the organization of the China Inland Mission, were the items of reference in his report, although these things do not seem to appear in the published reports of the Conference.[\[156\]](#) Mr. Roberts met James Hudson Taylor while there, and he said that Mr. Taylor prayed with him and for him.[\[157\]](#) If the influence of Mr. Taylor in that conference may be judged from the number of times he spoke, it was evidently considerable.

On the evening of the eleventh, Mr. Roberts went to the Salvation Army Missionary Meeting which was held in City Temple. That "immense room" was packed to the utmost. He estimated that there were four or five thousand people in attendance. The service was enlivened by a "full brass band" and evidenced an "envious enthusiasm." Converts from Australia, India, China, and other parts of the world spoke, and General Booth gave a more general account of their missionary work. Mr. Roberts thought Booth was "more of an organizer than a preacher," but appended that he was "doubtless doing a good work."[\[158\]](#)

On the eighteenth, he went to hear Charles Haddon Spurgeon preach. He described Mr. Spurgeon as being "very poorly," keeping a cane in his hand all the time on which he leaned. Several times he had rested on his knees while preaching, doing this, Mr. Roberts said, to ease his feet since he "suffered from the gout." Dr. A. J. Gordon of Boston conducted the preliminary services. Mr. Roberts sat on the fourth or fifth seat from the front so that he would be able to see well the famous man. "The sermon was excellent," he reported. "I was delighted with its simplicity and fervor." He was different from all the other preachers he had heard in that he spoke "plain English, no clipping of his words, no affectation of foreign accent." Mr. Roberts was impressed that he was a man who knew God. He thought the sermon was "far more pious" than that of Mark Guy Pearse or of General Booth. He declared his "soul was fed," and that if he could, he would get a copy of the sermon and take it home to his wife. The audience room was "very large" with two galleries surrounding it. The pulpit was located on the "back end of the lower gallery."[\[159\]](#) Evidently this was one of the high points of the London trip in the thinking of Mr. Roberts.

He also visited some of the interesting places about the city, including the Dore gallery of paintings which he rated the finest he ever saw. This judgment was probably based in part upon the fact that they were "mostly taken up with Scripture subjects." Some of them were as large as thirty feet in length and twenty feet in height with as many as from fifty to a hundred figures on them. One thing that impressed him favorably, and which he thought remarkable for a French gallery, was the fact that "there was not a nude female among the paintings."[\[160\]](#) Westminster Abbey also claimed its share of his attention.[\[161\]](#)

His trip to the spot on which Latimer and Ridley were burned at the stake made a strong impression upon him. This was located in the old university town of Oxford. A cross in the pavement of the street marked the spot where the fires were kindled. A beautiful gothic monument had been erected nearby as a memorial to the martyrs who, he said, "sealed with their blood their testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus." He also visited the Bun-hill Burying Ground which, at the time of his visitation was in the central

part of London. Here had been buried many whose names were known throughout the civilized world. The monuments were "generally plain" but full of interest to him. He made special note of the monument which had been renewed over the grave of John Bunyan. He gave the inscription as found, and then commented, "These few rods mark the resting place of the body of a man whose *Pilgrim's Progress* has been translated into more different languages than any other book in the world except the Bible." He also gave in full the inscription found on the tomb of "Mrs. Susannah Wesley, widow of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, M.A., late rector of Epworth in Lincolnshire, who died July 23, 1742, Aged 73 years." In his review of her life, he made special mention of the fact that she had conducted services, and quoted the letter she had written to her husband in defense of the innovation.[\[162\]](#)

He was giving, however, at least a part of his time to the Missionary Conference. On the twelfth of June he wrote that they were having a good Conference and that he had hoped that It would help on the work of his own church as well as the cause of God generally. Most of the delegates he said were men as old or older than he was, many of them missionaries from all parts of the world. He had not spoken as yet in the Conference, but thought he might that day. On the fourteenth, he wrote, "The Conference is going on very pleasantly; but I have nothing to do but to listen, and you know I am not used to that. Yesterday, I got in a few words."[\[163\]](#) That was in one of the open conferences listed under the general title, "Women's Work in the Mission Field," and was conducted in the large Hall instead of the Annex, because of the crowded attendance.[\[164\]](#) General Sir Robert Phayre presided and gave the opening remarks. Miss Rainy of the Free Church of Scotland presented a paper on "The Place of Female Agency in Mission Work" [\[165\]](#) followed by another on the theme, "Medical Work for Women' in the Mission Field" by Miss A. K. Marston from the India Female Normal School and Instruction Society, Lucknow, India.[\[166\]](#) In the general discussion that followed, three ladies preceded, while four men followed the brief speech of Mr. Roberts. The text of that short address, which he said "seemed to be well received," follows:

I rejoice at the door that is opened for women's work in spreading the Gospel, and I want to say a word to try and open the door wide. My experience in America is like that of many from India. I find the women morally superior to the men; and, if so, I can see no reason at all why they should not be permitted to preach as well as to labor in an inferior position.

My reasons for saying this are based on Scripture and on experience; and not to repeat what has already been said on the sixty-eighth Psalm, and Joel and Acts, we find in the sixteenth chapter of Romans, Paul sent his salutations to a great many women, and amongst others, he sent them to Andronica and Junia. Chrysostom, who understood the Greek language, was a Greek by birth and one of the brightest of scholars, says that Junia in that place is declared by the Apostle to be an Apostle. Our version is, 'of note among the Apostles,' but he says Junia was an Apostle, and was a noted Apostle; and it seems to me that there is very strong ground for women to take an advanced place in spreading the Gospel in heathen lands as well as at home. And so, in experience, we find that some of the most useful laborers in America and England have been women.[\[167\]](#)

Mr. Roberts thought that it "was not worth crossing the Atlantic twice to say." However, it did get the Methodists to talking, for his speech was followed by that of Mrs. Mary C. Nind, of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the M. E. Church, U. S. A.[\[168\]](#) Mr. Roberts remarked on the sixteenth that the Methodists did not seem to take much part in the proceedings. He thought the most spiritual sayings came from the evangelical wing of the Church of England.[\[169\]](#)

At the close of the Conference, he likely phrased the words which he later reported as his general reaction. He was "gratified and surprised at the deep spiritual tone and the fraternal spirit manifested by many of the preachers and members of the Church of England." He quoted in approbation a sermon one of the first preachers, Canon Farar, of that church had delivered in Westminster Abbey, in which he said:

When I speak of the Church in general I do not mean this or that communion, under this or that organization, but I mean in their ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, the whole multitude of the saints of God.[\[170\]](#)

He carried away a personal incentive in his own heart, so that he asked himself, "Am I doing all I can for the conversion of the world to Christ? If I am personally giving all the money I should; am I doing all I might to get others interested in the cause of missions?" He saw that the great work of cooperation was "a matter of importance" to the spread of the gospel. Doubtless thinking of the contributions of the innumerable groups, he emphasized, "Many drops make a shower; many showers make a river; many rivers make a mighty ocean."[\[171\]](#) Disappointed that he had not seen more of Methodism in England, and had not become better acquainted with more of their preachers, yet he was, on the whole, pleased with his visit, and believed that it would help on his own work. He said, "We must take hold of Mission work as we have not done and push it especially in Africa."[\[172\]](#)

A farewell reception given to the foreign delegates by Lord and Lady Radstock in their mansion, was a very pleasant experience to Mr. Roberts. The hosts were esteemed very devoted Christians, he said. She was rather "large and motherly" and he was a handsome man of about six feet five inches, devoted to good works. The four sons and daughters were introduced to the assembly of about one hundred persons. Refreshments were served and they had "a social, Christian visit." Whether he absent-mindedly wrote twice, "It was a very pleasant time" or whether it was so pleasant that he thought it needed a double emphasis, one must judge for himself.[\[173\]](#)

As early as the twelfth of June, Mr. Roberts had arrangements for his return voyage, planning to go to Scotland and sail from either Glasgow or Queenstown.[\[174\]](#) Two days later, he had moved up his sailing date to the twenty-ninth of June, leaving Glasgow on the State Line. He wrote to his wife, "My body is here, but my heart is with you. I want to get with my heart as soon as possible."[\[175\]](#) On the sixteenth of June, he notified her that he was traveling first Class on the Nevada and that he would "count the days and hours" until he could be with her. He finally decided to sail on the Nebraska, a little larger ship than he had originally planned to take, and it sailed a few days later than he expected to leave.

In his account of the Missionary Convention, Mr. Roberts characterized it as one of the most important gatherings of modern times, explaining that 130 different Missionary Societies in Great Britain, the United States, Canada, and the Continent of Europe, were represented. (The final report of the Convention showed that 149 Missionary Societies had participated.) Eighteen different nations were represented, with 1,447 delegates enrolled. The total scope of the Convention was so large that seven meetings were generally held each day, two and sometimes three meetings being held concomitantly.[\[176\]](#) The large Exeter Hall was well filled twice every day, besides those attending meetings in other parts of the building.[\[177\]](#)

[5. England, Ireland, Scotland, Home](#)

The Missionary Conference closed, and Mr. Roberts found himself with a few days of waiting before he sailed. Writing from Leeds on June thirtieth, he mentioned that he was at the home of a Rev. Ferguson, a preacher of the Primitive Methodist Church, a brother-in-law of a Mr. Hanmer of the Free Methodist Church. His hosts were very cordial, and made him feel at home. He characterized the Primitive Methodists as a "strong body" doing a "good work" in England. He had arrived the day before, and expected to go on to Edinburg on Monday.[\[178\]](#)

He estimated Leeds to be a city of about five hundred thousand people, and noted that it was a manufacturing center for woolen and other goods. He was surprised to see so few houses in the country. The fields, he narrated, were mostly in grass, and grass grew well in that country where it had rained almost every day since his arrival a month before. He thought he had not seen the sun for an all day period since he had left home. Taking everything into consideration, he believed he liked his own country best. While in Leeds he went to hear Canon Bullock preach, and found him delivering his message to thirteen people in "a great splendid Church." This, perhaps, made him think of his own work among the few, and he commented, "It almost seems to me that I have forgotten how to preach." He did, however, preach on Sunday, July first, in one of the Primitive Methodist Churches to a small congregation.[\[179\]](#) He thought he was not much blessed but supposed it was all right, since "getting blessed" had gone out of fashion in England, with the exception, perhaps, of the Salvation Army.[\[180\]](#)

In the afternoon of the same day, he went out to the "moor," a public ground on top of one of the hills, which, he thought, might have been a park if it would have had trees. However, it did have "nice walks, beautiful shrubbery and seats." It was not only a place of public resort, but devoted to public meetings. Four religious services were held there. Two of them were on holiness, and one was an Adventist service. Mr. Parr, another of the Primitive Methodists, had an organ on wheels, a band of singers, and a good congregation. Mr. Roberts thought what he said was "good and sensible." Mr. Roberts said he wished he could have "got a word in," but since he did not feel like "crowding in," he found no opportunity. He remarked that the English appeared to prize the ability to speak in public.[\[181\]](#)

That evening he went to a large Wesleyan chapel on Oxford Street which was not a third filled. They had a large pipe organ, and from the service, he judged them to be "quite as formal" as those of the Church of England. Out of this welter of experience, his reaction was in favor of his own denomination. "I feel

more and more thankful to the Lord for the Free Methodist Church," he wrote, "and see more clearly the necessity for it." Then an ejaculatory prayer sprang forth, "May God enable us to make it a great blessing to other churches and to the world." [\[182\]](#)

On July 6th, he wrote that he was about ready to board the steamer, Nebraska. Having had all the foreign travel he cared for, he was looking beyond the ten day trip to seeing his loved ones at home. On July seventh, after having a "pleasant sail" the day before, he discovered to his "horror" that they had to wait another thirty hours to take on freight. In the interim he went to Belfast, a twenty-three mile trip where he was glad to see a little of Ireland. But the charm of scenery and of description was over, and he hardly knew how to wait out his time. He confided to his wife, "Darling, you are more to me than all the countries and all the wonders and sights of the world." [\[183\]](#) He postponed the date of his arrival at home until the sixteenth or seventeenth of July. Although he felt rested, and knew the trip had been beneficial, yet he said he would be "only too glad to get to work again." [\[184\]](#)

As he sailed out of the harbor, he had in his possession a farewell letter from Liverpool, signed by J. Albert Thompson of the Church Societies' Depot, which read:

Liverpool
24 Elliot St.
July 2, 1888

Rev. B. T. Roberts -----

My dear brother,

I am sorry not to have seen you before leaving England. I feel as one of your own; having had the pleasure of receiving, welcoming, encouraging (in my small way) and handing on your missionaries to and from the field, it has just made me the wee tiny link between you in America and the foreign field. We continually pray for them and you with dear Brother Arnold. Will you remember us? We need a little corner in your prayers.

Praise God for the Conference, Christ's body united here. He is certain to bless the results riot only in the present but the future. May he stir you with us to do more than ever in this glorious work. The harvest is ripe, laborers are few. Let us put in the sickle and gather in the sheaves, so hastening his glorious return.

Accept my hearty wishes for a happy and beautiful voyage. May the rest the sea only gives, be yours, after the whirl and bustle of English scenes, that your body may be refreshed. Give our love to Mr. Arnold. We long to see and meet more like those you sent out, all full of true missionary zeal - 'Jesus only.'

Yours very truly in Him,

J. ALBERT THOMPSON

My presence shall go with thee and I will give you rest.[\[185\]](#)

D. FINALITIES

Mr. Roberts had known something about meeting the "last enemy" as he lived to suffer losses in his immediate family and among his friends. his own children, taken in earlier years, had been followed by the keener loss of "Sammie," thirteen years of age, who had passed away in 1875 after a siege of scarlet fever. Mr. Roberts had expected that this child should live to preach the gospel, and yet he said he would "bow submissive to His will, and kiss the hand that had so sorely smitten" them. The "heavy sorrow" caused by the loss of this child of "remarkable promise" was probably the greatest blow of the years.[\[186\]](#) Anna, the wife of their son George, had been taken in childbirth in the year 1881. Mr. Roberts wrote, "Oh, she was such a lady. It seems so hard that she should be taken. She will be so missed."[\[187\]](#) Later in the same year, his own beloved father had been taken. He wrote his mother, "Father is in glory," and comforted her with the promise of the "Mighty overshadowing presence of the most high."[\[188\]](#) He had told her, "We must keep on until our feet shall touch the immortal shore and we clasp glad hands where sorrow never comes."[\[189\]](#) His sister-in-law, Melissa Stowe, had gone on more recently while he was making his way to London in 1888, but not before he had visited her in what proved to be her last illness, and had heard her singing one early morning in a soft, clear voice,"

O come, angel band
Come and around me stand,
O bear me away on your snowy wings
To my immortal home.[\[190\]](#)

1. Failing Health

In 1880, for the first time in his life, Mr. Roberts suffered a prolonged sickness following a series of conferences and dedications. Taken with a violent attack of "chills and fever" he was "left weak and almost prostrate" so that for four weeks he never left the house. He attributed this to a lack of rest and mounting tension.[\[191\]](#) In 1881, after returning from his conferences "feeling uncommonly well" he was suddenly taken down with his old enemy, malaria, by the "first cold blast" from the north he encountered. He admitted then that he was "weak and prostrated," that "strength, vigor and flesh" were gone, and that he needed 'd good, long, quiet rest."[\[192\]](#) Still he judged rightly that he would yet "do much work for the Master."[\[193\]](#) Again in 1885, he showed indications of impaired health, but not until after his trip to London did he have the severe attack which was the distant precursor to his death. This occurred while he was presiding at the Canada Conference in the fall of 1888 and was attributed to overwork. He wrote of that experience, "After years of unceasing toil your Editor finds himself obliged to call a halt." He attributed his heart condition to his "incessant labors" attending conferences, preaching from five to seven times a week, "with tedious night journeyings" made more tiring by changing cars at night, and the

constant demands of his editorial work on both *The Earnest Christian* and *The Free Methodist*. Slight exertion then brought severe pains in his chest and a "sense of weariness and weakness" all through the upper part of his body, which physicians diagnosed as due to the impaired action of the heart.^[194] He hoped that many years of service could yet be given due to the "sound body" which had served him for so many years.

However, at his last General Conference in 1890, although he was back into the busy activities of his itineraries, there was a noticeable change in him. In a short account of his life in the *General Conference Daily*, it was noted that "his great labors" were beginning to tell upon his once "more than ordinarily vigorous frame." Still in full flesh, but somewhat bald, he had lost "the quick and springing motion of his early years."^[195] C. B. Ebey noted that "his benignant face showed lines of care" and urged the Conference not to "overload him for the future."^[196] Because of his condition, he refused to continue the editorship of *The Free Methodist*. In 1891 he announced that he had not the physical strength to "hold meetings every day and every night" as he had done, but said that he would be able to hold some meetings, believing then that he was gaining in health.^[197] Though at the close of the year he felt that the Lord was "wonderfully caring" for him, yet he acknowledged, "Still I shall be glad when I get around these cares forever."^[198] In the fall of 1892, at the close of his round of conferences, he was very worn and showed signs of coronary trouble. His wife begged him to desist from his continued exertions, but he felt that he "must go." She said that he was so hopeful and so continually looking on the "bright side" that the family did not apprehend any immediate danger.^[199]

2. Last Things

(a) *Closing itinerary.* In Stanhope, New Jersey, where Mr. Roberts had gone to preach, there was, it was reported, "literally a rush to the altar" and fifty seekers presented themselves at the altar for prayer.^[200] In 1891, he started across the country, preaching at every opportunity. In the depot in Chicago, he spoke to the woman in charge about the necessity of becoming a Christian, and she began to read her Bible and promised to seek the salvation of her soul. In Maricopa, Arizona, where he had to wait for his train from seven o'clock in the morning until eleven, he was invited by a hotel keeper to go over to his house and to "talk to the boys" because, he said, they "needed it." Mr. Roberts promised to preach a sermon if his host would call in the people of the town, which the man did. Mr. Roberts preached and Mrs. Roberts exhorted and the hotel keeper "passed his hat around and took up a collection." This was reputed to be the first religious service which was held in the village.^[201] He still enjoyed and commented upon his travels. Phoenix, "a beautiful town of some seven or eight thousand" took him by surprise with its "fine brick blocks, neat churches, three daily papers, books, electric lights and street cars." Recently made the state capital, he found the capitol building "finely laid out and decorated with beautiful trees and shrubbery." There he preached in the M. E. Church South in the afternoon and the M. E. Church at night.^[202]

He and Mrs. Roberts proceeded to Los Angeles where he was attracted, upon leaving the train, by "a large palm tree, standing like a live pillar" and having its "glorious tuft of great leaves at the top." He

organized the Southern California Conference, and dedicated a church. After visiting several other places, he went back to Mameda where he had the pleasure of seeing the new Free Methodist Church there, and of meeting "many who were saved in the meetings" which he held there eleven years before. Proceeding to Oregon "through the spurs and over the tops of sublime mountains," riding for eight hours in sight of Mt. Shasta whose top, white with snow, was difficult to distinguish from the fleecy clouds which floated over it, they stopped to see and to drink the refreshing water at Soda Springs. "A jet about an inch or two in diameter rises up to an elevation of eighty feet and descends in spray," he commented.[\[203\]](#) At Sodaville Camp Meeting he preached twice every day except the last. Then he proceeded to Salem in the "fertile Willamette valley" where strawberries, "truly wonderful for their size and excellence" were raised. At Dayton, where he had gone to dedicate a church, he was unable to raise the four hundred dollars necessary to pay off the mortgage, but that disappointment did not deter him from seeing in Oregon in its fertile soil and mild climate "a good field of labor for devoted men of God." He went on to Tacoma, "beautifully situated on Puget Sound" from whence he sailed to Seattle by steamer over waters as smooth as a "deep, quiet river" with mountains capped with snow on the horizon, and "solemn fir trees" standing like "sentinels" on the banks. At Seattle, "mostly built on hills," he commented on the improved appearance as a result of a fire a few years before. He was heartily welcomed to the home of H. H. Pease. He took a steamer to Whatcom, and from there rode east on the Canadian Pacific Railroad through British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. The bracing air, the grand scenery, the "wild torrents lashed to foam," the high precipices and snow covered mountain peaks, the numerous tunnels, the extended plains covered with the "great wheat fields of the world" held his interest. Arriving home on the tenth of July, he noted that he had traveled some six thousand five hundred miles.[\[204\]](#)

In 1892, he toured to the south and commented upon its colored population. Savannah, with half of its people colored, and with its "cotton, lumber, resin, turpentine and phosphates," gave him an opportunity of preaching through the Wesley Monumental Church to a "great congregation." After preaching in the colored Asbury M. E. Church, and visiting a colored industrial school, he commented that the colored people were showing "encouraging signs of prosperity." They were securing for them-selves homes, were as well dressed as the working classes in the North, and were well behaved on the streets. He thought if the colored people were taught "books and trades" as well as "science and Christianity" that the race problem would solve itself. "Give them a chance," he said, "and they will not fall behind the whites in intelligence and thrift." At the Georgia State Industrial College, located on a large farm of one hundred and thirty acres, and taught by "educated, gentlemanly colored men," he listened to recitations which he felt would "do credit to similar classes of white young men whose advantages had been no better."[\[205\]](#) He commented upon the visit of General Howard to Atlanta where he had made an address at a school to the newly emancipated slaves. Whittier, he said, recounted the occasion thus:

There was a human chattel
 Its mankind taking'
 There, in each dark, bronze statue
 A soul was waking.
 The man of many battles,

With tears his eyelids pressing,
Stretched over those dusky foreheads
His one armed blessing.
And he said, "Who hears can never
Fear for or doubt you:
What shall I tell the children
Up north about you?
Then ran around a whisper, a murmur
Some answer devising;
And a little boy stood up: 'Massa,
Tell 'em we're rising!'

The little boy who made that answer was then, Mr. Roberts said, Mr. R. R. Wright, A.M., "the able, accomplished, and highly efficient President of The Georgia State Industrial College" where Mr. Roberts sat listening to the recitations. This, he said, was "rising to some purpose," and was encouraging to the friends of the colored man. "It shows what they are capable of doing only give them half a chance," he concluded.[\[206\]](#)

From his university days when he taught a class of colored girls in a Sunday school, Mr. Roberts had always sponsored the cause of the negro. Once when traveling by train, a passenger was rudely remonstrating with the conductor for not making a nicely dressed, well-behaved group of young colored people go to the second-class car. The conductor explained that they had first-class tickets and were entitled to remain where they were. When the man still more vigorously protested riding with "niggers," Mr. Roberts interposed in their behalf and argued their case so convincingly that the rude passenger was quieted and the young people were permitted to stay where they were. Before the group of young people left the car, they gathered about Mr. Roberts, and in cultivated language, the spokesman for them thanked him for his kindness. Then, still gathered about him, they sang for him a beautiful song. It proved to be one of the first troupes of Jubilee Singers from Fiske University, whose songs so stirred the nation to an appreciation of what the black man was capable of doing with a little training.[\[207\]](#)

Closing comments of his trips are recorded. At Kansas, he spoke of a reunion of six who had started out in the early history of the movement together, and were "still true to the principles they then advocated, and pressing on in the way of life." Oklahoma was to him an "inviting field"; West Kansas a "missionary Conference." Colorado, with territory uninviting in many respects, having deep valleys and great mountains that threw their peaks into the regions of perpetual snow, was occupied by miners and cowboys who were not "the most accessible to gospel truth." Yet with men like H. A. Crouch still doing circuit work and singing, "Lame as I am I take the prey" he thought "encouraging progress" was being made. In the "great growing state of Texas" with "intelligent and thoughtful" people, he looked for a "glorious work." He thought Louisiana and Arkansas, whose stagnating waters made them unhealthy, but whose people gave "a willing ear to the gospel" were "deserving of attention and assistance." He could say after arising at three o'clock in the morning and driving twenty-eight miles in a buggy to Delhi to catch a train, "The Lord kept us from being over-wearied. He has wonderfully helped and preserved us

thus far on our tour of Conferences. To him be all the glory." [\[208\]](#)

The last two reports of his work are found in the February number of *The Earnest Christian*, 1893. Those trips took him to Burlington, Vermont, and Bradford, Pennsylvania. He enjoyed greatly the Vermont weather, with its zero temperature, shining sun, still and bracing air, and "snow singing under the runners." He thought it was better to "drink in the ozone" from the northern mountains, "even in winter" than to "breathe the balmy air of the tropics." While there, he lectured in the W. C. T. U. Hall on "How to Secure Prohibition." [\[209\]](#) The morning after his departure, the city paper carried this notice:

Rev. B. T. Roberts, A.M., senior Bishop of the Free Methodist Church, left yesterday morning for his home in Western New York, having spent several days in this city as the guest of Rev. C. H. Kenney and O. P. May, Esq., preaching in Barrow's Hall, W. C. T. U. Hall, and elsewhere commending the claims of his Savior, and the interests of his church to the people of this city. [\[210\]](#)

At Bradford, he was with the Rev. Walter A. Sellew where he reported the work was "greatly prospering." Services had been in progress in the United Brethren Church under the labors of a Rev. Bullis, an evangelist. The meetings, which were turned over to Mr. Roberts on Saturday and Sunday, were, he said, largely attended. "Many rose for prayers, and some, we trust, were saved," he wrote. [\[211\]](#)

(b) *Last Writings*. The last sermon Mr. Roberts wrote for *The Earnest Christian* was on the theme of "Saving Righteousness" in which he used the words of Christ, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven." [\[212\]](#)

His last two editorials were on the "Creation of Man," and "Tobacco."

c) *Last Sermons*. The last sermons, except one which was a funeral sermon, he preached in North Chili, New York, his home town. His text was, "Today if ye will hear his voice. harden not your hearts." [\[213\]](#) Adella P. Carpenter a teacher in Chili Seminary, said that he stood erect and preached with "unwonted power . . . and spoke with great solemnity, and a marvelous spirit of authority." At the close of the morning message he stated that he would always prefer seeing an altar service on Sunday morning. On his way home from church, in reply to a question from his wife as to whether he had ever preached from 'hat text before, he answered, "No, the Lord gave me that sermon at ten o'clock this morning." [\[214\]](#) That was one hour before he arose to speak.

The funeral sermon, his last, was preached for a Mrs. Bittle from Spottsylvania, Virginia, also in the home church. lie made his remarks on the text, "To die is gain" just two weeks before his own death.

(d) *Spirit of His Last Days*. Mrs. Roberts wrote that "for many of the last years of my husband's life, praise was the constant overflow of a heart full of love." In the two months preceding his death he had

remarked to her many times, "What a happy life we have had together." She said he was "tender, considerate and loving" and always "asked forgiveness . . . if he thought he had failed in the least thing."[\[215\]](#)

3. Death

Mr. Roberts had often said he would like to die while in the midst of his activities. His desire was granted. On the evening of February twenty-fourth, 1893, he left home to hold a Quarterly Meeting for the Rev. George Allen at Cattaraugus, New York. After spending the night in the home of his aged mother, he left her home in "noticeably good spirits" and took the train for Cattaraugus, about twenty miles distant. As he changed cars at Dayton, he was taken by a coronary attack so severe that by the time the train had traveled ten miles he was hardly able to walk. At Cattaraugus he was taken into the depot to rest until a sleigh was brought to take him to his place of entertainment. Dr. Amelia Tefft of East Otto, who had been his physician for several years, was sent for but did not arrive until eleven o'clock at night. He refused to let his family be notified because he thought his wife would be too greatly alarmed, and also because he still hoped to be able to go home by morning. During the night he quoted Scripture promises and exclaimed, "These are precious promises . . . The Bible is full of precious promises for us, if we but fulfill their conditions." Early in the morning, he was heard to exclaim, "Praise the Lord" twice, and a little later he repeated:

Jesus, the name that charms our fears
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life and health and peace.

He was heard later to repeat the words "so freely spilt for me," and still later he repeated again the above fully quoted verse. He dressed that morning, but was so short of breath that more than once he went to the door to get air. He occasionally praised God aloud, and tried often to sing but was unable. Fifteen minutes before the end, friends came in to see him. He walked into the room where they were, shook hands and greeted them warmly, and then returned to the couch and lay down. The look of pain that crossed his face drew the company to him, and all saw that the end was near. He was raised to a reclining position, and with a clear voice he said, "Praise the Lord, Amen" and passed away.[\[216\]](#)

His wife and son Benson, who had been too late notified of his condition, were at that moment in the Buffalo station waiting for a train to take them to his side.[\[217\]](#) His wife, after learning of his death, exclaimed, "Oh, how bitter that I could not have been with him!" Then she reasoned, as though the words came from the Lord, "Did I not send Aaron to Horeb to die, away from the people and his dear ones? Did I not send Moses to Nebo in the plains of Moab to die?" Mrs. Roberts, unaware of her husband's condition, had read those very accounts the day her husband was suffering in such agony, and as she read them, the thought crossed her mind, "How different God's ways are from our ways."[\[218\]](#)

4. Funeral

The funeral service was held in the chapel of Cox Hall, a new building on the campus of the Chili Seminary which Mr. Roberts had founded. The day, March 2, 1893, was bitterly cold, and a deep snow lay on the ground. Nearly forty ministers formed in procession in front of the Roberts home, and followed the casket to the chapel. The Rev. A. F. Curry conducted the funeral service, and close friends spoke words of appreciation. The Rev. Joseph G. Terrill's remarks, while not so eulogistic as most, were nevertheless appropriate:

It is well that the active life of Brother Roberts should close with that grand word, 'Amen.' That word ends the prayer our Savior taught. It ends the volume of inspiration. It echoed loud the approval of the divine administration by the hosts of Heaven. Brother Roberts worked until the last. He could see no place to rest either in body or in mind. But when God said stop, he said, 'Amen.' By and by a clearer, deeper, louder 'Amen' will be spoken, and the earth shall stand still, busy cares shall cease, and the lives of all men shall be summed up; then and not till then, can be summed up the life of him whose body now lies before us. Now it is for us, who mourn and wait, to say amen to the providence of God.[\[219\]](#)

It was after five o'clock when the procession formed to march to the nearby grave. His old friend, S. K. J. Chesbrough, read the ritual. Students of the seminary were his pallbearers, and it was the students who filed by the open grave to drop in their sprigs of evergreen, while a lone Japanese youth dropped in a coin, according to the custom of his people.[\[220\]](#)

5. Post Nubila, Phoebus

The bitterness of conflict over the party issues within the area of the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church gradually passed with the years, and finally, the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Church, seventeen years after the death of Mr. Roberts, requested the Genesee Conference of the Free Methodist Church to send a fraternal delegate to represent that branch of Methodism, at their centennial celebration. This celebration of the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Church was held in Rochester, New York in 1910. The delegate chosen to represent the Free Methodist Church was Benson H. Roberts, son of Benjamin Titus Roberts.

On the first day of their session, Mr. Ray Allen, who was then Secretary of the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Church, read a paper entitled, "Historical Sketch of Genesee Conference."[\[221\]](#) The Minutes of that Conference record that on the third day, Friday, September 30th, "Benson H. Roberts, fraternal delegate from the Genesee Conference of the Free Methodist Church, previously introduced, addressed the Conference."[\[222\]](#) Dr. Wilson T. Hogue reported that Benson Roberts "was treated with the utmost courtesy and cordiality. His address before that body was one of the finest, most courteous, courageous, diplomatic and effective addresses of the kind that I have ever known."[\[223\]](#) He mentioned a reaction that does not appear in the Minutes: "At the conclusion of its delivery, there was general

weeping, accompanied by fulsome expression of praise to God and commendation of the speaker." [\[224\]](#) It was probably at this time that "Blest be the Tie that Binds" was sung, as recorded in the official minutes of the conference. [\[225\]](#) The address by Mr. Roberts was answered by Mr. Ray Allen, who responded on behalf of the assembled body. In connection with his response, and in "eminently well chosen and touching words" [\[226\]](#) Mr. Allen presented to Benson Roberts the parchments of his father, the Rev. B. T. Roberts, which he had surrendered at the time of his expulsion. [\[227\]](#)

In the official printed Minutes, the action reads, "The Secretary of the Conference in accordance with the action taken Wednesday, delivered to Benson H. Roberts, the ordination parchments of his father, the Rev. Benjamin Titus Roberts, and the recipient made response." [\[228\]](#) A motion was then made by J. E. Williams that the action concerning the restoration of credentials be given to the Free Methodist Church. [\[229\]](#) It was said that the vote of a previous day, authorizing this act, was carried with great applause. [\[230\]](#)

In the historical sketch read by Mr. Allen, he noted the events that led up to the formation of the Free Methodist Church, and when speaking of the expulsions he said:

This heroic treatment might have seemed necessary at the time, but looked at half a century later, it seems unjust, and therefore exceedingly unwise. Those expelled brethren were among the best men the conference contained, and scarce any one thought otherwise even then The troubles of the Genesee Conference were not cured by a surgical operation. Following 1859 came the darkest years of her life, and her membership steadily fell year by year until in 1865 it was at the lowest level ever reached. She then had only 7,593 - a sadly wasted figure! In 1866 she began to amend, but the territory which in 1859 held 10,999 members never got back to that number again for nineteen years. Truly she came up out of great tribulation, and it is to be hoped she washed her robes white. [\[231\]](#)

Following the reading of the paper by Mr. Allen, the conference voted to restore the credentials of all the preachers who had been expelled at that time, the vote in favor of their restoration being unanimous. [\[232\]](#)

Thus ended the relationship of stress out of which grew the Free Methodist Church. In the *Centennial Number of the Official Minutes of the Genesee conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church of 1910*, the names of all the expelled ministers are listed as having been former members of the Conference. On page two hundred and seventy-three is found the record of B. T. Roberts which reads:

Roberts, Benjamin Titus. Born, Gowanda, N. Y., July, 1823. T. 1848. F. 1850. Expelled 1858. Appeal of General Conference of 1860 not entertained. Assisted in organizing the Free Methodist Church, 1860. Elected its first General Superintendent, 1860. Died, Cattaraugus, N. Y., Feb. 25, 1893. Credentials restored, 1910. [\[233\]](#)

ENDNOTE

- [1] General Conference Minutes, 1874, p.131. Denominational Headquarters, Lake, Indiana.
- [2] Letter from Mrs. B. T. Roberts to her husband, October 28, 1874. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.
- [3] "History of the General Conference," General Conference Daily, vol. II, No. 1, (October 8, 1890), p.4. (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House).
- [4] General Conference Minutes, 1878, pp. 195, 196. Denominational Headquarters, Winona Lake, Indiana.
- [5] Ibid., pp. 168, 169.
- [6] "History of the General conference," General Conference Daily, 1890, (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House), 5.
- [7] General Conference Daily, (June 17, 1907), 8.
- [8] General Conference Minutes, 1878, p.211.
- [9] General Conference Minutes, 1882, p.277.
- [10] Ibid., pp. 266.267
- [11] Ibid.. p.239.
- [12] Ibid., p.273.
- [13] Ibid., p.29.
- [14] General Conference Daily, (June 17, 1907), 8.
- [15] Wilson T. Hogue, op. cit., II, p.182.
- [16] General Conference Daily, (1882).

[17] Wilson T. Hogue, op. cit., II, p.185.

[18] Letter from Mrs. B. T. Roberts to her husband, September 22, 1886. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[19] Minutes of the General Conference, 1886, p.37.

[20] Ibid., pp. 58-65.

[21] General Conference Daily, (October 8, 1890), p.8.

[22] General Conference Minutes, 1886, p.85.

[23] Wilson T. Hogue, op. cit., II, p.189.

[24] J. G. Terrill, "Some Reminiscences of Rev. B. T. Roberts," The Earnest Christian, (April, 1893), 113.

[25] General Conference Minutes, (October 22, 1890), p.204.

[26] General Conference Daily, (October 17, 1890), P.126.

[27] Ibid., (October 22, 1890), p. 181.

[28] Ibid.

[29] B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.556.

[30] Ibid., pp. 556-558.

[31] Ibid., pp. 558, 559.

[32] Ibid., p.559.

[33] General Conference Daily, (October 12, 1890), p.79.

[34] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (September, 1872), 95

[35] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, August 21, 1872. Found among the personal letters of the

Roberts family.

[36] Letter from B. T. Roberts, near Bronson, Michigan, to his wife, written August 30, 1872. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[37] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Delta, Ohio, to his wife, written September 28, 1872. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[38] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Chicago, to wife, October 1, 1872. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[39] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Crystal Lake, Illinois, to his wife, October 7, 1872. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[40] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, written from Belvidere, Illinois, October 8, 1872. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[41] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, written from Plymouth, Iowa, October 10, 1872. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[42] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (September, 1873), 97.

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] *Ibid.*, (November, 1873), 163.

[45] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, undated, but evidently late in 1878.

[46] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Mrs. Cady, written from Alameda, California, January 9, 1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[47] B. T. Roberts, "In California," *The Earnest Christian*, (February, 1879), 82.

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] *Ibid.*

[51] Ibid., p.63.

[52] Mrs. Roberts. letter to Mrs. Cady, written from Alameda, California, January 9, 1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[53] Letter from B. T. Roberts to Anson Cady, written from Alameda, California, January 31,1879. Among personal letters of B. T. Roberts.

[54] B. T. Roberts, "From California," The Earnest Christian, (March, 1879), 94.

[55] Ibid., p.91.

[56] Letter from B. T. Roberts to Anna Roberts, written from Alameda, California, March 3,1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[57] Letter from Mrs. B. T. Roberts to George Roberts, written from Alameda, California, March 3, 1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[58] Letter from B. T. Roberts to Anna Roberts, written from Alameda, California, March 3 1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[59] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (March, 1879). 95.

[60] Letter from Mrs. B. T. Roberts to Anna Roberts, written from Alameda, California, April 22,1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[61] Letter from B. T. Roberts to George Roberts, written from San Francisco, California, March 22, 1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[62] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his son, George Roberts, written from Alameda, California, April 22, 1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[63] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to George Roberts, March 3,1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[64] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (April, 1879), 129.

[65] Ibid., (May 1879). 162.

[66] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to Anna Roberts, April 22, 1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[67] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (May, 1879), 162.

[68] Letter from B. T. Roberts to George Roberts, April 22, 1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[69] Letter from Jennie Bishop to Mrs. Roberts, written from Alameda, California, June 9, 1879.

[70] Letter from M. F. Bishop to B. T. Roberts, June 12, 1879.

[71] Letter from F. H. Horton to Mrs. Roberts, written from Plymouth, California November 8, 1879. Among the letters of B. T. Roberts.

[72] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, December 25, 1879. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[73] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (July, 1879), 30, 31.

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] Heb. 4:14.

[77] Letter from B. T. Roberts to wife, from Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin, June 22, 1882. Among personal letters of Roberts.

[78] Letter from B. T. Roberts, to wife, from Northfield, Minnesota, June 23, 1882. Found among personal letters of Roberts.

[79] Letter from B. T. Roberts. to wife, from Northfield Minnesota, June 27, 1882. Found among personal letters of Roberts.

[80] Letter from B. T. Roberts, to wife, from Minneapolis. Minnesota, June 28, 1882. Found among personal letters of Roberts.

[81] Letter from B. T. Roberts, to wife, from Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 28.1882. Found among

personal letters of Roberts.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Clear Lake, Minnesota, June 29, 1882. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[84] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Alexandria, Minnesota, June 30, 1882. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[85] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Alexandria, Minnesota, July 3, 1882. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Motley, Minnesota, Friday, July 7, 1882. Found among the personal letters of Roberts.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, July 13, 1882. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[90] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Waterloo, Iowa, September 23, 1882. Found among personal letters of Roberts.

[91] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (September, 1882), 97,98.

[92] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from New York, July 22, 1883. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from New York, (Brooklyn). July 26. 1883. Found among the personal letters of Roberts.:

[95] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, July 23, 1883. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[\[96\]](#) Ibid.

[\[97\]](#) B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (March, 1884). 95, 96

[\[98\]](#) Ibid.

[\[99\]](#) B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (December, 1884), 165.

[\[100\]](#) Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Dennison, Texas, October 22, 1884, Found among personal letters of Roberts family.

[\[101\]](#) Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Dennison, Texas, October 24, 1884. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[\[102\]](#) Ibid.

[\[103\]](#) B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (December, 1884), 165.

[\[104\]](#) Ibid.

[\[105\]](#) Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Ennis, Texas, October 28, 1884. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[\[106\]](#) Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Corsicana, Texas, November 3, 1884. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[\[107\]](#) Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Corsicana, Texas, October 31 1884. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[\[108\]](#) Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, November 4, 1884. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[\[109\]](#) Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife. from Marshall, Texas, November 6, 1884 Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[\[110\]](#) Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Corsicana, Texas, November 4, 1884. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[\[111\]](#) Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Marshall, Texas, November 6, 1884. Found among the

personal letters of the Roberts family.

[112] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (December, 1884) 186.

[113] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Columbia, Louisiana. November 8, 1884. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[114] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Welcome Home, Louisiana. November 10, 1884. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[115] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (December, 1884). 187.

[116] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from welcome Home, Louisiana. November 10, 1884. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, November 13, 14, 1884. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[119] Ibid.

[120] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (December, 1884), 187.

[121] Ibid.

[122] James Johnston (ed.), *Report of the Centenary Conference on the Protestant Missions of the World*, (3rd ed., Chicago: Fleming H. Revell), I, 24.

[123] Records of the General Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church, p. 123. Filed at Denominational Headquarters, Winona Lake, Indiana.

[124] Letter from Bywater, Tanqueray and Company, to B. T. Roberts, April 2, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[125] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from New York, May 26, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[126] Letter from B. T. Roberts to son Benjamin, May 28, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the

Roberts family.

[127] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, from North Chili, New York, May 28, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[128] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, May 28, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[129] George L. Curtiss, Manuel of Methodist Episcopal Church History, (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1893). p.333.

[130] Ibid., p.342.

[131] Ibid., p.333.

[132] Ibid., pp. 334, 336.

[133] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (June, 1879), 188.

[134] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Brooklyn, New York to his wife, May 28, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[135] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, May 29, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[136] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, May 30, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[137] Letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband, May 26, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[138] Steamer letter for Mr. Roberts from his wife. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[139] Letter from Charles L. Stowe to his sister, Mrs. Roberts, June 2, 1888, from Belvidere, Illinois. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[140] Second Cabin Bill of Fare of White Star Line, for Monday. Found among the personal papers of B. T. Roberts.

[141] James Johnston, op. cit., I, pp. 426-431, 475-477.

[142] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, written on board ship, June 7, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[143] Steamer letter from Mrs. Roberts to her husband. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[144] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife. written on ship, June 7, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[145] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, June 9, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, June 9, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[148] James Johnston, op. cit., p.1.

[149] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (August, 1888), 61, 62.

[150] James Johnston, op. cit., p.1.

[151] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, written from London, June 11, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[152] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from London, June 11, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Ibid.

[155] James Johnston, op. cit., I, pp. 172-177.

[156] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (August, 1888), 61, 62.

[157] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from London, June 23, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[158] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from London, June 12, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[159] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, London, June 18, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[160] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from London, June 16, 1888. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[161] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from London, June 23, 1888. Found among personal letters of the Roberts family.

[162] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (August, 1888), 64.

[163] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, June 14, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[164] James Johnston, *op. cit.*, II, p.140.

[165] *Ibid.*, pp. 141-146.

[166] *Ibid.*, pp. 147-151.

[167] James Johnston, *op. cit.*, II, p.143.

[168] *Ibid.*, pp. 153, 154.

[169] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, June 16, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[170] Quoted by B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (September, 1888), 96.

[171] Quoted by B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (August, 1888), 61, 62.

[172] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Leeds. England, June 30, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[173] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, June 22, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[174] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, June 12, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[175] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, June 14, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[176] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (August, 1888), 61, 62.

[177] James Johnston, *op. cit.*, Introduction, p. XXIV.

[178] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, from Leeds, July 2, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[179] *Ibid.*

[180] *Ibid.*

[181] *Ibid.*

[182] *Ibid.*

[183] Letter from B. T. Roberts, Ireland, to his wife, July 7, 1888. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[184] *Ibid.*

[185] Letter from J. Albert Thompson. Liverpool, July 2, 1888, to B. T. Roberts. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[186] B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, (February, 1875), 63.

[187] Letter from B. T. Roberts, to his wife, January 28, 1881. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[188] Letter from B. T. Roberts, to his mother, March 14, 1881. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[189] Letter from B. T. Roberts, to his mother, March 7, 1881. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[190] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (July, 1888).

[191] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (December, 1880), 188.

[192] Ibid., (December, 1881), 187.

[193] Ibid.

[194] Ibid., (December, 1888), 191.

[195] General Conference Daily, (October 8.1890) p.10.

[196] C. B. Ebey. General Conference Daily, (October 11.1890). p.52.

[197] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (February, 1891), 63.

[198] Letter from B. T. Roberts to his wife, September 29, 1891. Found among the personal letters of the Roberts family.

[199] Mrs. B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (April, 1893). 135.

[200] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (July, 1891), 5.

[201] Ibid.

[202] Ibid.

[203] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (August, 1891), 83.

[204] Ibid.

[205] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (May, 1892), 159.

[206] Ibid.

[207] B. H. Roberts, op. cit., p.565.

[208] B T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (October, 1892), 131.

[209] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (February, 1893), 62.

[210] The Earnest christian. (October, 1893). 131.

[211] B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (February, 1893), 64.

[212] Matt. 5:20.

[213] Heb. 4:7.

[214] The Earnest Christian, (April, 1893). 101.

[215] Mrs. B. T. Roberts, The Earnest Christian, (April, 1893), 135, 136.

[216] The Free Methodist, (March 15,1893), 8.

[217] The Earnest Christian, (April, 1893), 94, 95.

[218] Ibid., p.136.

[219] J. G. Terrill, The Earnest Christian, (April, 1893), 129, 130.

[220] Ibid., p.132.

[221] Centennial Number, Official Minutes, Genesee Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, (Rochester, New York: Spinning and Davis and Steele, 1910), p.43.

[222] Ibid., p. 48.

[223] Wilson T. Rogue, General Conference Daily of the Free Methodist Church, (June 20, 1911), p.45.

[224] Ibid.

[225] Centennial Number, Official Minutes, Genesee Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal

Church, p.48.

[226] Wilson T. Rogue, General Conference Daily, (June 20, 1911), 45.

[227] Centennial Number, Official Minutes, op. cit., p.49.

[228] Ibid.

[229] Ibid., p. 55.

[230] Wilson T. Hogue General Conference Daily, (June 20, 1911), p. 45.

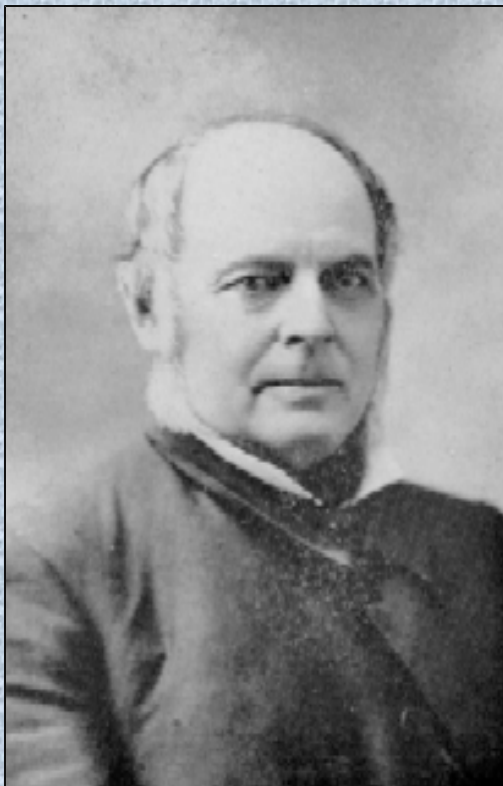
[231] Ray Allen, Address before the Centennial session of the Genesee conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, September 28, 1910.

[232] Centennial Number, Official Minutes, Genesee Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, (1910), p.55.

[233] Ibid., p.273.

EARNEST CHRISTIAN

Photos



Benjamin Titus Roberts
In Older Years
Friend to Man



Benjamin Titus Roberts
In His Time



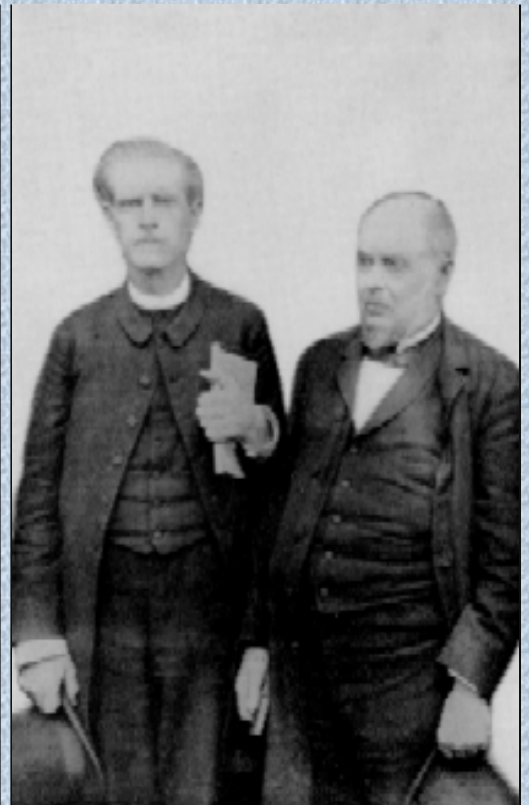
Benjamin Titus Roberts
As Organizer of the Free Methodist
Church



Benjamin Titus Roberts
Administrator and Promoter
with grave responsibilities



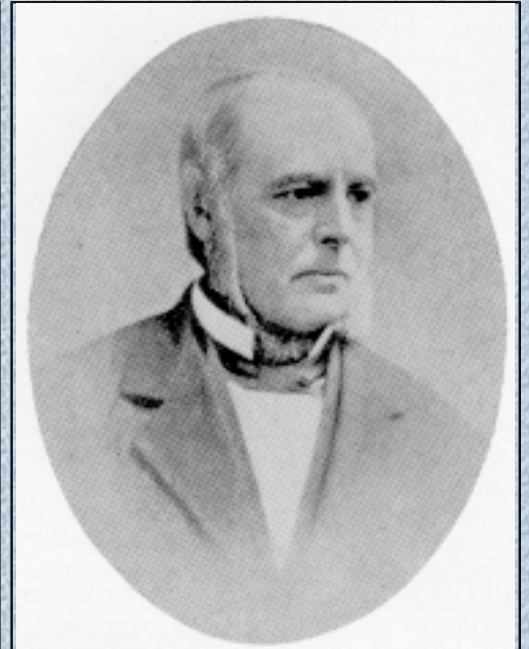
Benjamin Titus Roberts and wife
with their son, Benson Howard
Roberts, Beside their home which
still stands in North Chili, New
York



**S. K. J. Chesbrough
and
Benjamin Titus Roberts**
Lifetime Friends



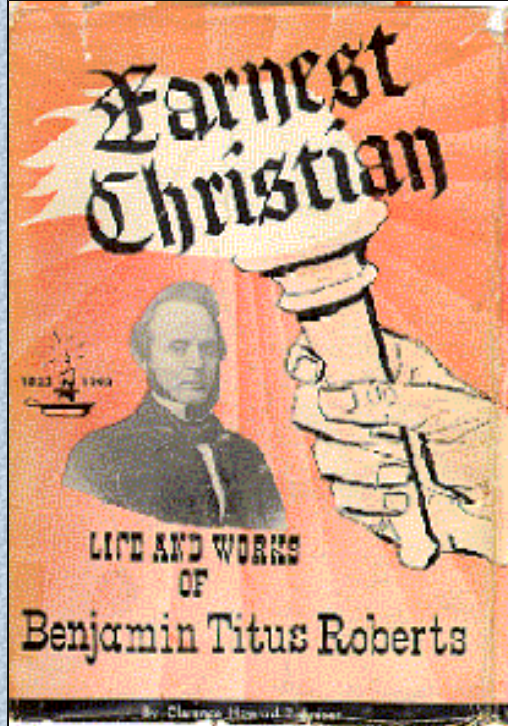
Bishop Roberts



Official Portrait
of
Bishop Roberts
in Closing Years

From a Charcoal Portrait of
P. E. Hall, Artist

Ellen Lois Roberts
From a Charcoal Portrait of
P. E. Hall, Artist



**Front Cover of
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EARNEST CHRISTIAN

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The author, born in Youngsville, Pennsylvania, is the son of Ralph A. Zahniser, one of the five Zahniser brother preachers known to Free Methodism. He has served as pastor and superintendent in Oklahoma and the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, area. For the past six years he has been Area Secretary for Africa of his denomination. He has been five times a member of the General Conference of his church, and has served four years on the Board of Administration. He has written frequently for his denominational organ, *The Free Methodist*, and was for two years editor of The Pittsburgh Conference Herald.

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EARNEST CHRISTIAN

LIFE AND WORKS

OF

Benjamin Titus Roberts

BY CLARENCE HOWARD ZAHNISER, TH.B., M.ED., PH.D.

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