



Life Event

Birth

Benjamin Titus Roberts was born on July 25, 1823, in Gowanda, New York, to parents Titus and Sally Roberts. He had two sisters, Florilla and Caroline, born in 1825 and 1827, respectively. As was common for the time, he later became better known by his initials, B. T.

1



Life Event

Early Education

When Benjamin has 16, he began a two-year law apprenticeship in Little Falls, New York and supported himself by working as a schoolmaster. He returned home in 1844 in order to prepare himself for the bar exam. But things changed...

2



Life Event

Conversion

B. T. had a significant conversion experience when he was almost 21 years old. "Christ demanded an unconditional surrender," he said. "I made it. The joys of pardon and peace flowed into my soul. My cup was full, my happiness was unspeakable." This was a turning point in his life.

3



Life Event

University Studies

B. T. decided to stop pursuing a career in law and instead began training to be a minister. He first attended a preparatory program at Genesee Wesleyan Seminary and then transferred to Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. Eventually, he became an ordained minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

4



Life Event

Marriage

B. T. and Ellen Lois Stowe first met during B. T.'s time at Wesleyan University when Ellen was visiting the town. They soon fell in love and maintained a regular correspondence through letters. The couple eventually got married in New York City on May 3, 1849, and went on to have a family of seven children, which included six sons and one daughter.

5



Life Event

Death

Benjamin Titus Roberts died on February 27, 1893, at the age of 69 in Cattaraugus, New York. He was buried in the North Chili Rural Cemetery. Ellen lived until January 28, 1908, and was buried next to B. T. in the same cemetery. Simple tombstones mark their graves.

6

SCRIPTURAL
HOLINESS

Belief

Sanctification

Roberts held a strong belief in the doctrine of entire sanctification, which maintains that Christians can attain a state of complete holiness and devotion to God subsequent to their conversion to Christianity. This concept holds that believers can be purified of their sinful nature, resulting in a life of complete obedience to God's will.

7



Belief

Equality

B. T. was a firm believer in the principle of equality before God, regardless of a person's gender, race, or social status. He firmly held that every individual, regardless of their background, was equally valued and loved by God, and as such, deserved equal treatment and respect.

8



Belief

Women in Leadership

B. T. was a vocal supporter of women's rights and equality, advocating for their leadership and public speaking roles. While he tried to push for women's ordination in the denomination, he was ultimately unsuccessful. It wasn't until 1974 that women were first ordained as elders in the Free Methodist Church.

9

200th Anniversary



P. F. Roberts
1823 - 2023

200th Anniversary



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Belief

Important Causes

B. T. supported two important causes. One was the temperance movement, which worked to reduce or prohibit the use of alcohol. He believed that alcohol was harmful to individuals and society as a whole. B. T. also supported the abolitionist movement, which aimed to stop slavery in the United States. He considered slavery to be a violation of basic human rights.

10

The Northern Independent

NO COMPROMISE WITH SIN, NO SILENT SUBMISSION TO WRONG, IN CHURCH OR STATE. A BOLD ADVOCACY OF ALL THE MORAL ISSUES OF THE AGE, AND ESPECIALLY OF AN UNCOMPROMISING CHRISTIANITY.

Starting Over

Trying to Reform the Church

In 1857, B. T. wrote an article titled "New School Methodism," which was published in *The Northern Independent* newspaper. In it he criticized the Methodist Episcopal Church for moving away from its biblical foundation and becoming more worldly. The church brought him to trial twice over this, and he was ultimately found guilty and lost his ordination as a minister.

11



Starting Over

Forming a New Church

The Free Methodist Church was established on August 23, 1860 in Pekin, New York. B. T. and Ellen Roberts, along with John Wesley Redfield, were the principal founders. They were joined by a group of like-minded ministers and laypeople who desired a more egalitarian church structure and a commitment to biblical holiness and social justice.

12

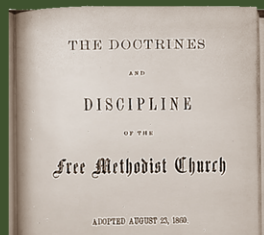


Starting Over

What's in a Name?

The term "Free" in "Free Methodist" had various meanings of freedom. The church believed in the freedom to worship as guided by the Holy Spirit, opposed social evils such as slavery and secret societies, rejected pew rental in church, and provided free access to all members of the community, regardless of barriers such as race, class, or economic status.

13

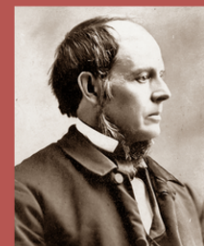


Starting Over

Beliefs, Principles, Practices

The Free Methodist Church was founded on the authority of the Bible as the only guide for faith and practice. It emphasized the priesthood of all believers and simple worship, rejecting elaborate ceremonies. It prioritized evangelism, missions, and serving the poor and underprivileged. These beliefs, principles, and practices were codified in *The Book of Discipline*.

14



Legacy

Church Founder and Leader

Benjamin Titus Roberts was the first General Superintendent (Bishop) of the Free Methodist Church, serving from 1860 to 1893. He played a vital role in shaping the beliefs and practices of the church. Today, the church has over 1.5 million members in 100+ countries worldwide, reflecting its commitment to spreading the Gospel and serving others.

15

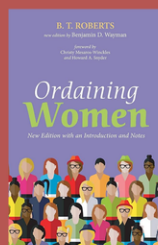


Legacy

Seminary Founder

In 1866, B. T. Roberts founded the Chili Seminary in North Chili, NY, to provide advanced education and training for ministers and missionaries. As its mission and scope evolved, it underwent several name changes. Now known as Roberts Wesleyan University, it offers a diverse range of undergraduate and graduate programs and encompasses Northeastern Seminary.

16



Legacy

Author

B. T. wrote several books on religious and spiritual topics, including *Ordaining Women*, *Holiness Teachings*, *Fishers of Men*, and *Why Another Sect?* These works highlight B. T.'s emphasis on themes of scriptural holiness, biblical authenticity, equality, and evangelism. Even today, *Ordaining Women* remains relevant for those interested in the subject of women's ordination from a biblical perspective.

17

THE EARNEST CHRISTIAN.

VOL. I. JANUARY, 1860. NO. I.

OBJECT AND SCOPE OF THIS MAGAZINE.

BY THE EDITOR.

There are many sincere and earnest persons throughout the land, anxiously inquiring "for the old paths." Dissatisfied with being outer-court worshippers, they are desirous of "breathing in the secret place of the Most High."

Upon their minds God often lets the light from Heaven shine. They are

its stages, from the first awakening of the sinner to his conversion, his deliverance from sin, his sanctification to the world, and his baptism with the Holy Ghost, all he is filled with all the fulness of God.

We shall insist upon a conversion that makes a man willingly part with his sins—that makes the proud humble, the short-lived, the selfish generous, the slaveholder anxious "to break

Legacy

Publisher and Columnist

In 1860, B. T. started a monthly publication called *The Earnest Christian*, serving as publisher, editor, and columnist. He also wrote for other periodicals, including *The Free Methodist*, which eventually became the official denominational paper. His writings covered a range of topics such as theology, social justice, politics, temperance, slavery, and women's rights.

18

200th Anniversary



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**B. T. Roberts 200th Anniversary
Print and Play Game**

Cut out around outside borders.
Fold along straight lines above
and below the B. T. Roberts 200
border rectangle. Make a slit on
the grey line below the MMHC
logo on the box flap. The box is
large enough to accommodate
sleeved cards, if so desired.



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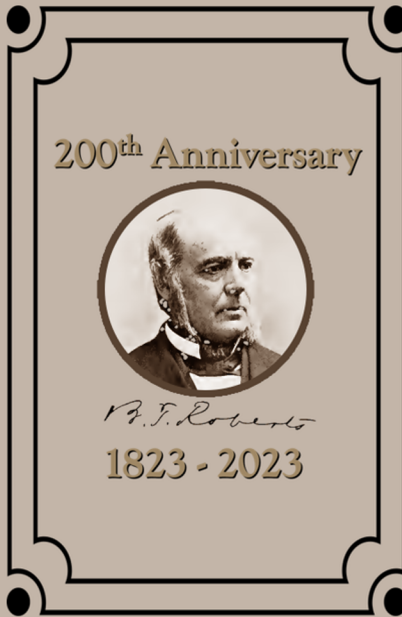
1823 - 2023
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B. T. ROBERTS

B. T. ROBERTS 200



Benjamin Titus Roberts

B. T. ROBERTS 200



B. T. ROBERTS 200



Ellen Lois Stowe Roberts

The Marston Book Prize

The Marston Book Prize is an annual
award, sponsored by the Marston
Memorial Historical Center,
given to the author of a book
published in the preceding 12 to 24
months that significantly helps
readers understand the Free Methodist
Church's origins, history, and mission.

2021

**BISHOP LESLIE R.
MARSTON
BOOK
PRIZE
WINNER**

2021 Recipient

*Old School or New School
Methodism? The Fragmentation of a Theological
Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford
University Press, 2019)
by Dr. Kevin M. Watson.

2022

**BISHOP LESLIE R.
MARSTON
BOOK
PRIZE
WINNER**

2022 Recipient

*Lived Missiology: The
Legacy of Ernest and Phebe
Ward* (London, KY: Fishers
for Christ, 2021) by Shivraj
K. Mahendra.

For further information, visit
historical.fmcusa.org/marston-book-prize/

B. T. ROBERTS 200



<https://historical.fmcusa.org>

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

Your generous gifts help us further
our mission.

Partnership Levels

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- \$100 Heritage Partners
- \$50 Legacy Associates
- \$25 Senior / Student Affiliates

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to make your membership donation.



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Flat B. T.



Flat Ellen



Download at historical.fmcusa.org/

B. T. Roberts 200th Anniversary Game

A game for two to four players

Game Materials

- 18 numbered cards, divided into 4 sets
- Life Events (cards 1-6)
- Beliefs (cards 7-10)
- Starting Over (cards 11-14)
- Legacy (cards 15-18)

Developed and designed by Larry Winckles for the Marston Memorial Historical Center.

Game 1: Group Discussion and Reflection

Shuffle the 18 cards and place them face down in a draw deck. Each player takes turns drawing a card and reading the fact or story aloud for the group. Discuss the information on the card and how it relates to B. T. Roberts' life and legacy. Prompt the group with questions of your own creation or use one of the suggested discussion prompts. Encourage the group to share their personal or creative reflections on B. T. Roberts' impact. Continue taking turns until all 18 cards have been discussed and reflected upon.

Possible discussion prompts:

- 1: How do you think B. T. Roberts' birth and upbringing in New York influenced his later life and work?
- 2: How might B. T. Roberts' experience of teaching school and studying to be a lawyer have shaped his perspective and approach to his later pursuits?
- 3: Discuss the significance of B. T. Roberts' decision to fully follow Jesus at a young age. How might this have influenced his life path?

- 4: How did B. T. Roberts' shift from lawyer to minister reflect his values and faith? How might this decision have influenced his contributions to society and ministry?
- 5: Consider the impact of B. T. Roberts' family life, having seven children, might have had on his values and the way he approached his work and ministry.
- 6: What do you think is the lasting legacy of B. T. Roberts, and how does his life continue to inspire others today?
- 7: Discuss the concept of being entirely devoted to God, as believed by B. T. Roberts. How might this belief influence one's actions and choices in life?
- 8: Explore the significance of B. T. Roberts' belief in the equality of all individuals before God. How might this belief have influenced his advocacy for justice and equality?
- 9: Consider B. T. Roberts' stance on women's rights and opportunities. Discuss the relevance of his beliefs in today's context and the progress made towards gender equality.
- 10: Reflect on B. T. Roberts' efforts to address societal issues such as drinking and slavery. How do these actions align with his Christian beliefs and values?
- 11: Discuss the consequences and impact of B. T. Roberts' critique of the Methodist Episcopal Church. How might this event have shaped his vision for a new church?
- 12: Explore the significance of B. T. Roberts' role in the establishment of the Free Methodist Church. How did his leadership contribute to the church's values and mission?
- 13: Analyze the meaning behind the name "Free Methodist Church" and its core principles. How do these principles reflect B. T. Roberts' beliefs and aspirations?

- 14: Discuss the importance of simplicity, equality, and the authority of the Bible in the worship and teachings of the Free Methodist Church. How do these values resonate with you?
- 15: Reflect on B. T. Roberts' leadership role within the Free Methodist Church. How did his leadership impact the growth and development of the church?
- 16: Discuss the significance of B. T. Roberts' initiative in starting a school and serving as its first president. How might education have been central to his vision for personal and societal transformation?
- 17: Explore the impact of B. T. Roberts' written works about Christianity. How might his writings have influenced individuals' spiritual journeys and understanding of faith? Why do you think that his book "Ordaining Women" is still in print?
- 18: Consider the importance of the publication "The Earnest Christian" that B. T. Roberts helped create. Discuss the role of such publications in promoting community, sharing information, and fostering Christian living.

By reflecting on these discussion prompts, you can consider how B. T. Roberts' ideas and actions can be applied to the challenges and opportunities of today.

Game 2: What's Been Changed?

In this game, you will explore the life of B. T. Roberts and test your knowledge of his legacy. To start, shuffle the 18 cards and deal an equal number of cards to each player. On each card is a fact or story about B. T. Roberts' life. Players take turns selecting one of their cards and reading it aloud, but with a twist. They must change one fact or detail on the card. It could be something small, like a date or a name, or something more significant. After the player has read their modified card, the other players must work together to determine what was changed and how to correct the card. They can use their knowledge of B. T. Roberts' life and legacy, as well as their creativity and problem-solving skills, to figure out the correct information. If the group is unable to identify the change or correct the card, the player who made the modification gets a point. If the group correctly identifies the change and corrects the card, no one gets a point. Play continues with each player taking a turn to modify and read one of their cards, and the other players working to identify the changes and correct the card. The player with the most points at the end of the game wins!

Bonus Game: Set Collection

1. Shuffle the cards and deal two cards to each player.
2. The remaining cards form a draw pile, with the top card turned face up next to it to start the discard pile.
3. On a player's turn, they may choose to:
 - a. Draw the top card from the draw pile.
 - b. Draw the top card from the discard pile.
 - c. Draw a random card from an opponent, giving the opponent a card in return.
4. After drawing a card from the draw pile or the discard pile, the player must either:
 - a. Play a card face up from their hand from a set not already on display in front of them. Read aloud the text on the card.
 - b. Discard a card face up to the discard pile.
5. If a player collects one card from each of the four sets, they win the game.
6. If the draw pile runs out before a player has collected all four cards, shuffle the discarded cards to form a new draw pile.
7. Play continues until a player has collected one card from each of the four sets or the draw pile runs out again.

NOTE: The bonus game rules can be cut out and included in the box along with the game cards.