



Free Methodist Historical Society

Newsletter

WINTER 2026 — Volume 25, No. 1

A NEW ADDITION: THE BIBLE OF TITUS ROBERTS

At the most recent meeting of the Committee for Free Methodist History and Archives, held this past September on the campus of Central Christian College of Kansas, the Marston Memorial Historical Center received a significant addition to its collection. Acting on behalf of Asbury Theological Seminary's Archives and Special Collections, archivist Jacob Tenney presented the Marston Center with an important artifact of Free Methodist history: a Bible originally owned by Titus Roberts and gifted to him by his son, B. T. Roberts, in 1849. This donation was made in appreciation of the longstanding partnership between the two institutions.



Archivist Julianne Class receives Roberts Bible from Tenney

Several inscriptions are featured on the front page (below, left), the first (and oldest) stating: "Rev. T. Roberts, With the Love of His Son, Benjamin, 1849." Another inscription, below that, states: "To Charles P. Roberts, September 11, 1896." In a different handwriting at the very bottom, an inscription reads: "This belonged to my great grandfather", which was most likely written by Charles Parrage Roberts, Son of Charles Stowe Roberts, who was a son of B. T. Roberts. Titus' wife, Sally Ellis Roberts, died in 1896, and theoretically could have willed this Bible to her great grandson after her death in April of that year.

The following page states that George W. Garlock, president of Chesbrough Seminary (later Roberts Wesleyan College), gifted the Bible to Clarence H. Zahniser, who went on to write an authoritative biography of B. T. Roberts. Howard Snyder, writing a footnote in his book *Populist Saints*, says that "Zahniser acquired the [B. T. Roberts Family Papers] from Dr. George Washington Garlock, president of A. M. Chesbrough Seminary at the time of [B.T. Roberts's son] Benson Roberts's death, and his wife, who apparently acquired them from Benson Roberts's family following Benson's death in 1930." Provenance has been lost on how it ended up at Asbury Theological Seminary's Archives and Special Collections, but available details would surmise that the Clarence Zahniser family may have gifted it.

The Marston Memorial Historical Center is thrilled to have such a valuable item added to its collection. The Bible of Titus Roberts will be an enduring testimony of the Free Methodist Church's commitment to "spread scriptural holiness throughout the world" and to be a people "who are determined, by the grace of God, to live up to the requirements of the Bible."

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

Cathy Robling, Director
Julianne Class, Archivist
Kyle Moran, Digital Librarian

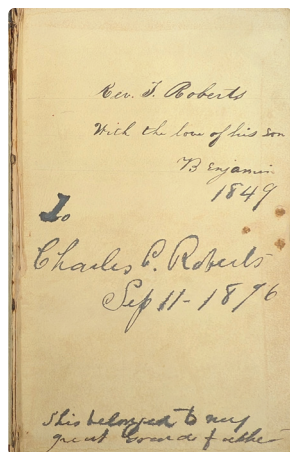
World Ministries Center
PO Box 51710
Indianapolis, IN 46251
(800) 342-5531

Email
history@fmcusa.org

Website
<https://historical.fmcusa.org>

Editorial Committee
Jacob Tenney (Editor)
Cathy Robling
David Bundy
Julianne Class
Mindi Grieser Cromwell

Layout & Design
Andrea Anibal



"Real Free Methodists Are Made of Too Good Stuff":

FREE METHODISM'S
RESPONSE TO THE

KU KLUX KLAN

IN THE
1920S

by Jacob Tenney

The founding vision of the Free Methodist Church required firm stances to many major social issues of its early context. A discussion initiated by Dr. Howard Snyder and Rev. Dwight Gregory, after reading Timothy Egan's *A Fever in the Heartland*, urged a desire to research the denomination's early response to the Ku Klux Klan. The discussion led to the broader conclusion that this historical perspective can help the present-day church address ongoing injustices that dehumanize people made in the image of God.

This article, then, offers introductory research on the Free Methodist Church's response to the Ku Klux Klan, specifically between 1921 and 1925, a period identified by Egan's *A Fever in the Heartland* as the height of the Klan's national influence, and draws exclusively from the Free Methodist, the denomination's primary periodical.

In 1922, longtime editor J. T. Logan introduced the issue of the Klan to readers and published several pieces clarifying the Free Methodist stance toward the Ku Klux Klan. In August of 1922 he criticized newspapers that "defend this secret society," condemning both its secrecy and its willingness "to violently take the law into its own hands." In November of that same year he notes that "some of our readers evidently do not understand what the object of this secret society is," insisting that opposition to Roman Catholicism (a common Free Methodist stance of the day) is no reason to support a movement marked by hostility toward "the Jews and the Negroes" in its "boasted claim of being 100 per cent American." Logan argued that the Klan operated "under cover of the mask and in the darkness," invoking the *Book of Discipline* to stress that "secrecy is always a ground of suspicion... A bad institution should not, and a good one need not, be secret... They must lift the veil while demanding our salutation, or we can not salute them by the way."

In the January 23rd issue of 1923, Logan's tone shifts. Instead of informing readers of the dangers

of the group, he instead mounts an attack on the Klan, focusing on how "objectionable" its beliefs and behaviors are. This most likely has to do with that fact that he received a first-hand account of the Klan interacting with a Free Methodist female pastor. He states that:

While the pastor of one of our churches in Pennsylvania was preaching, on Sunday night, four white-robed, masked men went up one aisle to the pulpit, handed her an envelope and marched down the other aisle and left the church... The envelope contained a sum of money, presumably intended to shut the pastor's mouth against the Ku-Klux organization. But we are well enough acquainted with her to know that it will have the opposite effect on her, for she has gone through too much opposition in the past to have her voice silenced against secrecy in this manner. Real Free Methodists are made of too good stuff to be caught in any such compromise trap as this.

Egan, in his book, recounts other instances like this, declaring: "Money changing hands in a house of God was usually viewed with skepticism. But this bribe of a soul merchant was part of a pattern: the new Klan would build its foundation with the blessing of Protestant clergy." In December of 1923, Logan, stating that the Free Methodist was being urged to take a stance on the Klan, concluded with an unflinching statement: "Our position is simply this... a Christian should have nothing to do with it."

In 1924, future bishop G. W. Griffith assumed editorship of the Free Methodist and continued Logan's opposition to the Ku Klux Klan. The May 27, 1924, issue offered the most extensive denominational response to date, noting that Logan's earlier stance "brought us a large number of messages of appreciation," along with "a much smaller number of letters and newspaper clippings extolling the work of the Klan." Although these supportive responses were few, they prompted Griffith to conclude that "it seems wise to give a more extended



Klan rally
in Portland,
Maine, 1923.

Photo courtesy
of Library of
Congress.

statement concerning the order and the reasons why, as a denomination, we can not give it our endorsement and support." This issue included a full-page editorial, contrasting contributions "for" and "against" the Klan, two syndicated articles concerning the KKK, and, maybe most significantly, a reprint of a resolution adopted by the Pittsburgh Conference in 1923 regarding the group.

The resolution is certainly related to the note in the Pittsburgh Conference's 1923 "On the State of the Work" report, which said that there were rumors that "some of our members have even united with the Ku Klux Klan." The report urged, "Brethren, let us not allow these things to be grafted into our precious church. Let us kindly but firmly return to the landmarks of our fathers." This context suggests that the Klan incident reported the previous year at a Pittsburgh-area Free Methodist Church was believed to have been carried out by church members, and the resolution (excerpted below) functioned primarily not as a public announcement, but instead as a disciplinary note in regards to Free Methodist identity:

Resolved farther, That we consider it a violation... for our preachers or members to receive money from any secret order as such and a compromise of our principles for a minister to permit, without protest, any secret society to enter one of our churches attired in the lodge regalia... We believe that all men are created equal and have a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness", whether "Jew" or "Greek", black or white.

Griffith, writing a small note later in that issue titled "Racial Hatred or Cooperation," seems to shift the Free Methodist's critique of the Ku Klux Klan from its secrecy to its racially motivated hatred cloaked in Christian rhetoric, "the Ku Klux Klan [is] fostering and encouraging a widening breach between the blacks and whites." In January 1925 he urged participation in "Race Relations Sunday" to, among other issues, address "causes of

racial friction and how to remove them." His final piece on the subject, "A Sample of Americanism," reproduced a Klan article he described as "an excellent example of the spirit of race discrimination and hatred fostered by this organization."

Historical evidence has demonstrated that the Free Methodist Church consistently opposed the Ku Klux Klan, rejecting not only its secrecy and vigilante methods but also the racial discrimination it espoused in the name of Jesus. Although there seems to be record of some Free Methodists were drawn into Klan membership, the denomination responded by upholding its historic teachings and identifying such participation as grounds for expulsion. Griffith aptly summarized this stance:

We can not understand why Christian people whose standards of life are molded by Jesus Christ can affiliate in any way with an organization that is inherently opposed to those standards. The K. K. K. is not American in its ideals. It is not Christian in its fruitage."

As Logan likewise affirmed, "Real Free Methodists are made of too good stuff to be caught in any such compromise trap as this.

quotes for EARNEST CHRISTIANS



This gigantic race problem which now presses for solution will never be solved aright until we are big enough to step down from our self-constructed foundationless pedestal of white supremacy. ... We must realize that, though a man be alien in thought, foreign in speech, and dark in color, he is nevertheless a man, and the essential thing about him is his [humanity]."

Bessie Reid, "Race Democracy," *The Free Methodist*, June 30, 1925

Free Methodist Church – USA
Free Methodist Historical Society
PO BOX 51710
Indianapolis, IN 46251
(800) 342-5531

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

LATEST BOOK PRIZE

The fifth Marston Book Prize, an award given annually by the Marston Memorial Historical Center and the Committee on Free Methodist History and Archives in honor of Free Methodist Historian Bishop Leslie R. Marston, was awarded in September 2025. This year's selection, *Consider the Lilies: How Jesus Saves People and the Land*, by Howard Snyder, merits the prize for its lucid and compelling articulation of Wesleyan theology and its implications for the entirety of creation.

Dr. J. Richard Middleton praises *Consider the Lilies*, stating it "is Snyder's magnum opus. Beginning with Jesus in the Gospels, Snyder develops a series of reflections on various topics in theology — and on issues not normally thought to be part of theology. Who would have thought that the Gospel would have implications for every dimension of

life in this complex, broken world?" Likewise, Dr. Steven Hoskins applauds the book as "a masterful achievement... from one of the leading voices in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement... this systematic deep dive into the themes of Jesus' example of holy living, creation care, and the wide-ranging responsibilities of Christian discipleship is a 'must read' that is challenging, provocative, and filled with inspiration."

For a more on *Consider the Lilies*, readers are encouraged to read the review published in the Summer 2025 issue of the Free Methodist Historical Society Newsletter, available at https://historical.fncusa.org/wp-content/uploads/FM-HS-Newsletter_summer2025.pdf. Additionally, we encourage everyone to read the interview with Dr. Howard Snyder conducted by Light & Life Magazine editor Jeff Finley, accessible via the Marston Book Prize page on our website: <https://historical.fncusa.org/marston-book-prize>.

