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*“Uncle Bud” Robinson*

ENDURING LESSONS FROM AN  
EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY  
SIMPLE FOLK PREACHER

**Abram J. Book**

Foreword by Steven Hoskins

**“Uncle Bud” Robinson**  
Enduring Lessons from an Early  
Twentieth-century Simple Folk Preacher

**Abram J. Book**

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euben V. “Uncle Bud” Robinson, born a moonshiner’s son in Tennessee and converted under the preaching of a traveling circuit rider while working as a Texas ranch hand, persevered to become the

Mark Twain of the early twentieth-century holiness movement. And, at the height of his ministry, he was dubbed the “the most popular man in America.” This book explains how a man who originally came from nothing eventually came to personify an entire subset of American Christianity and what it means for Christianity and evangelicalism today. The author examines how “Uncle Bud’s” preaching brought together people from all walks of life—wealthy and poor, educated and uneducated, urban and rural—under the banner of holiness, and how such communication can be instructive to pastors and Christians today struggling to find unifying messages in a deeply divided religious and political landscape.

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# WHO WAS “UNCLE BUD” ROBINSON?

## Between approximately 1900–1942, Reuben V. “Uncle Bud” Robinson traveled more than two million miles

as an itinerant evangelist, preached more than 30,000 times in that span, sold thousands of copies of the *Herald of Holiness*, and won more than 100,000 converts to the Kingdom of God and to the holiness movement. Bud accomplished all of this despite an upbringing in the depths of poverty in Civil War Tennessee, illiteracy until the age of 20, being afflicted with a severe stammer, and suffering from epileptic seizures for almost the entire first half of his life.

The man born to an abusive alcoholic moonshiner and a spiritual yet sometimes pious mother eventually persevered to become arguably the greatest preacher of the early twentieth century American holiness movement. His simple, folksy preaching style and humorous use of Southern idiom won him admirers around the world. Uncle Bud tirelessly brought the message of holiness to adherents of

more than seventy denominations, although he officially identified with the fledgling Church of the Nazarene and was instrumental to the denomination in its early years.

Uncle Bud produced a weekly column in the *Herald of Holiness* and published numerous books and pamphlets, dictating his words to be written down by his faithful wife, Sallie, a schoolteacher.

From his encounter with notorious South Carolina badman Baxter “Cyclone Mack” McClendon, to a fistfight with hecklers who attacked him following a revival sermon, to his

miraculous recovery from injuries received after he was hit by a car in San Francisco, Bud’s is an action-packed story of God’s grace. More importantly, the life and ministry of Uncle Bud Robinson is important history that carries with it important lessons in theology, communication, resilience, meaning creation, and more.



Bud Robinson, W.C. Wilson, and Alpin M. Bowes (1913)

**ABRAM BOOK** (PhD, Regent University) is assistant professor in the communication studies and modern languages department at Southeast Missouri State University. He has published articles in *The Journal of Communication & Religion*, *Artifact Analysis*, and the *Kentucky Journal of Communication*. He currently serves on the executive council of the Kentucky Communication Association and is a charter member of the editorial board of *Artifact Analysis*. He lives in Scott City, Missouri, with his wife and three children.

  
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