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Ralph D. Winter



Dear Reader,

The background for these four global conferences celebrating the famous Edinburgh 1910 conference is both miraculous in one sense and sad in another. But things are somewhat different now.

Talk about miracles. Here are a few:

Can you imagine how a poor kid from the backwoods of Massachusetts, who could not even talk “proper” American English, could go to England and speak to the aristocratic students at Cambridge University (even though friends urged him never to go to England where proper English was even more *proper*)?

Can you imagine that he persuaded seven of England's top athletes to join the (then lower class) mission of Hudson Taylor, which was already having trouble?

Can you imagine that J. E. K. Studd, later to become Mayor of London, and the older brother of one of the “Cambridge Seven,” C. T. Studd, was persuaded to travel to the United States where he won John R. Mott, a student at Cornell who later became the world class citizen he was, won the Nobel Peace Prize, but more importantly headed the globe girdling Student Volunteer Movement?

Well, those are God's miracles.

D. L. Moody was that “hick from the sticks.” His dyslexia was so bad he could not spell the simplest words and was therefore assumed to be ignorant. He had to learn most of what he knew

through intense conversations with every clergyman and Bible scholar he met. Later, although reluctant to talk to educated students, he was arm-twisted into sponsoring a college student conference, which launched history's largest and most sudden missionary movement.

One of those seven Cambridge students while on the field, inherited a huge sum and gave today's equivalent of at least \$1 million to Moody for the purpose of starting a school for missionaries. Moody accepted the gift but instead started what became known as Moody Bible Institute, which was for more than missionaries yet by 1978 one of every 18 North American Missionaries was a graduate of Moody Bible Institute. (Robert, p. 198)

Ominous Results?

However, something happened both surprising and perhaps in some ways unfortunate. Not exactly miraculous. Yet it came out of these great gains we so properly embrace as God's blessing! I hate to bring it up. We don't like to talk about such things. *But we must understand it. It affects what we do today and in 2010!*

Hudson Taylor married above his station. Then later his whole mission began to be jacked up by the unusual infusion of seven aristocratic university graduates into his “lower-class” mission.

Moody, that incredible soul, in England could speak to 50,000 common people at the Haringey Arena and then jump into a wagon and rattle across London to hold 5,000 upper class people spellbound in the opera house. Some were so impressed they left their seats and went out to urge their servants holding the horses to go in and hear what they had heard.

However long it had been in coming in history, Hudson Taylor, decisively

not only took in unschooled candidates but even accepted unschooled single women, especially in the early years of his mission.

This sounds a lot like some present-day megachurches telling their people “You don't need training; just get out there.” But, back then the “faith mission” movement, promoted by Taylor, seriously cut loose from the formal financial backing of denominations and began to flood the fields of the world.

So far so good, but these burgeoning “faith” missionaries (including most of Taylor's early field missionaries) did not generally value formal education, and could not do a lot more in many cases than some of today's “Bible and bare-handed” missionaries. Missions stopped founding universities for eighty years, for instance, not realizing that the university custom would come to dominate the leadership of the modern world.

Even today's inadequately-trained missionaries usually have college degrees. What? Yes, even Moody Bible Institute now offers regionally accredited degrees.

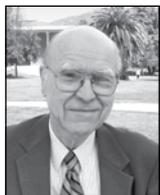
Now what?

This class polarization is still a considerable force. Professors of Mission in scores of schools that once were Bible Institutes still feel they must be suspicious (cautious, yes) of the Professors of Mission in the colleges and seminaries of the older denominational traditions.

Ironically, there are two different, fine, societies of mission scholars in this country, the American Society of Missiology and the Evangelical Missiological Society, and many unquestioned Evangelical professors belong to both.

That's right. The first came from the college-level missionary tradition, while the second derives from the Bible Institute tradition.

Similarly, the Foreign Mission Conference of North America, which began with mission agencies from both the Bible Institute and College (meaning wealthy, influential) sources finally declared the former could not vote and by 1917 essentially forced into existence the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Society, representing the “Faith Missions” which were interdenominational—a rift that exists to this day.



Ralph D. Winter is editor of Mission Frontiers and the General Director of the Frontier Mission Fellowship.

Two Traditions?

But, why these two traditions? So to speak, it is to a great degree Moody's "fault." As noted, he could profoundly influence the relatively few wealthy college-educated class of people (only 2% of Americans went to college by 1900—he died in 1899). But, he attracted millions of poorer "uneducated" and less-influential people, including the immigrants flooding the country in his day—people who would feel out of place in a well-heeled historic denomination.

Also extremely adverse events like the Civil War, the Boxer Rebellion in China, the 1st World War, the global flu epidemic right after the war that took far more lives than the war—all these things commended wide acceptance of a theory that the world had to get worse and worse before Christ's Second Coming.

Result? Horrors!

George Marsden describes this view of Evangelicals:

These American Christians underwent a remarkable transformation in their relationship to the culture. Respectable "evangelicals" in the 1870s, by the 1920s they had become a laughingstock, ideological strangers in their own land. (p. x)

While this transition is well understood by historians, a much chewed bone, the mainly class differences producing it are rarely recognized, or are unmentionable. So what difference does all this make, and what can we do about it?

One big difference is that all those poor, non-college people have undergone an enormous social, educational and financial lift.

Evangelicals founded Fuller Theological Seminary, by far the largest non-denominational seminary in the country, presided over for many years by a brilliant Bible scholar and theologian with a Pentecostal background, David Hubbard.

Similarly the president for years of the Gordon-Conwell Theological

Seminary was Robert Cooley, another Pentecostal.

Oral Roberts, a Pentecostal healer, founded both a university and even built a truly magnificent set of buildings for a major hospital, but the latter failed because he reached (too fast) past the perspectives of his donors.

How will these disparate streams work out in 2010? You can read more details in my article on p. 9. 🌐

Dana Robert, *Occupy Until I Come*, (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2003)

George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, (Oxford: New York, Second Edition, 2006)

Incidentally, it is my pleasure to become merely a consulting editor while the current managing editor now becomes the Editor of this Bulletin. Rick Wood has more and more been taking over the functions of Editor and I don't see any reason why there will be a big change. He has been serving faithfully with Mission Frontiers for about 14 years. Congratulations, Rick!



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