

## Olive Branch Mission and Dwight L. Moody



### *Dwight L. Moody*

*... the boundless possibilities of one's humble, human best,  
filled with the Holy Spirit!*

Excerpts taken from  
"Bush Aglow"

The Life Story of Dwight Lyman Moody - Commoner of Northfield  
By Richardson Ellsworth Day  
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"Your friend & Brother in Christ, D.L. Moody"

*Dwight L. Moody* continued...

## **And His Works Become Bondage**

...More furious he became, and more unhappy. Emma viewed his misery with unveiled eyes; she knew what the real trouble was. Therefore, she plied a woman's sweet ministry of talk: they might go to England for a visit; there were such giants of God's word there; it would be a great blessing to D.L. ...Here we find the first reason for the first English visit, March – July, 1867.

The sum total result of this trip was transforming, but it was not transfiguring.

For one thing, he was permitted to hear the young man preach who, next to Christ, had been his ideal for ten years – Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Spurgeon was then thirty-three, Moody thirty.

*“...He had read everything Spurgeon ever wrote. He sat weeping during the service and his eyes just feasted on Spurgeon. While he (Moody) remained in England in 1867, he followed Spurgeon everywhere.”*

But, that wasn't enough!

He also made a close study of that miracle of faith, George Müller, and from that time on Müller's Autobiography became Moody's Pilgrim's Progress.

But, that wasn't enough!

During this first visit also he met in Dublin the “puny, fragile, provincial and rude-speeched young Henry Moorhouse,” who followed Moody back to Chicago and became God's instrument for changing Moody's whole concept of preaching.

But, that wasn't enough!

It is true that when he returned to Chicago in 1867 everybody could see a change; but, it wasn't the change. Just before he sailed for home in July, 1867, he followed George Stuart's advice and attended the General Assembly in Edinburgh, “and it did me a world of good.”

But, all of these things together were not enough!

In early 1869, the unhappy young Apollos found Aquila and Priscilla in his own congregation, “two elderly, Free Methodist women (of Olive Branch Mission) in frail health,” Mrs. Cooke and Mrs. Snow. During the noon prayer meetings in Farwell Hall, they made him nervous just the way they looked at him. He knew he was deficient somewhere; and he knew they knew it, too.

The sum of their estimate of him came out in several flying conversations at the end of the meetings: “They were *praying* for him. They saw he wasn't in the will of God; not filled with the Spirit; they were praying for *him!*” Just as if he were a sinner! Why, that got completely under his skin. “He who had the largest congregation in Chicago; and there were so many conversions! Could anybody be *doing* more for God than he? No! a thousand times, No!” But his spirit found no help in this auto-bromide. He miserably knew something was wrong. He was belligerent toward those dreadful women when they were present; and miserably lonely when they didn't come.

...a mauling depression seized his soul. His little prayer-closet where he spent the time each day from 11:00 to 11:40 a.m. just before the great noon service, became a place of tears – “Oh God what's wrong with me?”

*Dwight L. Moody* continued...

He suddenly felt “terribly alone.” Summer was coming on, and he hated to face his task in Chicago. His congregations had shown signs of falling away. Then, in long hours..., he felt his soul drop into the deepest pit...; “The gospel would not draw – by itself. He’d have to resort to some kind of sacred concerts, or get some one to lecture to get his crowds back again.” His like-minded brethren... are the over-wrought chaps who spend miserable hours in “the religious services” they arrange, where the gospel is supplemented...; and then they go home thanking God it’s over for another week.

“Oh God have mercy! There is something wrong with me! In His dear Name, correct me! I’d rather die than go on this way.” He covered his face, ...

### **Till a Holy One Gives Him an Accolade of Fire**

The preeminent blessing of a centennial study of Moody is reserved for all earnest hearts, troubled over a fruitless Christian life, that are praying, “Oh God, illuminate me. How can I find the hidings of power?” Here is the divine apologetic, proving that the most vigorous Christian falls miserably short, “if his labors are not in the Spirit.”

It cannot be otherwise than that a host of us, who in this age have surrendered to a cellophane ministry, delicately questing anywhere or everywhere for truth – save in God’s Revelation – will suddenly receive the Fire that brings music at midnight, opens prison doors, and turns a hirdy-girdy age upside down.

The Spirit gave him no rest. He saw he had been ambitious, not preaching for Christ, really; he “was preaching for ambition; he found everything in his heart that ought not to be there.” He remembered with new understanding what an old man had said to him away back in Boston, in 1857, after Moody had spoken in Sunday School, “Young man, when you speak again, honor the Holy Ghost.”

At the close of a June service (1871), one of the dreadful women (from Olive Branch Mission) put her hand lightly on his arm. Ordinarily, he wouldn’t have stood for that. People couldn’t paw over him! Especially, women! But he waited with a trembling heart; and she said, “Lad, Jehovah is dealing with thee!” He just couldn’t keep back the tears. After all, these dreadful women had so much of the gentleness of Christ. His pride went smashing down. “Oh,” he stammered, “Won’t you please come to my house and talk to me?” Then followed a visit, the first of several, in which Ananias did Mighty Paul instruct.

These mothers in Israel were all love and gentleness. They knew he was sincere. They knew he was unselfish. They loved him for it, but that wasn’t enough. He was still afar from the Eye-Guidance; his will was still carnal. “And at no place is man’s unilluminated will more dangerous than when it serves the altar.” They prayed for him. He was humbled to the dust. After they left, he came back into the parlor, and covered his face with his hands. Then he felt Emma’s (his wife) sweet touch on his shoulder and heard her say, “Dearest, they’re right!”

Well, he wouldn’t worry about congregations; he’d just put God to the test, and though he did a poor job of it, he’d preach the Word.

More than three thousand people jammed Farwell Hall Sunday night, October 8.

*Dwight L. Moody* continued...

Suddenly, there was a wild alarm of fire, followed by the noise of fire-engines rushing past the hall; the tolling bells, with ever and anon deep sullen tones of the great city bell in the steeple of the old court-house close at hand. It was a general alarm! The fire raged from Sunday night, October 8, to Wednesday, October 11...To envision the flames fanned by a southwest wind, gripping whole blocks of frame buildings, ...the flying embers at night, ...the spread toward city center, ...the explosion of dynamite as General Sheridan blew down buildings to form fire barriers, ...the white faced terror of the homeless people, ...the fire-glow seen for hundreds of miles over the prairie and lake... When the fire burned out,

2100 acres were burned over,  
17,450 buildings were destroyed,  
250 people were killed,  
150,000 people were made homeless.

And among the tragic heaps, were the smoking ruins of Moody's new home, the new church building on Illinois Street, and the new Farwell Hall.

In Brooklyn (New York), he visited a little mission chapel recently dedicated... it was again the old Moody who preached, the sawdust topic-taker! Why did he take that sterile course, especially after what he had learned? Maybe it was because the devil had saved a few "pet sermons" out of the holocaust. Formerly they were always sure-fire; now, he saw they were ashes. The congregations swiftly dropped to eighteen. There was another woman in the meetings with the same terrible meekness of the Chicago pair (from Olive Branch Mission). He trembled one night at service-end when she said:

*"We have plenty of preaching in Brooklyn; but if you will tell us something about the Bible it will be blessed to us."*

He wept in his room to think what a fool he had been, always letting his eyes run toward the pagan hills for help, forgetting his help should come from the Lord. "God forgive him! And help him" – to "go simple again." The next afternoon, it was not an early sermonic peacock that he preened for a restrutting, but a simple Bible reading. The ravishingly sweet Fires of God at once came down, enveloping not only the little mission, but sweeping right up into Cuyler's home church. ...He had a heart for nothing now but the glory of the Word.

A strangely changed Moody walked down a New York street one night in November. He had never been drunk with wine in his life. But now, he knew the exultation which Satan's counterfeit imitated. Every time he stepped, one foot said "glory" and the other responded "hallelujah." Suddenly he sobbed, "Oh God, why don't you compel me to walk close to Thee, always? Deliver me from myself! Take absolute sway! Give me Thy Holy Spirit!"

And suddenly the little red room called his heart was filled as with a mighty rushing wind... He couldn't bear the rapture of it... He had to be alone. ...He knew a friend near-by who had a room where he could find refuge in this storm... There were hours following, of which it was unlawful to speak, and he seldom did.

But as triple battery of reporters caught him one day in New York, four years later, as he spoke to several thousand ministers and laymen, and it is my good fortune to have had their report put into my hands.

*Dwight L. Moody* continued...

*“He felt constrained against all his habits to communicate a personal experience. The fruits of his preaching had been small and few. In distress he walked the streets of the great city by night – ‘Oh God, anoint me with Thy Spirit!’ ...God heard him ...and gave him right on the street what he begged for... Words could not express the Influence upon him... He had been trying to pump water out of a well that seemed dry... He pumped with all his might and little water came... Then God had made his soul like an Artesian well that could never fail of water... He knew now what a Lovely Someone meant when he said, ‘But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life!’”*

(Back in Chicago – the rebuilding of the church from the ashes was ongoing)

When the building was completed, the people wired their pastor to come home for the dedication. Moody looked over a vast crowd in the rambling building on the evening of December 24, 1871. Where in the world did they come from? More than a thousand children, accompanied by their parents! Many sobbed with joy as he “Opened the Book.” He suddenly became aware that directly in front of him were those two Dreadful –no! No! a thousand times, No! those two Angels of Light!(from Olive Branch Mission) It just seemed that made his joy complete, that they were there!

Heaven had certainly touched earth during that two hours dedication. He stood, after service, meeting friends. And there at last were those two Wonderful Women. There was such an expression in their faces as they looked at him that he “wanted to fall at the feet of Jesus in thanksgiving.” And now they are saying something to him—words sweeter to hear as coming from them than from anyone else in all the world:

“And after the fire a Still Small Voice!  
Now, walk softly, Lad, all the days of thy life!  
Jehovah hath dealt with thee!”

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*“I do not know anything America needs more today than men and women on fire with the fire of heaven: not great men, but true honest persons God can use.”*

**D.L. Moody**