Running head: Dwight L. Moody American Evangelist

Dwight L. Moody

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Abstract

Dwight L. Moody was an American evangelist that lived from 1837-1899. His life is an example of what an evangelist is. He affected many lives in the States and in the British Isles as a revivalist over the course of his life. He quit his job and entered into full-time ministry, started schools, joined the YMCA, and preached to try to reach the unsaved masses for Jesus Christ. He served God in this capacity until his death in 1899.

**Outline**

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| **Claim:** | Dwight L. Moody was an American evangelist. |
| **Data:** | Dwight L. Moody dedicated his life to full-time ministry. He embodied the definition of what an evangelist is. Moody joined the YMCA. The YMCA was created was for the purpose of evangelism. Moody started schools, did revivals, and committed his life to evangelism. Eventually, he quit his job to serve God full time. He had to depend on others for financial support since he quit his job to go into full time ministry. He served God in this capacity until his death in 1899. |
| **Warrant:** | Moody made it his goal as an evangelist to do everything in his power to save America and the British Isles. |
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Dwight L. Moody the American Evangelist

1 Dictionary.com defines an evangelist as a “Protestant minister or layperson who serves as an itinerant or special preacher, especially a revivalist1.” Dwight L. Moody was an American evangelist. Moody gave up his career and dedicated his life to evangelism. He was every part of the definition that Dictionary .com publishes.

2 Moody was born in Northfield, Massachusetts on February 5, 1837. At the age of seventeen, he headed for Boston. There he joined the Mt. Vernon Congregational Church. At this time, he was employed as a shoe salesperson for his uncle. It was in Boston that Dwight’s life-long affiliation with the YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association) started. He eventually left Boston and moved to Chicago. In Chicago, his relationship with the YMCA continued. He continued to work as a very successful shoe salesperson right up until he decided to quit the business world. He dedicated himself to full-time ministry in 1860.

3 Ian Randal mentioned Moody in a study he did about a revival in 1859. He writes:

A leading Methodist newspaper reported on the new energy for witness among lay people, with Christian faith becoming a common topic. One of the most notable transatlantic products of the revival was a member of Plymouth Congregational Church in Chicago, who from 1858 (he was 21) was hiring large halls and was soon attracting 1500 children. This young man, Dwight L. Moody, was to go on to have a remarkable interdenominational and international evangelical ministry, giving up his business in 1860 to devote himself full-time to work with young people and children, later broadening his work and becoming a mass evangelist.(Randal, 2009, p. 219-220)

By 1859, Moody was well on his way to becoming the American evangelist.

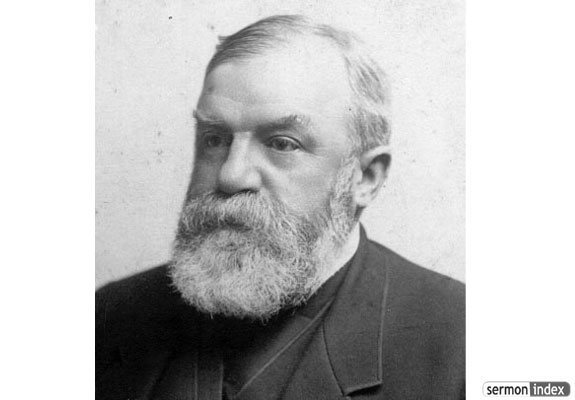


Figure 1. Dwight L. Moody

Note. Sermon Index.net. Retrieved July 03, 2009, from http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/myalbum/photo.php?lid=9

4 The YMCA played an important role in Moody’s life. “The Young Men’s Christian Association was founded in London, England, on June 6, 1844, in response to unhealthy social conditions arising in the big cities at the end of the Industrial Revolution (roughly 1750 to 1850)” (YMCA of Rowan County). Findlay stated this about the purpose of the YMCA, “To seek converts and thus new members of the denominations, and to expand the moral influence of the churches throughout society” (Findlay, 1969, p. 71). Moody took on many roles at the YMCA in Chicago. He started as the first unpaid employee. Moody moved up the ranks from janitor to president. He spoke at many of the YMCA conventions throughout the country. The connections he established were his door to doing revivals in England. (Findlay, 1969)

5 Moody attended the Plymouth Congregational Church in Chicago. He also started spending time with a young men’s group from the First Methodist Church. This group would visit saloons and hotels on Sunday mornings to try to get people to attend church services. In early 1859, Moody started a non-denominational mission Sunday school to try to reach children. He also hoped that this would lead to opportunities to minister to the parents. He would wander the streets looking for children to attend the school until 10 or 11 PM every night after work. The work started to take too much time and Moody decided to quit his job and go into ministry full-time. The school was eventually in need of larger facilities. A new school and church was built to support the growing ministry. John V. Farwell, a Chicago dry goods merchant, along with others (Cyrus McCormick, William E. Dodge, George Stuart), financially supported the ministry Moody started. (Findlay, 1969)

6 In June 1873, Moody left Chicago with Ira Sankey and headed to England to do revivals. Findlay reported, “He lost interest in everything except the preaching of Christ and working for souls”(Findlay, 1969, p. 132). Moody held revivals all over England and Ireland. After 2 years, Moody headed back to Northfield, Massachusetts. This became his primary residence for the rest of his life. Because of the media attention he received during his time in England, he returned to the United States a folk hero. Many communities were soon requesting Moody to do revivals. Moody did revivals in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Boston, Baltimore, St. Louis, San Francisco, Atlanta and Kansas City. There were also two more trips to England to do revivals. The last revival Moody spoke at was in Kansas City just before his death in 1899. (Findlay, 1969)

7 Moody started three schools devoted to Christian education. The Northfield Seminary for young women was started in 1879. In 1881, the Mount Herman School for Young Men was founded. (Findlay, 1969) The Chicago Evangelization Society (later renamed to Moody Bible Institute) was started in 1886 for the following reason, “He wanted, he said, to make it possible for “a man without any education,” who had “a passion for souls” and no “means to get ‘em,” to get the education he needed to work effectively for God” (Findlay, 1969, p.330).

8 Dwight L. Moody was a man with a purpose. He devoted his life to evangelism. He had a desire to reach souls for God. This led him to quit his job and enter full-time ministry. He started three schools for the purpose of Christian education. He sought lost souls his whole life by doing revivals. Through his preaching, many heard the message. He did all these things to try to save America and the British Isles.

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Author Note

Dwight L. Moody dedicated his life to service. He chose to serve God as an evangelist. There are many things written about him and each one points out how dedicated he was. He gave up his career, used his life and energy to pursue God, and encouraged others to do the same. His commitment to this end is extraordinary and worthy of emulation. We should all have this purpose in our lives.

Footnotes

1A revivalist is one who ties to renew or reawaken spiritual interest in an individual life, church, or a whole nation.