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1855–1899

The School That D. L. Moody Founded

Many institutions have been around longer than Moody Bible Institute, the school founded by evangelist D. L. Moody. Indeed, as MBI celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2011, ten colleges in America will have already celebrated their 250th anniversary—they began to offer bachelor's degrees before the thirteen colonies declared their independence from England. Moody Bible Institute, founded in 1886, is not even the oldest Bible school of higher learning. That honor goes to Nyack College of New York, founded four years earlier.¹

Yet the impact of MBI in the annals of both higher and general adult education makes the school a leader in innovative training. Consider these firsts:

- The first program to train church musicians, in 1889. Northwestern University of Evanston, Illinois, launched the second church program in 1896.
- First correspondence courses offered by an evangelical school (1901). MBI became just the third correspondence school in America, preceded by Chautauqua and the University of Chicago.
- First Bible-oriented evening school, begun in 1903.

- First complete (three-year) program in Jewish studies (1923).
- Bible conferences, tracing back to 1897. Though such meetings began earlier, the extension department became one of the main promoters of such conferences, and influenced the Bible conference movement more than any other evangelical organization.
- First correspondence school course offered on radio (1926). *Radio School of the Bible* became the longest running educational radio program, offering on-air courses from the Moody Correspondence School for eighty-six years. First carried on Chicago station WMBI, it was later syndicated nationally. The final program aired in September 2002.
- First noncommercial educational and religious radio station, WMBI-AM (1926).

For Moody Bible Institute, which comprises educational, broadcasting, and publishing divisions, innovation is part of its DNA. All three branches serve to advance Christ's kingdom. The innovative approaches reflect the imprint of its founder and first president, Dwight L. Moody. Far better known as an evangelist than as a businessman or educator, Moody challenged the masses to come to the Savior.

Though sometimes plain-spoken and having a limited education, D. L. Moody displayed a humble attitude and a confidence in the Scriptures that would impress his supporters. They helped the onetime entrepreneur in his quest to serve Christ and His church. Moody's goals—to train Christian workers, spread the gospel, and distribute inexpensive books about the Christian life and the truths of Scripture—were accomplished partly during his lifetime. After his death, strong leaders he had appointed would further advance those goals and fulfill his vision; subsequent leaders would extend that vision with innovative programs throughout the twentieth century and beyond.

SELLING SHOES AND SEEKING WEALTH

The compassion and directness of D. L. Moody may be due in part to his childhood in Northfield, Massachusetts. Dwight's father, Edwin Moody,

died when Dwight was only four. His mother gave birth to twins one month later, giving Betsy Moody seven sons and two daughters. Though Betsy’s brothers helped the family, the amassed debt made life difficult. Years later, Moody wrote, “My father died before I can remember. . . . He died a bankrupt, and the creditors came in and took everything as far as the law allowed. We had a hard struggle. Thank God for my mother! She never lost hope.”² Young Dwight received perhaps four years of formal education at the local school before he joined his older brother Luther, who was boarding with a childless couple. Only ten years old, Dwight would spend most of his next seven winters staying with other families, as he and his older brothers helped neighbors with the farm chores to ease the burden on their mother, home with two young daughters.³

At age seventeen, Dwight Lyman Moody, restless and dissatisfied with farming and logging, left sheltered Northfield, Massachusetts (population 1,000 in 1850), for Boston, a metropolis of 150,000. He became a sales clerk in his uncle Samuel’s shoe store. Within three months he had become the store’s top seller of shoes and boots. Ever ambitious and outgoing, he joined the Boston Young Men’s Christian Association primarily to enjoy the YMCA’s well-stocked library and its public lectures. Despite his limited education—or because of it—Moody wanted to learn. But he also wanted to make money. He learned about world markets and the selling prices of grain in New York, and even advised his brothers on what to plant and sell if they wanted to turn a large profit.⁴

A TOUCH AND TEARS

Moody did honor his uncle Samuel’s request to attend Sunday school and worship services at the local Congregational church. On Saturday afternoon April 21, 1855, his Sunday school teacher, Edward Kimball, was

1855	1860	1865
<i>Dwight L. Moody becomes a Christian.</i>	<i>Abraham Lincoln is elected president. Lincoln visits Sand Mission School and Superintendent Moody.</i>	<i>President Abraham Lincoln is assassinated.</i>

preparing his Sunday lesson when he felt constrained to visit Moody and talk to him about receiving Christ. He obeyed the prompting, and arriving at the shoe store he found Moody in the back, wrapping and shelving shoes.

“I went up to him and put my hand on his shoulder,” Kimball recalled years later, “and as I leaned over . . . I made my plea. . . . I simply told him of Christ’s love for him and the love Christ wanted in return.”⁵

Moody indicated Kimball’s touch and tears made him tender to the gospel: “I recollect my teacher came around behind the counter . . . and put his hand upon my shoulder and talked to me [about] Christ and my soul. . . . I said to myself, ‘This is a very strange thing. Here is a man who never saw me till lately, and he is weeping over my sins, and I never shed a tear about them.’ But I understand it now, and know what it is to have a passion for men’s souls and weep over their sins.”⁶

A STRUGGLE TO SURRENDER

In September 1856, Moody went west to Chicago, where his talent as a shoe salesman landed him a job at a thriving boot and shoe store in the downtown area. One of the owners noted, “His ambition made him anxious to lay up money. His personal habits were exact and economical. As a salesman he was . . . [a] zealous and tireless worker.”⁷ Soon “he was making more in one week (\$30) than he was making in Boston in a month.” Beyond selling boots and shoes for an astute entrepreneur, he was making much in real estate, buying land and selling it at a profit in a booming Chicago.⁸ His personal ambition was to become wealthy—he hoped to make \$100,000 in his lifetime, a princely sum in those days.

He was well on his way to achieving that goal when, in 1860, he decided to give up his business plans and devote his efforts entirely to Christian work. It was not sudden. He had given his Sundays fully to the

1871	1872	1874
The Great Chicago Fire engulfs Chicago.	<i>Moody challenged by Briton Henry Varley.</i>	Women’s Christian Temperance Union founded.

Lord’s work soon after arriving, and his youthful energy and passionate commitment sustained him each weekend. He had joined the Plymouth Congregational Church and quickly rented one pew and made it his goal to fill it. He soon did, calling idle men on street corners and early risers in the rooming houses of downtown to join him. Eventually he “rented five pews and kept them filled with young men at every service. He also went out and hunted up boys and girls for the Sunday school.”⁹

Next he started his own mission school for poor, underserved children living on the north side of the Chicago River in a vice-ridden section called the Sands and sometimes labeled “Little Hell.” Some lived with one parent and skipped school to help at home. Moody, himself from a poor home and raised by one parent after his father’s death, knew they needed the gospel. Unlike the typical church that did not know how to help these children who lacked discipline and interest, Moody’s school accepted the occasional screams and scuffles and laughter, even as it focused on singing, Bible readings and stories, and prayer.

The Sands Mission School began in a vacant saloon but grew and soon moved to a large hall over the city’s North Market, after Moody won the support of John Farwell, an entrepreneur who sold dry goods. The mission school soon had more than three hundred students. By late 1860, up to 1,200 students came each Sunday, and president-elect Abraham Lincoln, en route to Washington, stopped in Chicago to visit. At Moody’s request, Lincoln gave an impromptu speech.¹⁰

Despite his zeal to spread the gospel, Moody still wrestled to surrender his ambitions to God fully. One of his mentors, Mrs. H. Phillips, known as Mother Phillips at her home church, had taught the relatively new believer in 1857 to be more faithful in prayer and also emphasized Scripture memorization, systematic Bible study, and the importance of disciple-making. That year Mother Phillips had urged him to quit business and wholeheartedly take up “the call.” The same year J. B. Stillson,

1879	1881	1883
Thomas Edison invents first functioning lightbulb.		
Moody begins Northfield Seminary for Young Women.	Moody opens Mount Hermon Boys’ School.	Emma Dryer organizes the May Institute.



(Radical Obedience)

For someone who had made it his goal in Chicago to earn \$100,000, it seems surprising D. L. Moody resigned from his job, leaving behind a large annual salary and the big bank account he once hoped to nurture. But the call to radical obedience made total sense one day, as Moody watched the sacrifice of a teacher at his Sands Mission School.*

A loyal Sunday school teacher who managed to handle a noisy class of girls week after week missed a class one Sunday due to sickness, and Superintendent Moody took over. He appreciated how the teacher had calmed the unruly girls as they acted up on Moody himself. The next week the teacher came to Moody's store to announce he was leaving Chicago.

"I have had a hemorrhage of the lungs and the doctor tells me I can't live here. I am going home to my widowed mother to die."

Moody comforted the man and reminded him death was nothing to fear. The man agreed, but expressed his grief over the souls of the girls in his Sunday school class. Moody suggested that together they visit each of the girls "and tell them just how you feel."

Moody obtained a carriage and together they began to make the calls. At the first house the pale teacher said, "Mary, I must leave Chicago; I can't stay here any longer; but before I leave I want you to become a Christian." The teacher and student talked awhile, and then he prayed. Moody also prayed, and the girl became a Christian.

1892	1893	1894	1899
<p>Alexander Graham Bell establishes a telephone line between New York and Chicago.</p>			
	<p><i>Moody and his institute mobilize for the World Exposition in Chicago.</i></p>	<p><i>Moody opens Bible Institute Colportage Association. Joins Institute in 1899.</i></p>	<p><i>D. L. Moody dies. R. A. Torrey becomes the Institute's second president.</i></p>



During the next ten days, the teacher found some strength, and Moody assisted as the teacher made calls on other girls. One by one the girls surrendered their hearts to Christ. Finally the teacher visited Moody with the news he was leaving for home the next day. Moody wanted to arrange one last meeting of the class that night. The teacher, still weak, agreed to a farewell time of prayer, and Moody contacted all the girls.

“That night God kindled a fire in my soul that has never gone out,” Moody said. The dying teacher explained how God had given him strength to visit each of them. The teacher then read some Scripture and began to pray. Moody explained what happened next:

“He prayed for me as superintendent of the school; after he prayed, I prayed; and when I was about to rise, to my surprise one of those scholars began to pray, and she, too, prayed for the superintendent. Before we rose from our knees every one had prayed. It seemed as if heaven and earth came together in that room.

“The next day I went back to the store, but, to my amazement, I had lost all ambition for business.”

*Charles F. Goss recounted the episode in his 1900 book on Moody, *Echoes from the Pulpit and Platform* (Hartford, Conn.: Worthington, 1900); cited in Dorsett, *Passion*, 76–77.

1884	1886	1887	1889
A ten story building in Chicago is the world's first true "skyscraper."			Jane Addams opens Hull House in Chicago.
	Moody issues second call to train gap men; founding date of Bible institute.	Chicago Evangelization Society incorporates.	R. A. Torrey becomes general superintendent of Moody's Bible institute.

an evangelist twice Moody's age, taught D. L. the importance of tracts and New Testaments. The two men teamed to distribute the literature to the sick and to sailors lodging at night along the Chicago River; they also read the Scriptures to shut-ins.¹¹

Now, in 1860, his struggle came to a head. Business travel, which he liked, increasingly was robbing him of time in ministry, which he loved. He could not forget the words of Mother Phillips to heed "the call." Biographer Lyle Dorsett attributes Moody's final step to full surrender to the example of a faithful Sunday school teacher (see "Radical Obedience"). Later Moody would say, "When I came to Jesus Christ, I had a terrible battle to surrender my will . . . [and then in 1860] I had another battle for three months." In one sermon he summarized the ultimate outcome: "Whenever God has been calling me to higher service, there has always been a conflict with my will. I have fought against it, but God's will has been done instead of mine."¹²

Moody entered full-time religious work with the same zeal he displayed in business. He soon became a leading figure in the national Sunday school movement, and in 1865 he was named president of the Chicago Young Men's Christian Association.

MEETING MISS DRYER

In the midst of his busy schedule as a Christian leader and evangelist, Moody soon became keenly interested in educational endeavors. In 1870 he first met Emma Dryer, who had served on the faculty at Illinois State Normal University for six years as teacher of grammar and drawing, finally becoming principal of the women's faculty. Miss Dryer recently had resigned from the faculty after a debilitating bout of typhoid fever followed by complete healing. She believed the Lord restored her so she might "meditate on the needs of the dying world as never before. . . . And in my earnest prayerful meditation, God gave me new light from the Scriptures." She chose to commit her life to Christian service and left secular teaching.¹³

Her educational background, knowledge of the Bible, and dependence on God—like Moody, she had the courage to leave worldly success

to serve Christ wherever He led—impressed the evangelist.

The Great Chicago Fire roared through the city on October 8, 1871, as Dryer visited friends there. Suddenly she found herself involved in various kinds of relief work. Sensing the great need, Miss Dryer began three busy years conducting mothers' meetings and children's industrial schools in Moody's Northside Tabernacle, which had been reconstructed at Ontario and Wells streets after the fire. As they worked alongside one another while helping the needy, Miss Dryer and Moody often talked about his special work in England, known as the Mildmay Institutions, which included the annual Mildmay Conference, thriving evangelistic and missionary enterprises in a large conference hall, and a nearby deaconess house, where women received training for home and foreign missions work.

Moody was particularly interested in the training home for female workers. He urged Miss Dryer to become active in this type of ministry. He told her he was planning to go to England for ten months but wanted to begin something similar to the Mildmay work. He asked Miss Dryer to begin such a training institute and promised that once he returned from England, he would build a home for the work.

THE VISION FOR A COEDUCATIONAL BIBLE SCHOOL

Miss Dryer told Moody that she felt this proposed training school should be for young men as well as women. Moody, however, hesitated to start a coeducational program. He feared such a program would give the impression he was trying to compete with seminaries. Eventually this problem resolved itself in his mind, but it was Miss Dryer who raised the idea of coeducational training at the Chicago school.

Moody made a couple of visits to the British Isles in connection with his Sunday school and YMCA activities. When he returned for a third visit to Britain in 1872, he heard a challenge from evangelist Henry Varley: "The world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to him." Varley's statement profoundly moved Moody, who reportedly said, "By God's grace I will be that man."¹⁴ The next year he returned to Great Britain once more, this time for the first of his great

evangelistic campaigns (1873–75), followed in 1875–1876 by his first American campaigns in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago.

Meanwhile, Miss Dryer worked hard to develop what she called the “Bible Work” in Chicago. Though absent most of the time, Moody kept in contact, enlisting financial supporters for her and many students as he provided personal enthusiasm and prayers.

The ten months that Moody planned to be away from Chicago before he returned to promote this new work turned out to be more than ten years. His intentions were good, but his zeal for evangelistic work both at home and abroad dominated his schedule. Not until 1886 was he able to follow through on the plans he and Miss Dryer had talked about so enthusiastically in the winter of 1873.

Dryer conducted the first Bible classes in the temporary Northside Tabernacle, later in the Relief and Aid Society building, and eventually in a room provided in the new YMCA building. Moody urged friends in Chicago to support the expanding Bible work and its staff. Among his business friends were N. S. Bouton, Mrs. John V. Farwell, and the Cyrus McCormicks. Writing at that time, Miss Dryer reported: “Our workers had their appointed districts, in which they held meetings, and visited from house to house, cooperating with near churches.”

She later described Moody’s vision for the Bible work and his future Bible institute this way: “It was still Mr. Moody’s hope to fill Chicago with Christian workers, who should competently instruct, and who working from missions, and selected stations, by house to house visitation, distribution of the Bible, teaching in homes and missions, should do a continued work for Christ here, and also in foreign fields.”¹⁵

THE VISION FOR NORTHFIELD

Moody’s base of operations from 1871 to 1885 largely shifted from Chicago back to Northfield. The Moodys’ home had been destroyed in the Chicago Fire, and he had relocated his wife, Emma Revell Moody, and their children to Northfield, his boyhood village. Between campaigns he now returned to Northfield. In a sense, Chicago was out of sight and almost out of mind. But his vision for educating the young and

the poor for God's service was energized while home for two or three months a year. He sought to help impoverished New England girls with a college preparatory school—a rare type of institution for girls, especially girls in northern New England. He enlisted the help of Henry F. Durant, a wealthy Boston lawyer who founded Wellesley College in 1875, to give women a liberal arts education that included courses in English Bible and Christian doctrine.

Moody and Ira Sankey, his evangelistic song leader and soloist, donated the royalties from their popular hymnbook. Others offered funding, and several notable northern New Englanders joined the board of trustees. The Northfield Seminary for Young Women began on November 3, 1879. When officials dedicated the women's dormitory in September 1880, Moody concluded his address by saying, "The Lord laid it upon my heart some time ago to organize a school for young women in the humbler walks of life who never would get a Christian education but for a school like this."¹⁶

This was Moody's first school, but another would follow before the Chicago Bible institute would rise. People in the region pleaded for a school for boys and young men, and in May 1881 Mount Hermon Boys' School opened three miles from Northfield Seminary. Both schools included curriculum as well as extracurricular activities intended to help Christian students grow in their faith. Yet being a Christian was not a requirement for admission. Moody welcomed nonbelievers who could be loved into the kingdom. And in a society that offered limited educational opportunities to women and ethnic minorities, both schools enrolled Native Americans, students of Asian background, and African Americans.¹⁷ Students paid only half the cost of tuition and room and board, but Moody found willing donors who paid all costs for the poorest boys and girls.¹⁸

In 1890, four years after Moody's supporters organized the Chicago Bible institute, Moody would launch a third school in the Northfield area. The Northfield Bible Training School (NBTS) focused on women with little or no formal training. Many times following his campaigns in New England and eastern Canada, Moody had learned about women who accepted Christ and within a couple of years sensed an ongoing call

to home or international missions. Many were illiterate. “Moody wanted to connect those who were called with the locations needing workers,” and these women assisted urban churches with evangelism and house-to-house personal work in the community.¹⁹

So as not to drain funds from Northfield Seminary, Mount Hermon, and the budding Chicago Bible institute, Moody found some wealthy Christians who owned the Northfield, a luxury hotel that hosted guests attending “deeper life” conferences. Moody had organized this conference program in Northfield, which hosted notable speakers during most of the spring and summer. During the six nonconference months (September through March), the hotel was empty. Moody put two women in each of the larger rooms and offered two three-month terms during the school year.

NBTS was a vocational school that taught skills such as sewing, cooking, music, and hygiene to prepare women to meet the physical needs of the urban poor they would serve. It had no endowment and no buildings of its own, yet it attracted an increasing number of women students. Historian Lyle Dorsett called it “one of Moody’s most successful educational ventures.”²⁰ Eventually Emma Moody would work closely with the women at NBTS. The school trained women for eighteen years before it was absorbed into the Northfield Seminary.

MAY DAYS

Meanwhile the diligent Miss Dryer prepared for the coming Bible institute in Chicago. In 1882 she met the Reverend W. G. Moorehead, then a professor (and later president) at Xenia Theological Seminary in Ohio. Impressed with his teaching ability, she considered him as a possible teacher for a “test” institute in May of 1883. Later she approached Charles A. Blanchard, pastor of Moody’s Chicago Avenue Church. Blanchard liked the idea of a preliminary institute and told her to forge ahead; he would be sure the necessary \$500 to begin would be there when the doors opened.

The short-term “May Institute” opened with Moorehead in charge. Those institutes resumed each year in May until the year-round institute

opened formally in 1889. However, other special events were occurring that soon would transform the Bible work in Chicago into a larger, more permanent organization.

THE CHICAGO EVANGELIZATION SOCIETY

Moody's attention returned strongly to the proposed Bible institute in 1885 and again in 1886–87. Sometime in January 1885, Moody attended a special meeting in Farwell Hall to discuss city evangelization. T. W. Harvey, a prominent lumber merchant, presided. After two papers were read and discussed, Moody addressed the group. He laid the problem squarely on the line: If the leaders wished to carry on their plans to start the Chicago training school, the first step must be to raise the money to finance the work.

The need was there—of this he was convinced. But were the people of Chicago ready to support such an endeavor? He was not interested in starting the school without the full support and interest of the people in Chicago. According to Blanchard, Moody was candid in letting the people know that he himself would not spend time in Chicago raising money. His broader work was very demanding, and he felt it was up to someone else to raise the funds.²¹

Before departing, Moody told Emma Dryer, “Keep it before them, that I won't come until they raise that \$250,000.” Evidently Miss Dryer did this. Mrs. Nettie F. McCormick and her son pledged a total of \$50,000. (Her husband, Cyrus H., inventor of the reaper that bears his name, had died just a year earlier.) John V. Farwell promised \$100,000 in stock, and the long hoped-for and prayed-for training school was turning into a reality.

A year later Moody, again in Chicago, spoke at Farwell Hall on the subject of city evangelism. He kept the vision and the need before the audience: The next day, on January 23, 1886, a Chicago newspaper recounted Moody's address:

I tell you what I want, and what I have on my heart. I would like to see \$250,000 raised at once; \$250,000 for Chicago is not anything.



(The San Francisco Preview)

While Moody was still in San Francisco, the local press interviewed him shortly before he left for Chicago to attend the final May Institute; his Bible institute would open four months later. The interview (abridged) contains many significant statements about the proposed Chicago Bible institute:

Question: What do you aim to accomplish through a Bible institute?

Answer: To raise up a class of men and women who will help pastors in their work: who will visit from house to house and reach the non-church goers. In other words, we must have a class of men and women between the laity and ministry to do the work that must be done.

Question: Will not such an organization antagonize theological seminaries?

Answer: I think it will help the seminaries. Many who go into the work will see the need of more training and study, and after a year or two will go into some theological seminary and take the regular course.

Question: What do you intend to teach at Chicago?

Answer: The great fundamental doctrines of the Bible, such as repentance, regeneration of the Holy Spirit, atonement, conversion,

Some will be startled, but see how the money is pouring in upon you. See how the real estate has gone up, and how wealth is accumulating, and how you are gaining in population, and a quarter of a million is not much. Take \$50,000 and put up a building that will house seventy-five or one hundred people, where they can eat or sleep. Take the \$200,000 and invest it at 5 percent, and that gives you \$10,000 a year just to run this work. Then take men that have the gifts and train them for this work of reaching the people.

But you will say: “Where are you going to find them?” I will tell you. God never had a work but what He had men to do it. I believe we have got to have gap-men—men to stand between the laity and the ministers; men who are trained to do city mission work.²²

justification, redemption, faith and assurance, law and grace, sanctification and consecration, resurrection. Of course a great deal of the instruction will be in methods of practical work, as "How to interest non-church goers," etc. Such matters will be discussed at many of the sessions.



Question: Do you intend to work independent of the churches?

Answer: No sir; but in full sympathy with all evangelical churches.

Question: What will be the cost?

Answer: Instruction will be free; the workers will board and lodge themselves.

Question: Do you know any scheme like this in the country?

Answer: I do not, nor in any other country, but I think it is the crying need of our churches today. Three-fourths of the workingmen in all our large cities are entirely neglected, and we must train men and women to reach them.

Question: Why not start such an enterprise right here in San Francisco?

Answer: I think Chicago is more central and less expensive to reach. San Francisco is too far to one side.

Question: Will you take persons of any nationality?

Answer: Yes; anyone who can understand the English language.

Just over a year later, on February 5, 1887, seven trustees signed the document creating the Chicago Evangelization Society. The first signature was that of Moody, who was also CES president. Others included Harvey, Farwell, Cyrus H. McCormick Jr., and Robert Scott, senior partner in what would become Carson Pirie Scott, a leading Chicago department store chain. Intentionally or not, the date honored Moody: February 5 marked his fiftieth birthday! CES began one week later, February 13, when the state of Illinois certified the organization.²³

At its founding, CES established the Bible Work Institute, soon to be the Chicago Bible institute, the school D. L. Moody founded.²⁴ CES grew and thrived. Its workers held city tent meetings and visited homes with tracts and the gospel; some led Bible classes.

AN UNEXPECTED DETOUR

The only setback occurred in July 1887, when Moody announced he would resign from the board of trustees. Moody and the board had disagreed about “some fundraising and construction strategies.”²⁵ Later he received a letter from Mrs. C. H. (Nettie) McCormick in which she expressed some discontent regarding the constitution of the Chicago Evangelization Society along with some suggestions for improvement.²⁶ In his reply to Mrs. McCormick, Moody took issue with the board’s plan to increase its size but also felt it would benefit the board if he resigned. The letter stunned Nettie, a loyal friend and major supporter, as well as Moody’s fellow trustees. Mrs. McCormick immediately wrote and offered her own resignation in place of Moody’s.

At this point the two Emmas, Dryer and Moody, close friends who knew D. L. well, interceded. Miss Dryer recognized that the plan for a year-round institute would not succeed without Moody’s involvement. She sent a letter to Moody criticizing him for hurting the McCormicks and not respecting the decisions of others. She also wrote her good friend Emma Moody, “asking her to talk sense into her husband.”²⁷

Emma Moody played an important part in convincing her husband he should change his mind. Biographer James Findlay described her significant impact despite a quiet demeanor. “Emma Moody was shy and retiring in the extreme, and few people knew the influence she exerted on her husband. Little record is left of the esteem Moody held for his wife’s opinions and the deep affection that existed between them. In her own special way Emma Moody acted constantly as a counterbalance to her ebullient spouse.”²⁸

Moody listened to both Emmas and apologized for his hasty response. He even telegraphed Dryer and McCormick to say he was “very sorry for the letter.”²⁹ His heartfelt apology was readily accepted by Nettie McCormick and the board, and they continued to pour their energies into CES and the plan for a Bible institute.

THE OFFICIAL FOUNDING DATE

On September 26, 1889, five months after Emma Dryer began her

final May Institute (which actually commenced in April that year), formal classes began at the Chicago Bible institute. Although classes began in 1889, as early as 1905 a published annual report stated that the Institute was “founded by D. L. Moody in 1886, under the name of the ‘Chicago Evangelization Society.’” This coincided with Moody’s second Farwell Hall address and his public call for \$250,000 for an institute to train “gap-men—men to stand between the laity and the ministers; men who are trained to do city mission work.”

However, a school calendar published in 1894 had designated the founding date as September 26, 1889. In 1929, employee A. G. Olson wrote a letter to suggest that a special observance be held to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Institute, using the date of the “formal opening on September 26, 1889.” A. F. Gaylord, the school’s business manager, received the letter and then forwarded it to James M. Gray, president of the Institute. Gray wrote back the following informal note:

I would not wish to reopen the old controversy as to the date of the founding of the Institute. We have always held it to be 1886, and although Mr. Olson is speaking of the date when it was “formally opened,” yet it would be difficult to keep this distinction clear before the public.³⁰

Thus the year 1886 has been accepted as the origin of Moody Bible Institute.

FROM YALE TO LEIPZIG TO CHICAGO

Moody knew he would visit but not stay at the Bible Institute for Home and Foreign Missions—the Institute’s formal name while he was alive—once it began. So he searched for the right person to lead the Institute. He soon settled on Reuben Archer Torrey, a powerful preacher who had directed a city mission in Minneapolis. Torrey combined evangelistic fervor with administrative experience and deep skill in biblical criticism. His training made some wonder why Torrey had accepted a city mission when he could be teaching in a college or university. After all, he had a BA

from Yale University and a BD from Yale's Divinity School and was proficient in Greek and Hebrew. His mastery of German took him to two German universities, Leipzig and Erlangen, for postgraduate level studies in biblical criticism during the early 1880s. But Torrey sensed the call to this unique mission just as he had to Minneapolis.

This was a perfect match: the man who gave up business success initially to work with poor children had met a scholar who had given up an academic calling to serve God in urban ministry in Minnesota. Both men were preachers and evangelists. Torrey shared with Moody a passion for the urban masses and a belief that "the divinity schools, seminaries, and colleges that were providing academic training had simply failed to equip ministers and missionaries for the realities of wretched humanity at home and abroad . . . Except for rhetoric and homiletics, little was offered in practical theology."³¹ From his days at Yale Divinity School, Torrey had a grasp of historical, biblical, and systematic theology.

R. A. Torrey joined as general superintendent and the primary Bible teacher; he also directed the men's department. Moody soon would recruit other teachers. With his preaching skills, Torrey also served as pastor of Moody's Chicago Avenue Church from 1894 until after Moody's death.

THE STUDENTS COME

The Chicago Bible institute had room for fifty women and two hundred men by 1890, and these spaces soon were filled. At one point in 1898 Moody wrote Institute officials about a girl he had met in Pueblo, Colorado, who wanted to come to the Institute but was turned away because they were "full" now. "I want to see 1000 students at the Institute," he protested. He asked that they stop turning away students who were called to ministry and needed training.³²

From its beginning, students paid for room and board only. Classes were tuition-free, thanks to donors who supported the students' education. This was Moody's vision. And 125 years later, undergraduate students at the Chicago campus still receive a tuition-paid education, paying only for room, board, books, and miscellaneous course and technology fees.

THE WORLD COMES TO CHICAGO

Although D. L. Moody was away from the institute campus often in the 1890s, as president his fingerprints were all over campus—from the three-story 153 Building, the first structure built in 1889 (which quickly added two more stories in 1892), to the various evangelistic enterprises.

Moody and his institute mobilized for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Most remember the Exposition for its gleaming white buildings that inspired visitors to dub it the White City, and for its Palace of Fine Arts, which later became Chicago's famed Museum of Science and Industry. But Moody had a grand idea, "as novel as it was daring," his son Will later wrote: to make "such a carnival the scene of wide-spread evangelistic effort."³³

The institute headquartered the crusade: Three hundred out-of-town workers and preachers stayed in the newly expanded 153 Building, displacing some students; and many students participated as counselors and helpers. Moody and his associates organized speakers and singers as well as recruited dozens of evangelists, including J. Wilbur Chapman, R. A. Torrey, and a young Billy Sunday. They were sent to theaters, halls, tents, and auditoriums. Moody associates and students alike invited tourists and locals to scores of venues. And the guests came. One Sunday morning in September more than 64,000 people attended seventy assemblies, and on another Sunday morning Moody preached to 20,000 in the Forepaugh's Circus tent. The World's Fair seemed to spark Moody's creativity and energy. He enlisted preachers from Germany, Poland, Russia, and France, who held services for international guests. He raised almost \$70,000 to rent different venues at the Fair and throughout the city.³⁴

Many Chicago believers argued for a boycott because the World's Fair was open on Sundays and the Parliament of Religions at the Fair would showcase the world's various religions. Moody, instead, saw an opportunity for evangelizing.³⁵

The success there would motivate future MBI presidents and ministries to use world's fairs in the twentieth century as a means for creative advancement of the gospel. In 1939, Irwin Moon, then a member of the MBI extension department, presented Sermons from Science

demonstrations to large crowds at the San Francisco World's Fair. Later Moon and his team, part of the popular Moody Institute of Science (MIS), would present films and science demonstrations at world's fairs in Seattle (1962), New York (1964), Montreal (1967), and Spokane (1974), all with an eye on how the God of creation formed this world that people might enjoy it and know Him, their Creator.

BOOKS TO THE WORLD

Moody's other notable accomplishment at the Institute was to launch the Bible Institute Colportage Association (BICA) in 1894. "Colportage" refers to the making and distribution of religious literature. Five years later it incorporated within the Institute. The goal was to publish practical, inexpensive books on the Christian life for the masses.

The first paperback books were just ten cents, imitating the "dime novels" of the day. Yet the pricing was revolutionary for Christian books—one-third the price that was being asked for similar religious books. (The price was later raised to fifteen cents so that the colporteurs could make an adequate profit.) Early books included sermons by Moody and C. H. Spurgeon. In 1941 BICA became Moody Press and continued to expand. Today it is known as Moody Publishers, offering books, audio, and e-books. (For more on BICA, Moody Press, and Moody Publishers, see chapter 10.)

D. L. Moody died on December 22, 1899. Three months later the board of trustees voted to change the name of the school to the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.

NOTES

1. Nyack College was founded as the Missionary Training Institute by pastor and missionary advocate A. B. Simpson and is located in Nyack, New York.
2. As quoted in Charles F. Goss, *Echoes from the Pulpit and Platform* (Hartford, Conn.: A. D. Worthington, 1900), 495; cited in Lyle W. Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls* (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 34.
3. Dorsett, *Passion*, 34–36.
4. *Ibid.*, 44–45.

5. Edward Kimball, "Reminiscences of Moody," MBI archives, as cited in Dorsett, *Passion*, 47.
6. D. L. Moody, as quoted in J. Wilbur Chapman, *The Life and Work of D. L. Moody* (Philadelphia: Winston, 1900), 76; cited in Dorsett, *Passion*, 47.
7. W. H. Daniels, *D. L. Moody and His Work* (Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing, 1875), 28–29; as cited in Dorsett, *Passion*, 55.
8. Dorsett, *Passion*, 56.
9. John Wilbur Chapman, *The Life and Work of D. L. Moody* (Philadelphia: Winston, 1900), 88, 91.
10. Lincoln had heard of the school's fame, but came with the understanding that he would not speak. At the end of his visit, as he readied to leave, Moody said to the school, "If Mr. Lincoln desires to say a word, as he goes out, of course all ears will be open." Lincoln moved to the center of the hall, seemingly disinterested. Then he stopped and began to address the teachers and children with humility. See John V. Farwell, *Early Recollections of D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Winona, 1907), 9; cited in Dorsett, *Passion*, 73–74.
11. Dorsett, *Passion*, 75.
12. Quoted in Joseph B. Bowles, *Moody the Evangelist* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1926), 17; cited in Dorsett, *Passion*, 75.
13. Dorsett, *Passion*, 166.
14. Bernard R. DeRemer, *Moody Bible Institute* (Chicago: Moody, 1960), 13; and Mark Fackler, "The World Has Yet to See . . ." Christian History.net; www.christianitytoday.com/ch/1990/issue25/2510.html.
15. Unpublished manuscript by Emma Dryer, January 1916, 14, 19; cited in Gene A. Getz and James Vincent, *MBI: The Story of Moody Bible Institute* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 20.
16. Dorsett, *Passion*, 285.
17. *Ibid.*, 297, 287–88. Dorsett writes, "During some academic years the records reveal that promising students were brought to Northfield and Mount Hermon from Africa and Asia."
18. *Ibid.*, 286. Sometimes, lacking a donor, Moody would cover the cost himself.
19. *Ibid.*, 299.
20. *Ibid.*, 300–301.
21. Unpublished manuscript of Charles A. Blanchard, February 1916, 12; cited in Getz and Vincent, *MBI*, 21.
22. *Record of Christian Work*, V, February 1886, 5–6. See also *Chicago Tribune*, January 23, 1886, 3.
23. Getz and Vincent, *MBI*, 54. A separate nine-member board of managers oversaw daily operation. Significantly, only two men were among the managers. The seven women managers included Emma Dryer, Mrs. C. H. McCormick, and Mrs. T. W. Harvey. See Dorsett, *Passion*, 274–75.
24. Most MBI students remember the hymnwriter Daniel B. Towner (known for such classic hymns as "Trust and Obey" and "Grace That Is Greater Than All Our Sins") for his hymn "One with the Lord" (popularly known as "God Bless the School"), with lyrics by MBI's third president, James M. Gray. The fourth verse begins, "God bless the school that D. L. Moody founded; firm may she stand, though by foes of

truth surrounded!” Written in 1909, it became the school song. A second “theme song” that traditionally has begun the academic convocation each school year is “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” More recently (2006) a third school song, “As One in Christ the Lord,” by Timothy Dudley-Smith and David McCallister, is also sung at convocation and commencement.

25. Dorsett, *Passion*, 274.
26. Getz and Vincent, *MBI*, 24.
27. Dorsett, *Passion*, 274. In his letter to Mrs. McCormick dated July 18, 1887 (MBI archives), Moody explained he had two choices to resolve the board disagreement: “Either to go against my judgment and join with my board or stand aside and let the work go on without me. After due consideration I have decided to resign, and let me say in doing so, that I do it with the best wishes for the society.”
28. James Findlay, “D. L. Moody,” doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 1960, 331; see also James F. Findlay, *Dwight L. Moody* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1969).
29. Dorsett, *Passion*, 274. “Will withdraw [the letter],” he wrote. “Tell the trustees to do as they please . . . and I will come soon.” Moody to McCormick and Dryer, July 27, 1887, MBI archives.
30. Original letters in MBI archive files; as cited in Getz and Vincent, *MBI*, 18.
31. Dorsett, *Passion*, 310–11.
32. Two letters from Moody to Miss Strong and Gaylord, November 24, 1898, MBI archives; cited in Dorsett, *Passion*, 299, 313.
33. William Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody* (New York: Revell, 1900), 409; cited in Dorsett, *Passion*, 390. President Will Houghton would call the World’s Fair outreach “the most audacious campaign of [Moody’s] career”; in Will Houghton and Charles T. Cook, *Tell Me about Moody* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1937), 68.
34. Houghton and Cook, *Tell Me about Moody*, 68–70; Dorsett, *Passion*, 391.
35. See Dorsett, *Passion*, 390–92.