

The “Third Call” for Global Networking An Appeal To Disciples Everywhere

by A. T. Pierson, D. L. Moody, J. E. K. Studd, and Others

Editor’s Introduction

After many startling and unusual accomplishments in America, Scotland and England, D. L. Moody consented to host the annual Northfield Conferences, held right in the little town of his birth in Western Massachusetts. Thousands attended. The third year this conference was held, in 1885, the theme of missions came up and A. T. Pierson was asked to speak on that subject at the evening meeting.

As he poured out his soul—citing reasonable statistics to base his challenge that “believers everywhere” get busy and try to complete the Great Commission by the Year 1900—his words were apparently so impelling that Moody (a huge, fidgety man) jumped up at the precise moment when Pierson said it ought to be done by the year 1900, and waved for approval from the crowd. The roar of response was so great that he appointed a committee of six which worked for three days to produce a remarkable document, “An Appeal to Disciples Everywhere.”

One of the signers, J. E. K. Studd—the older brother of the famous cricketer and missionary C. T. Studd (and later to become Mayor of London)—went from this conference to stump U. S. colleges for missions, snaring John R. Mott at Cornell for the 1886 student conference (again under Moody and Pierson), which formulated the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions.

A year later, in 1886, this document was published as part of a widely read book by Pierson. The next year, 1887, it turned up in a ponderous volume published in England by the China Inland Mission (today the Overseas Missionary Fellowship). The following year, what this document calls for actually transpired—the largest mission conference ever held up to that time, in London, where the whole world was in the picture.

But, “believers everywhere” did not respond. The reasonable challenge (note Pierson’s calculations) was only partially met. Lavish parties—often run by Evangelicals—characterized the U.S. in the following “gay nineties.” And while some made great effort, others satisfied themselves with a new slogan which

You can hardly imagine a more illustrious committee document. D. L. Moody who appointed the group and worked with it did not sign it. Probably no one in U.S. history has had greater spiritual influence. A. T. Pierson and A. J. Gordon were the two most famous mission promoters in that era. J. E. K. Studd, deriving from Moody’s Cambridge breakthrough, at Moody’s request stumped U.S. colleges attracting hundreds, including John R. Mott, into missions. Studd was the older brother of the famous missionary C. T. Studd (who founded Patrick Johnstone’s mission, WEC). J. E. K. Studd later became mayor of the City of London.

Latourette (see sidebar, p. 39) felt compelled by the Student Volunteer Movement. He went to China, got terribly sick (kerosene is not an effective cure for dysentery), came home with broken health and broken faith, and revived. He became, as a Yale professor, the foremost church and mission historian of all time.

had no date attached: “the evangelization of the world in this generation.”

Even so, the largest single surge forward to the ends of the earth did in fact take place in the years following this remarkable “heavenly vision,” although due in great part to a different type of meeting.

Yes, the surge was paralleled by American expansionist political sentiments. Sure, Americans had already consolidated their hold on gold-rich California, and would in a few months thrust their way to the North Pacific to keep Canada out of what is now Washington and Oregon, moving clear out into the Pacific to grab Guam, Western Samoa and the Philippines.

But a careful reading of the record shows that the key student leaders, like John R. Mott, did not build on that wave. On the eve of the U.S. invasion of Cuba he announced to a Student Volunteer Movement convention that “the war WE fight cuts through every nation and family and individual heart . . .”

However, that same former student mission leader, Mott, witnessed the strategic value of field meetings of mission leaders in China and then in India. He suddenly became convinced that a similar world level meeting strictly of mission agency leaders was needed, and within 24 months, with his wide following, set it up for 1910 in Edinburgh.

We will let words from Latourette (see sidebar next page) describe that event. We call it *The First Call*.

Ralph D. Winter, Editor

Issued by the Northfield Convention, (August 14, 1885)

To Fellow believers of every name, scattered throughout the world, Greeting:

Assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, with one accord, in one place, we have continued for ten days in prayer and supplication, communing with one another about the common salvation, the blessed hope, and the duty of witnessing to a lost world.

It was near to our place of meeting that, in 1747, at Northampton, Jonathan Edwards sent forth his trumpet-peal, calling upon disciples everywhere to unite the whole habitable globe. That summons to prayer marks a new era and epoch in the history of the church of God. Praying bands began to gather in this and other lands; mighty revivals of religion followed; immorality and infidelity were wonderfully checked; and, after more than fifteen hundred years of apathy and lethargy, the spirit of missions was reawakened. In 1784, the monthly concert was begun, and in 1792, the first missionary society formed in England; in 1793, William Carey, the pioneer missionary, sailed for India. Since then, one hundred missionary boards have been organized, and probably not less than one hundred thousand missionaries, including women, have gone forth into the harvest-field. The Pillar has moved before these humble laborers, and the two-leaved gates have opened before them, until the whole world is now accessible. The ports and portals of Pagan, Moslem, and even Papal lands are now unsealed, and the last of the hermit nations welcomes the missionary. Results of missionary labor in the Hawaiian and Fiji Islands, in Madagascar, in Japan, probably have no parallel even in apostolic days; while even Pentecost is surpassed by the ingathering of ten thousand converts in one mission station in India within sixty days, in the year 1878. The missionary bands had scarce compassed the walls and sounded the gospel trumpet, when those walls fell and we have but to march straight on and take possession of Satan’s strongholds.

(God has thus, in answer to prayer, opened the door of access to the nations.)

Out of the Pillar there comes once more a voice, “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.” And yet the church of God is slow to move in response to the providence of God. Nearly a thousand millions of the human race are yet without the Gospel; vast districts are wholly unoccupied. So few are the laborers, that, if equally dividing responsibility, each must care for at least one hundred thousand souls. And yet there is abundance of both men and means in the church to give the Gospel to every living soul before this century closes. If but ten millions, out of four hundred millions of nominal Christians, would undertake such systematic labor as that each one of that number should, in the course of the next fifteen years, reach one hundred other souls with the Gospel message, the whole present population of the globe would have heard the good tidings by the year 1900!

Our Lord’s own words are, “Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations;” and, “This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Peter exhorts us both to “look for and hasten the coming of the day of God;” and what if our inactivity delays His coming? Christ is waiting to “see of the travail of His soul;” and we are impressed that two things are just now of great importance: first, the immediate occupation and evangelization of every destitute district of the earth’s population; and, secondly, a new effusion of the Spirit in answer to united prayer.

If at some great centre like London or New York, a great council of evangelical believers could meet, to consider the wonder-working of God’s providence and grace in mission fields, and how fields now unoccupied may be insured from further neglect, and to arrange and adjust the work so as to prevent needless waste and friction among workmen, it might greatly further the glorious object of a world’s

evangelization; and we earnestly commend the suggestion to the prayerful consideration of the various bodies of organizations. What a spectacle it would present both to angels and men, could believers of every name, forgetting all things in which they differ, meet, by chosen representatives, to enter systematically and harmoniously upon the work of sending forth laborers into every part of the world-field!

But, above all else, our immediate and imperative need is a new spirit of earnest and prevailing prayer. The first Pentecost crowned ten days of united, continued supplication. Every subsequent advance may be directly traced to believing prayer, and upon this must depend a new Pentecost. We therefore earnestly appeal to all fellow-disciples to join us and each other in importunate

daily supplication for a new and mighty effusion of the Holy Spirit upon all ministers, missionaries, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and Christian workers, and upon the whole earth; that God would impart to all Christ's witnesses the tongues of fire, and melt hard hearts before the burning message. It is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord, that all true success must be secured. Let us call upon God till He answereth by fire! What we are to do for the salvation of the lost must be done quickly; for the generation is passing away, and we with it. Obedient to our marching orders, let us "go into the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," while from our very hearts we pray, "Thy kingdom come."

Grace, mercy, and peace be with you all.

Done in convention at Northfield, Mass., August 14, 1885, D. L. Moody presiding.

Committee:

Arthur T. Pierson, Philadelphia, Presbyterian, Chairman.

A. J. Gordon, Boston, Baptist.

L. W. Munhall, Indianapolis, Methodist.

Geo. F. Pentecost, Brooklyn, N. Y., Congregationalist.

William Ashmore, Missionary to Swatow, China, Baptist.

J. E. Studd, London, England, Church of England.

Miss E. Dryer, Chicago Avenue Church, Chicago.

The Granddaddy Meeting: 1910

by *Kenneth Scott Latourette*

The following is from *A History of Christianity* by Kenneth Scott Latourette, pp. 1343-1345 (Harper & Brothers 1953)

The most notable in the succession of the international, interdenominational assemblies was the World Missionary Conference, held in Edinburgh in 1910. It became a landmark in the history of the Ecumenical Movement, for it influenced profoundly some of the most important developments of the next forty or more years. In several ways it was in contrast with its predecessors and was an advance beyond them. First, it was more strictly a delegated body, made up of official representatives of the missionary societies. Second, it was a deliberative body, seeking to formulate policy for the years ahead. While it possessed no legislative authority, it could suggest, and because it was composed of leaders of the various societies there was

reason to hope that its recommendations would be followed by action. In the third place, as a preliminary to the deliberations prolonged and extensive studies were made of the several aspects of the missionary enterprise and in their preparation hundreds of correspondents were enlisted in many different parts of the world, thus stimulating widespread thought. In the fourth place, the gathering was more comprehensive ecclesiastically than its predecessors. The latter had, in general, enlisted only Evangelicals. At Edinburgh several Anglo-Catholics were present and took part. Moreover, members of what later came to be called "the younger churches," namely, those founded by eighteenth and nineteenth century Protestant missions, while few, were prominent. Of first-class importance, in the fifth place, was the fact that provision was made for carrying forward the work of the gathering. A Continuation Committee was appointed. Through it conferences were held in 1912 and 1913 in various centres in Asia preparatory to more permanent cooperative bodies, a comprehensive scholarly journal, *The International Review of Missions*, was inaugurated, and, after 1914, as we are to see later, the International

Missionary Council emerged. In the sixth place, the Edinburgh gathering also was in part responsible for the two organizations, the World Conference on Faith and Order and the universal Christian Council for Life and Work.

A seventh feature of major significance was the fashion in which "Edinburgh 1910" either brought to the fore or enlisted men who were to have an outstanding part in the growth of the Ecumenical Movement. John R. Mott was active in the preparations for the conference, presided at most of its sessions, and became the chairman of the Continuation Committee and then of the International Missionary Council.

By deliberate choice, the Edinburgh conference confined its attention to missions to non-Christians and therefore did not include Protestant missions among the Roman Catholics in Latin America. As an eighth result of the gathering, some who believed that this huge area should be covered in cooperative fashion in 1913 had the Foreign Missions Conference of North America call a meeting from which emerged the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, a body which was to have a notable history.