

“It’s Harder Getting into the Depot than Heaven”: Moody, Mass Media and the Philadelphia Revival of 1875-76

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It was half past seven and the largest choir that anyone had ever seen in the biggest building any Philadelphian had ever been in were just finishing “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” when D.L. Moody began reading the fifth chapter of Mark. It was the story of Jesus meeting the man with an unclean spirit. “No one could bind him anymore,” he said hurriedly, as seven stenographers from the city’s leading dailies strained to keep up. “Night and day he was always crying out,” Moody seemed to be saying, “and crying out with a loud voice.” But many of the 13,000 present could hardly hear. “The solemn stillness was rudely broken,” the *Philadelphia Times* would later report, by someone trying to “kick his way into the reporters’ box.”¹ It was a gentleman of the press who had arrived late and been barred from the biggest spiritual story to hit the centennial city since Franklin hosted Whitefield a century and a half before.²

Months earlier, while Moody was winning an international reputation by bringing Britain to its spiritual senses, a newspaper had noted that “arousing preachers of other times found apathy where they did not meet approbrium,” while Moody’s ministry seemed instead “a triumphant march.”³ Philadelphia’s Gilded Age press, known for its “cau-

1. *Philadelphia Times*, January 12, 1876, p. 4.

2. For a summary of Benjamin Franklin’s courtship and promotion of George Whitefield during the Great Awakening, see Carey Kinsolving, “The Preacher and the Printer: An Evaluation of Benjamin Franklin’s Coverage of George Whitefield,” a paper given at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, in Kansas City, Missouri, on August 12, 1993.

3. *Birmingham Daily Post*, January 15, 1875, p. 5.

tious conservatism" and "business-like seriousness," found the former shoe salesman "sincere" and "earnest," if "unremarkable."⁴ His results in "stirring a sensation" seemed to stem from organizational acuity and canny public relations, his critics claimed, in which the press played no small measure.⁵ While the overly eager reporter was finally admitted to the press box, others lacking his status and denied admission could not be consoled by any of John Wanamaker's 300 company employees who served as blue-badged ushers.⁶ In the crush of those locked out of the Pennsylvania Railroad Freight Depot and unable to see the spiritual spectacle going on inside, an elderly man could be heard shouting, "I've been to a good many religious meetings in my time, but I was never kicked around in this way before." Event organizers had "gone into show business," another man grouched. "It's harder to get into the depot than heaven," complained a third, as they made their unlucky way down Thirteenth Street.⁷

More than one million people did get in to see what many would affectionately remember as the Grand Depot Revival. It opened to a packed house on November 21, 1875 and closed nine weeks later when delegates to a Christian Convention heard Moody explain how the momentum of revival might be sustained. Those that passed through the civic spectacle had never seen anything like it. They delighted in keeping scrapbooks of press reports that included verbatim transcripts of Moody's every utterance during 250 mass meetings. Seventeen thousand anxious inquirers met with Moody and his workers after these meetings and 4,200 prayed to become Christians. For them the meetings had a special meaning. On the fortieth anniversary of Moody's last meeting in Philadelphia, a capacity crowd at the Garrick Theatre remembered the centennial city's season of spiritual excitement. One hundred stood to

4. The characterization of the Philadelphia press appears in Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1884), vol. 1, p. 840 and vol. 3, p. 1961. Accounts of Moody as an ordinary man achieving extraordinary results appear in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 22, 1875, p. 4, *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 20, 1875, p. 4 and *Philadelphia Daily Press*, November 24, 1875, p. 6.

5. *North American and U.S. Gazette*, November 29, 1875, p. 1 and *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch*, December 19, 1875, p. 1.

6. Wanamaker's role in organizing the Pennsylvania Railroad Depot Revival of 1875-1876 is described in Henry Adams Gibbons, *John Wanamaker*, volume one (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926), pp. 133-140. Instructions to ushers on how to deal with late attendees can be found in "Rules for the Ushers of the Religious Meetings at Thirteenth and Market Streets, Philadelphia, Commencing Nov. 21st, 1875." History. Moody. Evangelism. Revivals. File 14. Philadelphia Revival. D.L. Moody Papers. Dolben Library. Northfield Campus. East Northfield, Massachusetts.

7. *Philadelphia Times*, November 26, 1875, p. 1.

Courtesy of Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois

Inside and Outside views of the Grand Freight Depot of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Philadelphia, where Moody's Revivals were held.



Courtesy of Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois



say they became Christians through those meetings. Many more had their own stories to tell of prodigal sons who had returned home, of dissolute husbands reconciled with their wives, of young men and women fresh from the country who were saved from the seductions of the city.⁸

This article examines Moody's use of the mass media and their use of him in the curious collaboration that produced Philadelphia's Gilded Age revival. Newspaper holdings at Philadelphia's Free Library and letters, diaries and revival memorabilia kept at the Dolben Library in East Northfield, Massachusetts, the Yale University Divinity School Library in New Haven, Connecticut, and the Moodyanna collections at Chicago's Moody Bible Institute trace the outlines of Moody's promotional dexterity and organizational aptitude. The awareness by Moody and his closest followers that mass communication serve the interests of mass evangelism makes Moody and his Philadelphia campaign an important subject for historians who have recently begun examining the cultural and social significance of religious reporting in the daily press.⁹ In attempting to draw attention to what Moody saw as "the work of the spirit in bringing revival," Moody invariably attracted press attention to himself, becoming a celebrity evangelist, perhaps the nation's first, but certainly not its last.¹⁰

8. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 26, 1916, p. 4, *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, February 27, 1916, p. 3 and February 28, 1916, p. 4, and *Philadelphia Record*, February 28, 1916, p. 2.

9. Historians of religious revivals have recognized the importance of press coverage in publicizing the activities of evangelists. See William G. McLaughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism: Charles Graddon Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: The Ronald Press, 1959); Bernard A. Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River: The Story of the Great Evangelists and Their Impact Upon Religion in America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958); Darrel M. Robertson, *The Chicago Revival, 1876: Society and Revivalism in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1989); and Jonathan M. Butler, *Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling: Heaven and Hell in American Revivalism, 1870-1920* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1991).

The work of journalism historians in analyzing the cultural significance of religious reporting includes David Paul Nord, "The Evangelical Origins of Mass Media in America, 1815-1835," *Journalism Monographs* 88 (May 1984); David Paul Nord, "Teleology and the News: The Religious Roots of American Journalism, 1630-1730," *Journal of American History* (June 1990), pp. 9-38. John P. Ferre, "Sunday Newspapers and the Decline of Protestant Authority in the United States," *American Journalism* 10 (Winter/Spring 1993), pp. 7-23; Elizabeth V. Burt, "Reform Allies: The Temperance and Prohibition Press and Women Suffrage, Wisconsin, 1910-1920," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in Atlanta, Georgia on August 11, 1994; and David Copeland, "The Presence of God Was Much Seen in Their Assemblies: Religious News in Colonial America," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Journalism Historians Association in Tulsa, Oklahoma on September 29, 1995.

10. Chroniclers of the careers of Billy Sunday, Billy Graham and the rise and fall of 20th Century evangelists and religious groups have examined the use of the media in reaching the reprobate and feeding the flock. See J. Erskine Tuck, "The Winning of the Press," *Moody Monthly* (October 1954), pp. 28-29 and 86-90; William G. McLaughlin, Jr., *Billy Sunday Was His Real Name* (Chicago: Uni-

Philadelphia's business community joined hands with Moody in staging a spiritual extravaganza for a city in the throws of "turning itself inside out."¹¹ The rise of streetcars and commuter railroads had permitted some to escape the crime and congestion of America's second city. Others were left behind to endure the crowding and contagions of expanding warehouses, city street gangs and substandard housing.¹² Among those remaining were 160,000 families who attended 530 religious congregations. Annexation and industrialization had produced a population of 800,000, a quarter of these foreign-born Irish and Germans, and this population was growing at a faster rate than the Protestant majority.¹³ Youth gangs fought over turf and pecking order.¹⁴ Artisans were being displaced by mechanization and felt the depressing effects of the Panic of 1873. So did the small businessman and the city's financial institutions. The usually upbeat *Public Ledger* understatedly admitted, "The signs of the times are not in every respect propitious."¹⁵ The city's political machine operated for cynical civic amusement and was dominated by ward healers of little vision and less energy. The Republicans had saved the union, spoilsmen argued, leading one voter to boast, "I'd vote for the Devil, if he was running as a Republican." If simple sentiment didn't work, patronage and intimidation did. "King James" McManes, ruler of the Gas Trust, employed 5,500 people and enjoyed a \$4,000,000 annual payroll, while overseeing a municipal debt

versity of Chicago, 1955); Kurt Lang and Gladys E. Lang, "Decisions for Christ: Billy Graham in New York City," in Maurine R. Stein, Arthur J. Vidich and David M. White, eds., *Identity and Anxiety: Survival of the Person in Mass Society* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1960), pp. 415-427; and Frederick L. Whitam, "Revivalism as Institutional Behavior: An Analysis of the Social Base of a Billy Graham Crusade," *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* (June 1968), pp. 115-127.

11. Mark H. Haller, "Recurring Themes," in Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller, eds., *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790-1940* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1973), pp. 282-283.

12. Charles F. Warwick, *Warwick's Keystone Commonwealth* (Philadelphia: Warwick Publishing, 1913), pp. 284-285. Nicholas B. Wainwright, ed., *A Philadelphia Perspective: The Diary of Sidney George Fisher, Covering the Years from 1834 to 1871* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1967), pp. 201-204. Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1968), pp. 59-62 and 99-109.

13. Thompson Westcott, *The Official Guidebook to Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1875), pp. 46 and 261. Caroline Golab, "The Immigrant and the City: Poles, Italians and Jews in Philadelphia, 1870-1920," in Davis and Haller, 203-206.

14. Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, *Philadelphia: A History of the City and Its People*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: Philadelphia: S.J. Clarke, 1911), 303-305 and David R. Johnson, "Crime Patterns in Philadelphia," in Davis and Haller, 89-101.

15. Nicholas B. Wainwright, *History of the Philadelphia National Bank: A Century and a Half of Philadelphia Banking, 1803-1953* (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia National Bank, 1953), 128-129. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, September 18, 1873, 1. *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch*, November 21, 1875, 1 and 2. Warner 65-67.

of \$70 million. The corruption of machine politics was symbolized by a half-finished city hall that had been begun four years before. Those who protested too loudly might face thugs who had police protection.¹⁶

While it would be D.L. Moody's ties to Philadelphia's evangelical elite, John Wanamaker, George Stuart, Anthony Drexel and Jay Cooke that made headlines, much of the revival's success rested on self-made men, new to the city, and not yet acculturated to its corruptions. These were the clerks and salesmen of rural backgrounds who filled the pews of Philadelphia's evangelical churches and its communal fellowships such as the Young Men's Christian Association. They were appalled by what they saw as the city's indifference to moral blight and led the campaign to do something about it. They were drawn to Moody's earnest appeal that Christians overcome denominational barriers in proclaiming an old familiar faith to a population that resisted instruction.¹⁷ Through it they hoped to strengthen the social order in the centennial city, while saving souls for the next. While their arrangements in revival planning were "ever so perfect," they warned fellow Philadelphians and its establishment newspapers on the eve of Moody's meetings that an "entire people must be awakened" if the city's slothful citizens were to be reached.¹⁸

Philadelphia's Press on the Eve of the Revival

"There was quite an excitement in Frogtown," *The Catholic World* told its readers after warily watching Philadelphia's press welcome Mr. Moody to their city. "The Rev. Eliphalet Notext," the *World's* name for Mr. Moody, "was in town." Brother Notext was no theologian, the *World* reported, but he knew "the business of getting up a revival." That meant creating "a sensation," so "he began with the newspapers." Hoping to stimulate circulation, "a few friendly newspapers chronicled his wonderful success." Then their competition got in on the act. Readers were told "the numbers of converts was miraculously large." The curious

16. Frank B. Evans, *Pennsylvania Politics, 1872-1877: A Study in Political Leadership* (Harrisburg: The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1966), 13-16 and 234-243. Clinton R. Woodruff, "The Progress of Municipal Reform in Philadelphia," *Harper's Weekly* 38 (1894), 1019. J.T. Salter, *Boss Rule: Portraits in City Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1935), 17-21.

17. George Vickers, *The Fall of Bossism: A History of the Committee of One Hundred and the Reform Movement in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: A.C. Bryson Printers, 1883), 60-70. Edward P. Allsion and Boies Penrose, *Philadelphia, 1681-1887: A History of Municipal Development* (Philadelphia: Allen, Lane and Scott, 1887), 189-206.

18. A letter from the Office of the Executive Committee for the Gospel Meetings to Philadelphia's Ministers, dated November 17, 1875. Philadelphia Revival. Moody Papers. Dolben Library.

came to see for themselves. The crowds swelled. You could hardly get a seat. By then, "Mr. Notext's machinery was in full blast."¹⁹ The paper reflected the sense of estrangement many Philadelphia Catholics felt from the machinery of Mr. Moody's revival. They had grown to 42 churches, geographically dispersed throughout the city, and could look to their cathedral on Logan Square and the Seminary of Saint Charles Borromeo in Overbrook as sure signs of Catholic permanence. Their significance was sealed in 1875 when Philadelphia-born Bishop James Frederick Wood became the city's first Archbishop. The diocese had an allergy to periodic Protestant excitements, particularly when led by the self-taught. Their celebrants shared their antipathy.²⁰

The *North American and U.S. Gazette*, then in its ninety-first year of service as the oldest daily paper in America, shared this skepticism. "Adroit heralding" by a sympathetic press, the paper editorialized, had made the excitement of Moody's meetings "not a spontaneous manifestation of the spirit's moving," but was the direct result of "a carefully planned success."²¹ The paper's publisher, 67-year-old Morton McMichael, had had a long association with Philadelphia's "better" classes and he couldn't see where Moody's revival would do them any good. He argued that Moody would be better served "saving the souls of those poor wretches" of the Western Pennsylvania coal fields. Such men were "a stain upon our civilization." Their "dark souls typified the black mines where they dig, delve and conspire."²² An intimate of Webster, Clay, Seward and Chase, McMichael became Philadelphia's mayor in the late 1860s and a spokesman for its commercial community. Sons Walter, who became the paper's general business manager, and Clayton, who served as managing editor, saw the world as he did.²³ Philadelphia's "intelligent citizens" deplored "religious entertainment," because "no action that is sprung purely from excitement can be trusted."²⁴

19. "A Revival in Frogtown," *Catholic World* 22 (1876), pp. 699-707.

20. Dennis Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of Urban Experience* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1973), 65-84. Dorothy Ditter Gandos, "The Cultural Climate of the Centennial City: Philadelphia, 1875-1876," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1947, 6-12.

21. *North American and U.S. Gazette*, November 29, 1875, p. 1.

22. Charles Morris, ed., *Makers of Philadelphia: An Historical Work, Giving Portraits and Sketches of the Most Eminent Citizens of Philadelphia from the Time of William Penn to the Present Day* (Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly & Co., 1894), p. 166. Harry R. Whitcraft, "Fifty Years of Journalism in Philadelphia," *The Beehive* 25 (July 1934), pp. 1 and 4. *North American and U.S. Gazette*, November 23, 1875, p. 1, November 29, 1875, p. 1 and December 9, 1875, p. 1.

23. Eugene H. Munday, "Collins and M'Leester's Proof Sheet: The Press of Philadelphia, 1870-1871," pp. 65-69 in "Notes and References Relating to the History of Philadelphia Newspapers," arranged by John M. Heim for the Free Library of Philadelphia in 1937. Scharf and Westcott, vol. 3, pp. 1970-1972.

24. *North American and U.S. Gazette*, November 22, 1875, p. 1, December 2, 1875, p. 1 and December 9, 1875, p. 1.

Speaking for “the better people,” the McMichaels disdained Moody’s ministry, while the *Sunday Dispatch* chided him for championing the cause of those “who profess to be better than their fellow man.”²⁵ The oldest existing Sunday paper in Pennsylvania had from its founding been a bit of an outcast. Its inaugural number in 1848 made only twenty-eight cents. It had been boycotted by the better people. The daily press ignored it. The Protestant community deplored it. It took the city directory three years to list it.²⁶ It was published on South Third Street below Walnut, where it developed a reputation under veteran editor and civic historian Thompson Westcott of tweaking the establishment. “We are nothing, if not critical,” he proudly boasted. The paper saw itself as a friend of the workingman and a sworn enemy of the interests. It had mounted an unsuccessful campaign to force the city to take possession of municipal railroads and to lease them to the highest bidder. And it had fought the removal of houses from the middle of Market Street, charging it was “a scheme of the market house monopolists” and their friends in city hall to push the small-time peddler out.²⁷

Westcott identified Moody with the special interests and the newspapers that supported them. These were the men who “have the chief seats in the city’s churches, who are clad in broadcloth and fine linen and fare sumptuously every day.” They were building up “a loud-mouthed brag-gart” whose “matchless affrontery” sold religion as if it were “a cheap, patent medicine.”²⁸ Moody was “an untiring blower of his own trumpet,” but he had help. The crowds that came to the tabernacle to hear him had had “their curiosity piqued by newspaper accounts.” Westcott considered Moody “an ignorant impostor,” whose “eccentric evangelism” was being promoted by the press in hopes of keeping the public in their place. The suggestion that each night Moody preached to capacity crowds was “the biggest lie in the history of Philadelphia journalism,” the *Sunday Dispatch* said. It preferred, as did its readers, “the religion of those who mind their own business.”²⁹

Philadelphia’s competing establishment papers, however, were firmly on Moody’s side. Led by the city’s most popular paper, the *Public Ledger*,

25.. *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch*, November 28, 1875, p. 2.

26. Scharf and Westcott, vol. 3, p. 2020. “Report of the State Librarian-Annotated Catalogue of Newspapers in the Pennsylvania State Library, 1927: *Sunday Dispatch*,” p. 6.

27. Munday, pp. 37-42

28. *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch*, December 5, 1875, p. 1.

29. *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch*, December 19, 1875, p. 1, January 9, 1876, p. 2 and January 23, 1876, p. 2.

they viewed Moody as a "great commander" directing an "efficient army" of workers in "meetings of moral grandeur."³⁰ The paper's publisher, George W. Childs, disputed Westcott's claim that only the *Dispatch* defended the public interest. The "boy barterer" had come up the hard way, buying and selling books. When he won control of the *Public Ledger* in 1864 it was \$100,000 in debt and within three years Childs had put it on a paying basis and opened its new offices at Sixth and Chestnut.³¹ He consciously courted respectability, removing from the paper any language and all advertising that might offend an eight-year-old. He built a reputation for fair-minded philanthropy, negotiating a wage package with his workers that included profit-sharing and a pension, before endowing a burial plot in Woodland Cemetery for the Typographical Society of Philadelphia.³²

When the Moody revival opened on the evening of November 21, 1875 in the Old Freight Depot building of the Pennsylvania Railroad at 13th and Market streets in Philadelphia, it was not surprising to see the 46-year-old Childs sitting on stage with 400 other invited guests. The daily press would note how he attended many of the 250 meetings that followed. So did his managing editor, Colonel William V. McKean.³³ Their presence signaled as forcefully as any editorial could, the acceptance by the establishment press of Moody's work in Philadelphia. McKean, who had helped establish the Philadelphia chapter of the Young Men's Christian Association in 1854 was a private collector of Cotton Mather sermons.³⁴ He seemed certain that "the grandest century in the history of men" would have a fitting climax in Moody's meetings. That was why all those committed to the "moral progress" of the less fortunate were "heartily in sympathy with this work."³⁵

The *Philadelphia Times* was certainly in sympathy with Moody. By publicizing Moody's meetings, it sought to strengthen its hold on the second widest circulation in the city. Forty-seven year old chief editor Alexander McClure was a man in a hurry and on a mission. As country

30. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, December 18, 1875, p. 2.

31. George W. Childs, *Recollections* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1890), pp. 9-17. Morris, p. 93.

32. Richard T. Ely, "Mr. Childs and the Workingman," in Childs, pp. 325-328. Benson J. Lossing, *The American Centenary: The History of the Progress of the Republic of the United States during the First One Hundred Years of Its Existence* (Philadelphia: Porter, 1876), pp. 495-500.

33. *Philadelphia Times*, December 13, 1875, p. 4 and December 20, 1875, p. 2. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, December 20, 1875, p. 2. *Philadelphia Daily Press*, December 20, 1875, p. 6.

34. Scharf and Westcott, vol. 1, p. 834 and vol. 2, p. 1488. Childs, p. 51. George H. Stuart, *The Life of George H. Stuart* (Philadelphia: J.M. Stoddart, 1890), pp. 239-240.

35. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, November 20, 1875, p. 1 and January 1, 1876, p. 2.

editor and lawyer he had been a founding father of the Republican Party and a state legislator who had helped elect Lincoln. He had won a state senate seat running as a Liberal Republican and narrowly lost the 1873 race for Philadelphia mayor while running as an Independent.³⁶ While his competitors seemed satisfied to encounter Moody at his meetings, McClure sent a reporter to interview the celebrated evangelist at the home of John Wanamaker, where he stayed during the crusade. Moody admitted he was tired. Two and a half years of daily preaching in Britain had been quickly followed by a month's worth of meetings that had drawn 300,000 persons to the Brooklyn Tabernacle. McClure warned readers that Brooklyn's church leaders had been "full of hypocrisy" and that that had "impeded progress." That was why "the whole city will turn out" to "insure success" in Philadelphia.³⁷

McClure saw Moody's meetings as symbolically significant. The centennial meant that all eyes would be on the city. That was why they could not be allowed to fail. "The outside world is watching us with profound interest," McClure editorially observed. Reporters and local pastors shared the responsibility, as he saw it, of moving the momentum of Moody's meetings forward. Together they could stake a claim on America's second century.³⁸ Nowhere was this view more elegantly stated than at the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. L. Clarke Davis had established a reputation as a first rate writer of fact and fiction prior to becoming the paper's managing editor in 1870 at the age of thirty-five.³⁹ He was graduated from Philadelphia's Episcopal Academy with a dedication to worthy causes; first, abolition, and later, care for the insane. Faith and experience had convinced him that "the grandest accomplishments of our race in all the world and in all time have been achieved through the power of religion to control man's will and work." So the sentiment of the *Inquirer* would be "to forward the work of these evangelists to the extent of our ability."⁴⁰

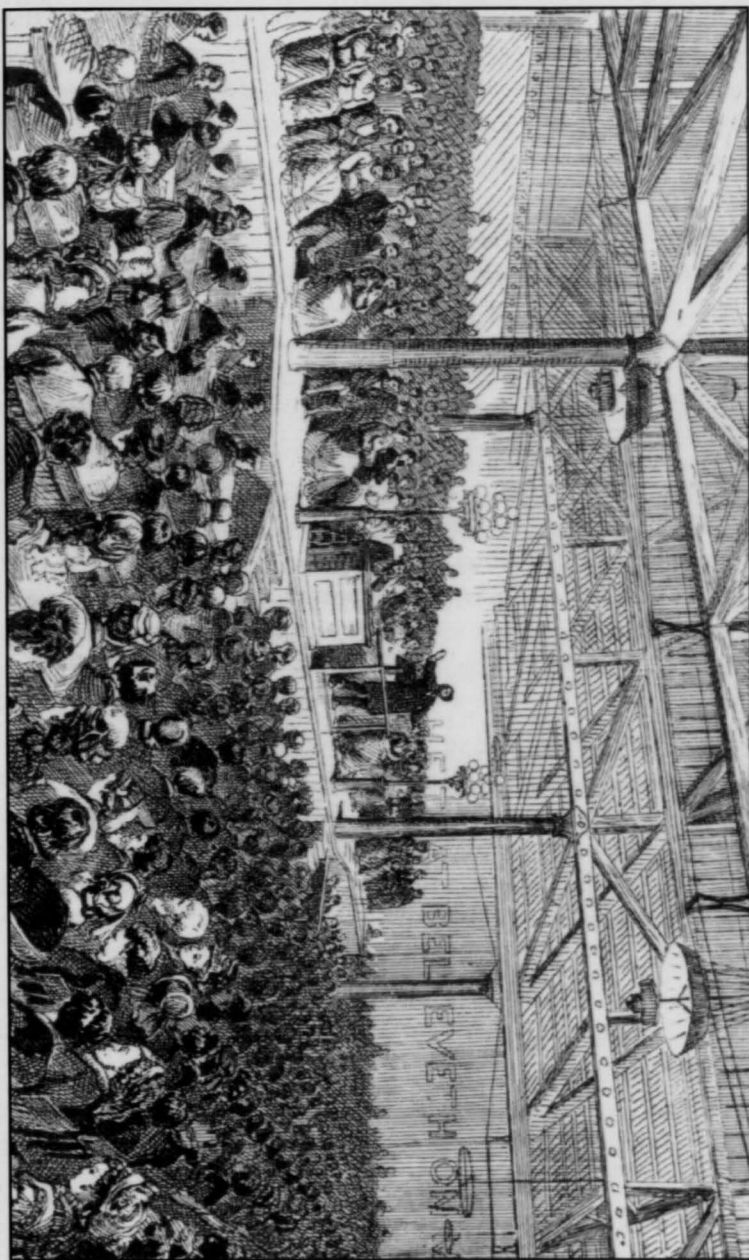
36. "From Report of the State Librarian-Annotated Catalogue of Newspaper Files in the Pennsylvania State Library, 1900, *The Times*," Free Library. Philadelphia. Also, Morris, p. 150.

37. *Philadelphia Times*, November 20, 1875, pp. 1 and 2 and November 22, 1875, pp. 1 and 2.

38. *Philadelphia Times*, November 23, 1875, p. 2, December 4, 1875, p. 2 and January 17, 1876, p. 2.

39. Davis's novel *A Stranded Ship: A Story of Sea and Shore* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1869) would go through several editions. He would also write for *Harper's*, the *Atlantic*, the *Century*, *Scribner's*, *Lippincott's* and *Putnam's*. His son, Richard Harding Davis, would be the highest paid and most widely read journalist of the Gilded Age. For background on Davis and his connection with the *Inquirer*, see Morris, p. 170 and Richard J. Beamish, "Brief History of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*," a supplement to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 1, 1929.

40. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 22, 1875, p. 4.



Courtesy of Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois

The *Inquirer* proclaimed "The Great Awakening" in a nearly unprecedented nine-line front-page bold-face lead on the eve of the Moody meetings. Its daily, stenographic accounts of Moody's every public utterance, occupying column inch after column inch, indicated its hope that coverage would be good for the city's spirit and the paper's business. The *Evening Bulletin*, locked in a crowded competition for the late afternoon and early evening reader, advertised its coverage in the *Inquirer*, promising a "full report" of the day's events. It was a serious-minded promise from a newspaper that was well-respected, but not widely read. Gibson Peacock obtained the job of editor after his father bought a share of the floundering paper in 1847. Struggles followed. The paper was sold at public auction to generate revenue and Peacock cast about for a good story to stimulate a slender circulation.⁴² He thought he had found it in Moody's revival. "Two years of hard times," the *Inquirer* observed, identifying itself with the anxious and vulnerable, had made "the fields ripe unto harvest." The people could use a savior. That was why "everybody desires the success of these meetings."⁴³

Revival organizers advertised meetings in the *Bulletin* and in other cooperating papers. The *Daily Press*, the *Evening Telegraph* and the *Public Record* each benefited from that ad revenue. Event organizers benefited most from the popular *Press* and its warm embrace of the meetings. John Wein Forney, the 58-year-old founder of the *Press*, was a Philadelphia editor with a national reputation and influence. He was a Jacksonian Democrat whose support proved crucial in the 1856 election of James Buchanan to the presidency. Then he broke with his longtime friend over the extension of slavery into Kansas, and later became a Republican and an intimate of President Lincoln. Contemporaries considered Forney the dominant figure in Pennsylvania journalism.⁴⁴ The *Press* never supported or opposed anything "by halves."⁴⁵ "Except a man be dead," the paper argued, "it was impossible to resist" the moral meaning of Moody's message.⁴⁶ The paper's weekly edition steadfastly predicted "the largest number of converts in American history" would emerge from the meetings at the Depot Tabernacle.⁴⁷

41. Scharf and Westcott, pp. 2016-2018. "Daily Evening Bulletin," entry in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin Newspaper Files, compiled by Ada Tyng Griswold. Madison, Wisconsin.

42. "Evening Bulletin," entry in the Report of the State Librarian-Annotated Catalogue of Newspaper Files in the Pennsylvania State Library, 1900. Also, Munday, pp. 21-24.

43. *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 20, 1875, pp. 4 and 6 and December 11, 1875, p. 4.

44. See Scharf and Westcott, p. 2026 and Morris, p. 162.

45. Munday, p. 74.

46. *Philadelphia Daily Press*, December 27, 1875, p. 8.

47. *Forney's Weekly Press*, December 11, 1875, p. 6.

On the eve of the campaign's opening the *Evening Telegraph* reported "an enthusiasm never seen before in the city." Even the unexpected death of Vice-President Henry Wilson was shunted to the side to make room for news from the crusade. Charles Warburton, the paper's publisher, had no doubt that part of Moody's popularity was a nostalgic appeal "to a more innocent time" before liberal theology began to chip away at public confidence in the familiar faith of their fathers. That, however, did little to deter the crowds "anxious to shake Mr. Moody's hand after every service."⁴⁸ William J. Swain, publisher of *The Record*, saw his penny paper "as a welcome guest at the fireside of the poor man," and believed his readers would share the city's enthusiasm in welcoming the well-known evangelist. The long months of well-publicized work by his organizing committee seemed to ensure curious crowds. If Moody could succeed anywhere in America, *The Record* argued, it would be in Philadelphia, where church leaders appeared "united with great earnestness and eagerness for the coming of the evangelists."⁴⁹

The anticipation that Moody's union meetings at the Grand Depot would succeed in an unprecedented way had been carefully cultivated through the organizational acumen of two men Moody had known for years. George Stuart and John Wanamaker had served with Moody in the earliest days of the Young Men's Christian Association. Each was eminently well connected to do Moody a great deal of good in Philadelphia, and each understood the importance of publicity and the effective use of mass media in doing that good. They saw to it that Philadelphia's Protestant community and its establishment press were well-disposed to Moody and his methods before the first sermon was preached. Their contribution to the story of Moody's success is a case study in the role of advertising and the power of publicity in crafting the modern mass media revival.

Stuart and Wanamaker

"The very report of what God is doing in one region can raise hope and effort in another," George Stuart predicted in the summer of 1875, when he financed one of the first summaries to appear in America of

48. *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph*, November 20, 1875, p. 4 and November 22, 1875, p. 1.

49. *Philadelphia Public Record*, November 22, 1875, p. 2. For Swain's stated commitment to the poor of the city, see "Why the *Public Record* Was Started," an article written by Swain that first appeared in the October 14, 1872 edition of the paper on p.2. It was reprinted several times thereafter.

D.L. Moody's revival work in Britain and Ireland.⁵⁰ The 59-year-old Philadelphia linen importer, whose company had branches in New York and Manchester, had time and money on his hands. He put both to work in helping to make Moody the best known evangelist in the English-speaking world before bringing him to Philadelphia. This made the well-connected Stuart a "sycophant" in Moody's service, according to his critics at the *Sunday Dispatch*, "as garrulous as a crazy old woman" when it came to bragging about his protegee, Mr. Moody. They claimed that the merchant's personal wealth was more responsible than the Associated Press for first bringing Moody's trans-Atlantic work to the attention of American audiences.⁵¹

Moody was a 22-year-old Sunday School teacher working the slums of Chicago, when he first came to Stuart's attention in 1860.⁵² At the outbreak of the Civil War, Stuart recruited Moody to serve in the U.S. Christian Commission, an organization dedicated to meeting the spiritual and material needs of men in uniform. Stuart chaired a committee of twelve who directed humanitarian relief from the organization's national headquarters at 13 Bank Street in Philadelphia.⁵³ Stuart, by this time, was recognized as a national leader in Christian work and philanthropy. His parents were Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who impressed on their son from an early age the beauty of a Christian's civic responsibility. Stuart became an early advocate of temperance and served as elder and Sunday School Superintendent in Philadelphia's First Reformed Presbyterian Church.⁵⁴ In 1851, he met George Williams, a farmer's son who became a clerk in a London dry goods store, before establishing the Young Men's Christian Association in 1844. Stuart was struck with the organization's zealotry in improving the spiritual condition of young men new to the city and its seductions. In 1854, he launched a Y.M.C.A. in Philadelphia, becoming the chapter's president and chief recruiter.⁵⁵

50. John Hall and George H. Stuart, *The American Evangelists, D.L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey, in Great Britain and Ireland* (New York: Dodd & Mead, 1875), p. 8.

51. *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch*, November 21, 1875, p. 2, November 28, 1875, p. 2 and December 5, 1875, p. 1.

52. Stuart, p. 272.

53. Letter from George H. Stuart, chairman of the Christian Commission, dated September 15, 1862, to commission members. Box 1. Folder 13. Papers of the U.S. Christian Commission. Young Men's Christian Association Archives. University of Minnesota Library. St. Paul, Minnesota. Also, Centennial Brochure of the U.S. Christian Commission. Army & Navy File Copy. Box 1. Folder 4. Y.M.C.A. Archives.

54. Stuart, pp. 19-22 and 73-82.

55. *The Verdict of Time* (Philadelphia: Association Press, 1905), pp. 11-22. Laurence L. Doggett,

Stuart's most important recruit was the man he chose in 1858 to serve as chapter secretary. John Wanamaker was a 19-year-old clerk in the Tower Hall clothing store, the largest in Philadelphia, when Stuart offered him \$1,000 a year to stimulate interest in the work of the organization and to increase its service to the young men of Philadelphia. By the end of his first year of employment, the local chapter had expanded by 2,000 members. "I went into the byways and hedges and compelled them to come in," Wanamaker observed in the aggressive certainty that would make him a superb salesman.⁵⁶ For three years the organization expanded its membership among white-collar clerks and merchants by offering lunch hours that combined speakers with fellowship, prayer and praise. Workers who were strangers to the city were given a sense of group identity and spiritual support. They eagerly told others what they had found.⁵⁷ Wanamaker was a practical Presbyterian, a Sunday School teacher determined to make a difference in the lives of the young boys he'd collect on the streets and deliver to the Chambers Church on Broad Street below Chestnut. "The Sunday-school," he was certain, "comes closer than anything else in answering the greater needs of the human race."⁵⁸

Stuart's and Wanamaker's introduction to the importance of organization and communication technology in furthering the purposes of evangelism was the revival of 1857-1858. By March of 1858 the 3,000 seat Jaynes Hall on Chestnut Street was barely large enough to contain the white-collar crowds who came for noon hour sessions of prayer and praise. Four months before, barely a dozen listeners could be found. That was when event organizers decided if the crowd wouldn't come to them they'd go to the crowd. In a preview of the Moody meetings, hard-working volunteers posted announcements in public places, handed out tracts to men as they arrived at work, where they banked, and as they

History of the Young Men's Christian Organization (New York: Association Press, 1922), pp. 16-25.
C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America* (New York: Association Press, 1951), 4-8 and 42-43.

56. Marion L. Bell, *Crusade in the City: Revivalism in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University, 1977), pp. 178-184. Hopkins, pp. 44-45. Morris, p. 119.

57. *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Convention of the Young Men's Christian Associations of the United States and British Provinces* (New York: Published by the Executive Committee, 1860), pp. 9-15. Y.M.C.A. Archives. University of Minnesota.

58. John H. Appel, *The Business Biography of John Wanamaker, Founder and Builder* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), pp. 22-24 and John Wanamaker, *Maxims of Life and Business* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1923), pp. 108-109.

rode home on public transportation.⁵⁹ A media campaign was initiated too. Friendly newspapermen were enlisted to publicize the meetings. Reduced telegraph rates transmitted the good news to cities along the Atlantic seaboard. Eventually, the newly formed Associated Press, always in search of a good story it could sell to subscribers, gave the meetings national play.⁶⁰

Between 1858 and 1875, Moody would come into Stuart's and Wanamaker's orbit, and eventually, they into his. The day after Fort Sumter was fired upon, Wanamaker launched a clothing store at the southeast corner of Sixth and Market Streets, spending \$24 of the first \$24.67 he made on advertising his latest line of "ready made clothing."⁶¹ In November of 1861 he accompanied Stuart to New York, where they established the U.S. Christian Commission through the cooperation of Y.M.C.A. chapters in the North.⁶² Immediately, Moody impressed Stuart as "one of our most efficient workers." His work in the field, where he led daily services, in camp hospitals, where he offered support to the suffering, and with reporters, where he publicized the commission's work and needs, helped assure that "there was no organization which had a stronger hold on the hearts of the people than ours."⁶³ Stuart helped Moody's transition to evangelist after the war by securing for him Philadelphia's Central Presbyterian Church for a series of revival meetings in 1866. Wanamaker, by this time a highly prosper-

59. Bell, pp. 187-188. Stuart, pp. 105-113. Talbot W. Chambers, *The Noon Prayer Meeting of the North Dutch Church, Fulton Street, New York: Its Origin, Character and Progress, with Some of Its Results* (New York: Board of Publication of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, 1858), pp. 45-52 and 83-91. Richard C. Morse, *History of the North American Young Men's Christian Associations* (New York: Association Press, 1918), pp. 16-23.

60. Victor Rosewater, *History of Cooperative News-Gathering in the United States* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1930), pp. 67-73. Oliver Gramling, *A.P.: The Story of News* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1940), pp. 33-44.

61. The advertisement, the first for a Wanamaker store, appears in *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, April 27, 1861, p. 3. Stuart urged Wanamaker to reconsider. The great war would mean "no business. Before long," he warned his 23-year-old protégé, "grass will be growing in the streets of Philadelphia." See Appel, pp. 39-42.

62. "United States Christian Commission for the Army and Navy for the Year 1862," First Annual Report, Philadelphia, April 1863, pp. 7-22. Y.M.C.A. Archives. University of Minnesota. Lemuel Moss, *Annals of the United States Christian Commission* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1868), pp. 94-113.

63. Stuart's assessment of Moody and the work of the commission appears in Stuart, pp. 134 and 272. The work of Moody and the North-western Branch of the United States Christian Commission is chronicled in "United States Christian Commission for the Army and Navy for the Year 1865," Fourth Annual Report, Philadelphia, March 1866, pp. 38-40. Coordination of media relations is described by Rev. W.E. Boardman in "Christ in the Army: A Selection of Sketches of the Work of the U.S. Christian Commission, Produced for the Ladies Christian Commission, 1865," pp. 33-39. Y.M.C.A. Archives. University of Minnesota.

ous merchant, was dubious. Moody's fourth grade education meant "he murders the King's English."⁶⁴ The crowds came anyway and by the time Wanamaker heard Moody address the Y.M.C.A. convention in Albany two years later, he became a convert to Moody's cause. A friendship followed. When Moody came to Philadelphia in 1871, he was Wanamaker's house guest. When the Great Chicago Fire burned down Moody's home church in that city, Wanamaker and Stuart led a national fund-raising campaign to put the evangelist back on his feet again.⁶⁵ When Moody began to make money through the sale of a popular hymnal, the funds were administered by a board of trustees, headed by Stuart.⁶⁶

Stuart and Wanamaker fully expected Philadelphia would be honored as the first American city to hold a crusade by the famous evangelist following his highly successful revival work in Britain and Ireland between 1873 and 1875. The Academy of Music was available, but Stuart wanted to make a bigger splash. Moody made plans to open his North American revival work in Brooklyn, while Stuart and Wanamaker made plans to stage Moody's Philadelphia campaign in the old Pennsylvania Railroad freight warehouse at 13th and Market Streets. Wanamaker had secretly secured the site months before as the future home of his burgeoning retail business. Now he made it available to Moody and event organizers rent-free. The six-week run up to Mr. Moody's grand opening on November 15, 1875 was a sure-fire headline stealer. Addison Hutton, perhaps the area's best known architect, redesigned the shed and waived his fee. Two hundred workmen were dispatched. The construction started an avalanche of free publicity.⁶⁷ Railroad tracks were ripped up and a board floor, properly pitched so all could see the man whom they had come to see, was laid down. One

64. Stuart assured Wanamaker, "I care nothing about his grammar, so long as he brings sinners to Christ." See Stuart, pp. 272-273. Gibbons, pp. 133-134.

65. Moody's financial plight in rebuilding his mission church after the Chicago fire are described in letters he wrote on November 24, 1871 and March 20, 1872 that appear in Moody's Letters, Volume One, 1854-1879. D.L. Moody Papers. Moody Bible Institute.

66. Typical of the evolving relationship between the two men is a letter sent by Moody from London to his home church, dated July 12, 1875, advising them that Stuart would be distributing \$20,000 from the sale of hymnals to pay off the remaining debt of Moody's Chicago church. Moody Letters. Moody Papers.

67. Accounts of the negotiations to bring Moody to Philadelphia and his planned use of the Pennsylvania Railroad freight warehouse are described in Thomas K. Cree, "Mr. Moody as an Evangelist," pp. 6-7. Biographical Papers of Thomas K. Cree. Y.M.C.A. Archives. University of Minnesota. See also, Stuart, pp. 275-277 and Appel, pp. 74-77. Regular, often daily, press accounts of the tabernacle's progress were included in each of Philadelphia's major papers.

thousand gas jets were installed overhead. A tiered platform, large enough for several hundred singers, was next. Stuart got a Connecticut firm to contribute 10,000 chairs at 28 cents a seat. It was the largest such order ever. Wanamaker saw that it was publicized and added eight seats to the invoice to make the exact number, 10,008, an even bigger impression in the press.⁶⁸ Like everything else in the Grand Depot campaign, little would be left to chance.

Organizing and Publicizing a Revival

Weeks before D.L. Moody set foot in Philadelphia, the elaborate plans to bring him to town were having the desired effect. Daily headlines reported the creation of coordinating committees, charged with organizing the event. A committee of fifteen ministers beseeched God and participating churches to do their part. A committee of thirteen laymen, led by Stuart, made sure men would do theirs. Six hundred singers were sought.⁶⁹ Three hundred ushers were found. Many of the singers were from Wanamaker's Bethany Bible study, the



John Wanamaker

largest in the nation. The blue-badged ushers were clerks in Wanamaker's store, which by 1875 was the busiest in the nation.⁷⁰ Acoustics experts created a wooden shell that would allow Moody to be heard in the auditorium's back row. Wanamaker added a series of speaking tubes to connect his chief usher to all corners of the hall. One hundred eighty police officers were put on special detail to handle the anticipated crowds. A telegraph connected them to city police headquarters.⁷¹

The sheer size of the undertaking was unprecedented. It assured that the curious would come when the tabernacle opened its ten large doors

68. Gibbons, p. 135. Cree, pp. 8-9.

69. Letter from the Committee on Music to Philadelphia area ministers, dated November 4, 1875. Philadelphia Revival. Moody Papers. Dolben Library.

70. "Circular," undated, to "the members of Messrs. Moody and Sankey's Choir." Philadelphia Revival. Moody Papers. See also, Gibbons, pp. 136-137.

71. Cree, p. 8.

to the public on the evening of November 21, 1875. No one had seen anything like it. The one story tabernacle was a city block big, extending 373 feet from Market to Kelly Street, and 250 feet from Thirteenth to Jupiter. It was an organized universe crossed by eight aisles and occupied by 8,904 seats and a speakers platform of 1,304 more. When filled, it created the impression "the whole city had turned out."⁷² The importance of keeping the crowds coming was very much on the minds of executive committee members. "Our entire people must be awakened," committee secretary Thomas Cree claimed, "if we are to avoid the unutterable sadness of failure." Philadelphia's centennial celebration gave a unique opportunity "to exert an influence that will be felt all over the world."⁷³

Cree, a longtime Y.M.C.A. leader in Philadelphia, was given a \$30,000 publicity budget on the eve of the meetings. He knew what to do with it. Much of the money went to advertising in the daily press, the production of large sheet posters and the distribution of small circulars. On one Saturday alone a fleet of volunteers circulated 162,000 notices of Moody's meetings at the tabernacle, while a team of workers visited congregations within fifty miles of Philadelphia.⁷⁴ Cree and his coordinators received their marching orders from Moody himself, who believed encouraging people "to expect a blessing of unusual magnitude" helped to "create a spirit of excitement among the people."⁷⁵ He worked to create that climate by aggressively advertising his message. "It seems to me a good deal better to advertise and have a full house than to preach to empty pews," he told his detractors.⁷⁶ The church could learn something about selling from the world, he insisted. "They advertise very extensively. This is the age of advertisement, and you have to take your chance."⁷⁷ Moody did not think it "beneath a man's dignity to go out and ask people to come in." Those who deplored his merchandising the

72. *Philadelphia Times*, November 22, 1875, pp. 1-2.

73. Letter from the Ministerial Committee for the Gospel Meetings to Philadelphia Area Ministers, dated November 17, 1875. Philadelphia Revival. Moody Papers. Dolben Library.

74. Cree, pp. 9-10.

75. *Carlisle* (Scotland) *Daily Chronicle*, November 18, 1873, p. 3. Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*, pp. 150-151. *The Christian* (London, England), October 23, 1873, p. 8.

76. Dwight L. Moody, *To All People: Comprising Sermons, Bible Readings, Temperance Addresses, and Prayer-meeting Talks, Delivered in the Boston Tabernacle* (New York: E.B. Treat, 1877), p. 181.

77. D.L. Moody, *New Sermons, Addresses and Prayers* (St. Louis: N.D. Thompson, 1877), pp. 33-34. Gundry, p. 80.

gospel needed to understand the reality of modern living. America's sacred institutions and religious work now competed against theaters and places of amusement for people's time and attention. He believed newspapers were one of the principal places where the battle lines were drawn and the competition fiercely waged.⁷⁸ Wanamaker strongly defended Moody's decision. "I owe my success to newspapers," he would often say, and proved it by rarely going a single day without placing an ad of his own.⁷⁹

So that there was no uncertainty about Moody's meaning or message, he met with his coordinating committee and local supporters on the eve of the meetings. Jay Cooke and Anthony J. Drexel, leading bankers of the city, who could be seen passing the collection plate at the meetings, were present along with *Public Ledger* publisher George Childs. Cooke, who helped finance the Civil War, was recovering from his speculation over the Northern Pacific Railroad that had led to personal bankruptcy and a nationwide panic only two years before.⁸⁰ Drexel, who had helped finance Childs's purchase of the *Ledger*, was conservative in finance and cautious in his public involvements.⁸¹ Moody told them that if they expected to lead others to Christ, they must be ready themselves to meet their Maker. Addressing each man by name, he asked, "Are you ready?" The tension was considerable until Moody got to Wanamaker. "John Wanamaker," he said, "are you ready?" "Yes," the merchant replied, "ready-made," repeating his often advertised assertion that suits need not be made to order.⁸²

The two friends almost certainly spoke of Wanamaker's mild eruption that night on the way home, as the Moodys settled in with the Wanamakers for the nine-week meeting schedule. Moody would address the large meetings at the tabernacle and Wanamaker the nightly

78. Moody, *To All People*, p. 181. D.L. Moody, *Thou Fool: And Eleven Other Sermons Never Before Published* (New York: Christian Herald, 1911), p. 78.

79. Wanamaker's comment appears in *Advertising World*, September 15, 1897, p. 1. For his devotion to advertising, see Gibbons, vol. 2, 14-16. For background on the role of advertising in the newspaper economy see Gerald Baldasty, "The Media and the National Economy," in James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan, eds., *The Significance of the Media in American History* (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1994), pp. 165-181 and Henry R. Boss, *A Brief History of Advertising* (Chicago: Frederick Weston Publishing, 1888), pp. 22-26.

80. Summaries of Cooke's public banking and private philanthropy can be found in Ellis Paxon Oberholtzer, *Jay Cooke, Financier of the Civil War*, two volumes (Philadelphia: G.W. Jacobs & Co., 1907) and Henrietta M. Larson, *Jay Cooke, Private Banker* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1936).

81. Morris, pp. 55 and 78. Childs, pp. 15-16.

82. The anecdote appears in Gibbons, pp. 135-136. His advertising techniques are described in Appel, pp. 39-55 and Wanamaker, pp. 55-57.

overflow meeting for young men in a Methodist church nearby at Broad and Arch Streets. A lifelong friendship would be solidified in the weeks that followed, and years afterwards Wanamaker would proudly show to those entering his office one of his most prized possessions. It was a bit of cardboard, faded and very much worn, his usher's card at the Moody meetings that were to make Philadelphia history.⁸³

Covering Moody's Meetings

Reporters had been warned to come early if they wanted good seats at Moody's inaugural meetings, but they could not have imagined that it might mean hours in advance. The doors were suppose to open at seven for the seven-thirty services, but the crowds that came to the tabernacle by mid-afternoon spilled over the sidewalk and swelled into the street, blocking traffic. The tabernacle's doors were ordered opened before six, and within minutes all 12,000 seats in the auditorium and on stage were occupied. Choir members and ministers among the ten thousand on the outside looking in attempted to take the clamor as a sign of God's abundant blessing. Reporters, locked out of the day's big story, failed to share their enthusiasm. A reporter from the *American & Gazette* who did break through found "there was not an available seat anywhere in the building." That included the press box, which was overridden "by persons who had no business being there."⁸⁴ A *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter got in after Moody had begun and complained he "couldn't see the speaker."⁸⁵ More than once, the *Evening Bulletin* editorialized, people posing as members of the press had swindled their seats. Some admittedly were reporters from small town papers miles away. Others, however, were "young gents who know as much about reporting as a duck does about Latin."⁸⁶

The press appealed to Moody's coordinating committee for a remedy. The *Daily Press* publicly called on the Committee of Arrangements to straighten things out so that "the humble chroniclers" of the press could

83. There are many letters between Moody and Wanamaker that demonstrate the close friendship between the two. See particularly, Moody's letters to Wanamaker, dated November 5, 1877 and January 9, 1878, in Moody Papers. Moody Bible Institute. See also, Gibbons, p. 133.

84. *Philadelphia North American & U.S. Gazette*, November 27, 1875, p. 1.

85. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 27, 1875, p. 2.

86. *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 29, 1875, p. 8.

"ply their profession."⁸⁷ Their appeal showed how aware they were of the news media's contribution to the success of modern revivalism. The curious come because they read of Moody in the papers, the *Press* put it. Then they are "brought under the influence and power" of Moody and the spectacle of his services. "The evangelists regard half their work done," the paper observed, "when the people become interested."⁸⁸ The press was no less "devoted to the service of Almighty God" than the men who preached the Good News, claimed the *Bulletin*. That was why "smart young men who beat their way into circuses, variety theaters and other small shows" should not be allowed to succeed at the tabernacle.⁸⁹

The meeting's executive committee responded to the "credentials crisis" by creating the "Reporters' Department" under Cree. It announced it would now reserve specific seats for specific reporters. Violators would be subject to prosecution.⁹⁰ It was becoming apparent to meeting organizers that the press needed a good story as much as event organizers needed the free flow of positive publicity. Instead of incurring the expense of advertising the meetings, Cree's committee decided to simply send a circular to interested editors giving them a schedule of future meetings. Reporting the schedule became front-page news.⁹¹ Moody's text was news, reported fully and faithfully each day of the campaign by stenographers scurrying to record column inch after column inch. But the spectacle of revival was its own text. "We had never before seen anything like it," Cree could remember, years after the campaign closed. "Thousands desperately seeking admission were turned away," while "everywhere you looked, stretching in long rows from side to side and a way to the back, it was a scene never to be forgotten."⁹²

John Forney had seen revivalists come and go in nearly three decades as the city's chief chronicler, but as the tabernacle meetings unfolded, he observed that "there has never been a similar meeting in the city's history." It was not only the size of the meetings, but the method of their execution that impressed Forney. From the very start, Moody and his

87. *Philadelphia Daily Press*, November 25, 1875, p. 8.

88. *Philadelphia Daily Press*, November 26, 1875, p. 8.

89. *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 24, 1875, pp. 4 and 8 and November 29, 1875, p. 8.

90. Letters from Thomas K. Cree, secretary of the executive committee, dated December 1, 1875 and January 19, 1876, to members of the press. Philadelphia Revival. Moody Papers. Dolben Library.

91. Letter from Cree to Philadelphia newspaper editors, dated January 3, 1876. Philadelphia Revival. Moody Papers. Dolben Library.

92. Cree, pp. 12-13.

coordinating committee "have been as systematic as an astronomer," Forney wrote, offering a new form of evangelism that was not "content alone to trust some higher power." Instead, Moody's first week of messages targeted believers, not unbelievers, with what they must do to revive themselves if they expected to revive others.⁹³ The *Public Ledger* saw symbolic significance in this approach. The growing anonymity of large-scale urban living in America's second century produced isolated people in search of community. In Moody's meetings "of moral grandeur" they knew they had found it. That was the "electric touch of human sympathy" that was bringing "a mutual thrill to the hearts of thousands."⁹⁴

Reports of Moody's meetings brought President Grant, his cabinet and the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court to the Grand Depot on the evening of December 19, an attendance arranged by George Childs, with whom the President would be staying, while touring the city's centennial preparations.⁹⁵ Rarely had so many men of power and influence been gathered under the same roof to hear the gospel preached, a significance not lost on Philadelphia's chroniclers of the sacred and secular. Stuart's account of the evening included the "arrest" of the justices at the corner of Thirteenth and Chestnut and their police escort into the tabernacle, where they sought to avoid "mingling with the throng."⁹⁶ The nation's most acclaimed historian, George Bancroft, then immersed in revisions for the centenary edition of his *History of the United States*, was also a witness to history that night.⁹⁷ So were former House Speaker James G. Blaine, Grant's heir apparent, James A. Garfield, a future President, and leaders of Congress. Moody did not disappoint. His text from the fourteenth chapter of Luke, "I pray thee, hear my excuse," detailed the reasons people gave for not becoming Christians and the moral urgency to do so while there was yet time. His advocates in the press had never seen Moody more "powerful." Grant,

93. *Forney's Weekly Press*, December 4, 1875, p. 4 and December 11, 1875, p. 6.

94. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, December 18, 1875, p. 2.

95. The long and close relations between Childs and Ulysses S. Grant are summarized in Childs, pp. 70-139.

96. Stuart's account also contains the claim that one justice of the Supreme Court was "converted" to Christ that night through the earnest prayer of a faithful wife. See Stuart, pp. 279-280.

97. Bancroft was the son of a Unitarian minister, whose career in journalism and diplomacy began in 1823, when he became a regular contributor to the *North American Review*. The first volume of his ten volume *History of the United States* was published in 1834. The final volume was completed the year before the tabernacle campaign. See M.A. De Wolfe Howe, *The Life and Letters of George Bancroft* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908).

a Methodist, sat on stage behind Moody and to his left. After the meeting he told reporters that Moody's message was just what the nation needed. Blaine, always available for a quote, considered Moody one of the country's most "useful" of men.⁹⁸

When word of the President's attendance at the tabernacle reached readers outside Philadelphia, the excursion trains with discount fares began bringing them to town in unprecedented numbers. Tickets, issued in advance, were designed to make sure the passengers had a seat when they got there, but even that failed to keep the crowds down. Newspapers kept daily score in a kind of competition generally reserved for reporting baseball. Lancaster brought one thousand tabernacle attendees; Harrisburg eight hundred fifty; Wilmington seven hundred; Trenton six hundred; West Chester three hundred, Merchantville one hundred fifty, most of the Christians in that New Jersey town. Each day brought a new team to town. Townspeople from along the West Jersey Road and villagers on the North Pennsylvania Road as far as Doylestown were finding "it's quite the thing to come."⁹⁹ Allentown excursionists were combining shopping with matters of the spirit. Even reporters were getting in on the evening entertainment. By special permission they could bring their lady friends to the press box. For them, it became date night at the tabernacle.¹⁰⁰

While the spectacle was something to see, it was the man Moody, the centennial's celebrity evangelist who attracted the curious. The close of the meetings only intensified the public's appetite to have one last look of him. The *Sunday Dispatch*, never a convert to Moody's cause, grouched that his two dollar picture sold briskly in the marketplace. As an incorrigible self-promoter, Moody knew no equal, the paper lamented. His "pyrotechnic display of mendacities" appeared to bewilder his fans into believing his "feet were not of clay, nor his head wood."¹⁰¹ The sight of his statuette hawked outside the tabernacle struck the *American &*

98. *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, December 20, 1875, p. 8. *Philadelphia Daily Press*, December 20, 1875, p. 6. *Philadelphia Times*, December 20, 1875, p. 4.

99. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, December 15, 1875, p. 1 and January 12, 1875. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 2, 1875, p. 2 and December 3, 1875, p. 3. *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, December 10, 1875, p. 1.

100. *Philadelphia Daily Press*, November 29, 1875, p. 6. *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, December 15, 1875, p. 8.

101. *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch*, December 19, 1875, p. 1; January 9, 1876, p. 1; and January 23, 1876, p. 2.

Gazette as a crass commercialization of religious sentiment.¹⁰² Even the redoubtable Dr. R.V. Pierce was getting in on the act. The patent medicine manufacturer advertised in many Philadelphia newspapers during the weeks of the tabernacle crusade under the title, "American Genius-Moody and Sankey," in which he likened his elixir to clean out the blood and liver with the purifying work of "the great revivalists."¹⁰³

Remembering Moody's Meetings

Moody came to Philadelphia on the eve of America's centennial to make converts. When it came to the city's press, however, he was essentially preaching to the converted. The city's papers that had hailed his coming, helped build his following, then praised the mighty works he had done. The opposition press that was hostile to his coming was generally glad to see him go. The *Sunday Dispatch* seemed certain that Moody's "sacrilegious absurdities," despite their constant repetition in a sympathetic press, would have no permanent effect on the city or its sinners. "Salvation of the slop-shop character" made "a travesty of Christianity," the paper argued, deploring Moody's link to the professionally religious within the business community. The paper particularly scolded Moody for his claim near the close of the revival that the Jewish rejection of Christ was tied to their rejection by men. "In a city of 800,000 only women and drunks" warmed to Moody's "bitter prejudice," the paper remarked.¹⁰⁴ The remark flowed in part from Moody's work among women and for temperance, his meetings for each yielding the largest crowds ever seen in the city of women participants.¹⁰⁵ Blacks, however, participated far more marginally in Moody's meetings. When a "colored woman" stood up during a women's meeting in the center of the hall and shouted "glory," thousands of women suddenly stood, many fearing fire. Moody awkwardly asked everyone to rise and sing and that's just what they did as the woman was led out. Moody's critics had charged him with "sensationalism," but a better description of his meetings was their businesslike efficiency. The Methodist and Episco-

102. *North American and U.S. Gazette*, November 29, 1875, p. 1.

103. *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph*, December 1, 1875, p. 5. *Philadelphia Public Record*, December 25, 1875, p. 2. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, February 19, 1876, p. 390.

104. *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch*, December 19, 1875, pp. 1 and 2; December 26, 1875, pp. 1 and 2; and January 9, 1876, p. 1.

105. Cree, pp. 12-13. *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 22, 1875, p. 1 and December 7, 1875, p. 1. *Philadelphia Daily Press*, January 7, 1876, p. 5. *Philadelphia Times*, December 5, 1875, p. 2.

palian black churches of Philadelphia had a long and proud tradition of noisy revivals. Black Baptist churches seemed boisterously to be in continuous revival. The mood of Moody's meetings and the color line that separated church attendance tended to exclude Philadelphia's 22,000 African-Americans from substantial participation in the tabernacle campaign.¹⁰⁶ *The Nation* noted the underclass was little represented at Moody's meetings. Moody was preaching to the choir, it argued, because his hearers were already familiar with his message or curious about it.¹⁰⁷

The *Catholic World*, which had caricatured Moody as "the Reverend Dr. Notext," successful only in the power of his publicity, predicted that "every trace of the great tidal wave of revival" would "disappear" when he did.¹⁰⁸ The *American & Gazette*, however, which had criticized the heavily advertised meetings at their outset certain they would have little "lasting" effect, observed as the meetings closed that "immense gatherings" yielded "crowded inquiry rooms filled with penitents." There was every reason to believe, the paper admitted, that "much good was done" in meetings the paper hoped could be continued in the evangelist's absence.¹⁰⁹

At the close of Moody's meetings he thanked the press for their faithful summaries of the tabernacle services.¹¹⁰ In turn, the *Daily Press* editorially thanked him. His three months in Philadelphia had been "the most remarkable in the history of the city."¹¹¹ The word "revival" was taking on municipal meaning. Even advertisers were getting in on it. Jabez Jenkins, a South Tenth Street salesman, promised that his tea "revived" the family as Moody had the spirit.¹¹² Philadelphia was reported "loth to part with him" and Moody's followers cashed in on the enthusiasm.¹¹³ In a bid that raised \$220,000 for the local Y.M.C.A. on the evening of its 21st anniversary, everything associated with the revival was auctioned off down to Moody's Bible stand and private towel. It

106. William E.B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1899), 41-45. E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken, 1964), pp. 24-39 and 133-147. Bell, pp. 126-136.

107. *The Nation* 21, "The Church and the Poor," November 18, 1875, pp. 321-322.

108. "A Revival in Frogtown," p. 707.

109. *North American and U.S. Gazette*, January 17, 1876, p. 1.

110. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 18, 1876, p. 2 and January 21, 1876, p. 3.

111. *Philadelphia Daily Press*, January 11, 1876, p. 6.

112. *Philadelphia Daily Press*, January 5, 1876, p. 5.

113. *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph*, January 14, 1876, p. 8.

lifted the organization out of debt and placed it on sound financial footing.¹¹⁴

Thirty-five hundred persons attended a converts class as the revival closed. The more than 17,000 who inquired about becoming Christians during the campaign were sent Christian literature with a facsimile signature of Mr. Moody himself.¹¹⁵ Many found their way into Christian churches. The Presbyterians reported a doubling of new members after Moody's meetings and considered the revival the greatest in the city's history. The Methodists reported about the same.¹¹⁶ Evangelical churches in Delaware and New Jersey reported gains as well. Years after the event, private citizens would show off chairs and planks and gas lamps that had had their temporary homes in Philadelphia's Grand Depot. Still others would carefully preserve in family scrapbooks newspaper accounts of the event.

Moody's loyal lieutenants seemed satisfied with the campaign's conclusion. Years afterwards, Stuart wrote that Moody's success in Philadelphia solidified his "wide reputation" and provided impetus to his evangelism of Gilded Age America.¹¹⁷ Cree came to the same conclusion. The revival's effects were felt far beyond Philadelphia, he observed, focusing on Moody's influence over evangelical ministers across eastern Pennsylvania and within the mid-Atlantic region. This included a revival at Princeton College and through it a student movement to evangelize college campuses across the country.¹¹⁸ Moody's mission included drawing Wanamaker into full-time Christian work. Two years after they had teamed up so successfully in evangelizing Philadelphia, the nation's most acclaimed revivalist preached repentance to the country's foremost merchandiser. "I cannot get you out of my mind," Moody wrote him. He was determined "to make one more effort to get you out of your business." Moody urged him to "close out before the end of the year" as Moody had years before while giving himself completely to Christian service. "If I only had you with me," he implored, reminding Wanamaker of their "blessed" work at the Grand Depot. "We have no

114. *Philadelphia Times*, January 21, 1876, p. 1.

115. Cree, pp. 17-18 and 27-29.

116. Lefferts A. Loetscher, "Presbyterianism and Revivals in Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 69 (1944), pp. 63-66.

117. Stuart, pp. 286-287.

118. Cree, pp. 11-12 and 19-20.

time to lose. What a blessing you would be to this work.”¹¹⁹ Wanamaker, however, had other plans. His new store at the site of the Old Depot opened on May 6, 1876 to a city that was now widely familiar with the Thirteenth and Market Street location.¹²⁰ The cynical might charge Wanamaker with using Moody’s tabernacle to publicize his department store. But that belies Wanamaker’s lifelong commitment to evangelism. Instead, the opening symbolizes the intimacy of business practice and the machinery of Gilded Age revival. The connection was not lost on Wanamaker. To his mind, principles of “business efficiency” needed to be brought into “Christian service.” The church was a pay as you go operation every bit as much as the department store. Both required a “permanent system of collections” to keep their doors open. Those that incurred debt risked consequences.¹²¹

On the first day of the last year of the Nineteenth century, Wanamaker, then 61, stood in the pulpit of Bethany Presbyterian Church at 23rd and Bainbridge Streets, and offered a tearful tribute to Moody’s memory after the evangelist died on December 22, 1899 of congestive heart failure at the age of 62. “No man had accomplished more,” he said, in remembering Philadelphia’s revival twenty-four years before, “in helping his fellowmen.”¹²² Had he lived, Moody planned to revive Philadelphia at the dawn of the new century, hoping, he told Wanamaker, to light a fire in the East that would sweep across the nation.¹²³ At Association Hall, one week later, speakers praised the building Moody had helped build. “He made no inventions,” the Y.M.C.A. reported that day, “and made no new discovery. He wrote no poems, painted no pictures, led no armies, but made such an impression on the city and the world that the dying century had seldom seen.”¹²⁴ Moody was as “irreplaceable” as Lincoln, Wanamaker told a memorial assembly, and like Lincoln was one of the century’s great men.¹²⁵

119. Letter from Moody to Wanamaker, dated November 5, 1877 in Moody Papers. Moody Bible Institute.

120. Appel, pp. 92-95. Gibbons, pp. 141-143.

121. Wanamaker’s “Bringing Business Efficiency into Christian Service,” is an undated article that first appeared in the *Sunday School Times* and is available in the John Wanamaker File of the Moodyanna Collection at the Moody Bible Institute.

122. *Philadelphia Press*, January 2, 1900, p. 1.

123. Wanamaker’s letter to the Moody Bible Institute, dated January 7, 1920, details Moody’s plans to evangelize America’s great cities, starting with Philadelphia, in the new century. The letter appears in the Wanamaker file of the Moodyanna Collection.

124. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, January 9, 1900, p. 1.

125. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, January 12, 1900, p. 1.

The great revival in the Grand Depot had its critics, those who viewed the religious sensation at Thirteenth and Market as a temporary intrusion into the predictable pattern of the institutional church and its inhabitants. Others complained any crusade that did not lead to an amelioration of social deprivations brought on by industrialization and recession was not much of a crusade at all.¹²⁶ Such criticism failed to capture the essence of this new moment in mass mediated evangelism and how it excited celebrants anxious to create the new Jerusalem. "Sure it's sensational," the *Evening Bulletin* observed at the height of the excitement. "The American people like sensation!"¹²⁷ There were those who had hooted at Moody and his methods as he strolled through Philadelphia's centennial streets, but there were a great many more who stood for hours in long lines before the tabernacle and couldn't get in.¹²⁸

America's second century would be "the grandest in the history of man," Philadelphia's press seemed certain, because it would see "the supremacy of intelligence, justice, and good will" in the affairs of men.¹²⁹ But the gentlemen of Philadelphia's Gilded Age press believed communal life required one thing more. The "onward sweep of progress" could "re-civilize the world only through Christianity."¹³⁰ And the new times required new methods. That had been the charm of Moody's meetings to the faithful and their conservative chroniclers in the press. From the outset they had realized that "curiosity" was important to Moody's ministry and the daily press was an important instrument in mobilizing the curious.¹³¹ Reading their columns of Moody's mission is an exercise in unabashed public relations. "Journalists are fact-finders," the *American and Gazette* maintained, in reiterating its social responsibility to readers, but when it came to reporting Mr. Moody and his time at the tabernacle, many publishers and editors shared the hope of his eager audience that Christ's kingdom of gentle mercy was at hand.¹³²

126. Loetscher, 67-69. Dorothy Gondos Beers, "The Centennial City, 1865-1876," in Russell F. Weigley, ed., *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), pp. 444-446. Bell, pp. 242-245.

127. *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 23, 1875, p. 8.

128. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 27, 1875, p. 3.

129. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, January 1, 1876, p. 2.

130. *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, December 24, 1875, p. 4.

131. *Philadelphia Daily Press*, November 22, 1875, p. 1.

132. *North American and U.S. Gazette*, December 31, 1875, p. 1 and January 17, 1876, p. 1.

John Forney believed he'd witnessed Napoleon when he watched Moody and his mighty minions marshaling their forces in Philadelphia's centennial year to wage war against slothfulness and sin. His efforts were "singularly blessed by heaven and man" and that was the point.¹³³ Revival movements in the future would be mass media spectacles in which newspapers would let readers in on everything. They would be staged to reaffirm the founding faith of the community and they would be communicated through a press equally anxious to re-moralize their communities while turning a tidy profit. In exactly that way Moody's mission to Philadelphia on the eve of its centennial celebration got the party off to a good start. And revelers would remember well into America's second century their time at the tabernacle and the press that carefully captured the excitement in its pages.

133. *Forney's Weekly Press*, January 22, 1876, p. 1.