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HOW THEY ENTERED CANAAN
(A Collection of Holiness Experience Accounts)
Compiled by Duane V. Maxey

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

WILLIAM HOWARD HOOPLE (Early Nazarene)

The streams of Moody's life ran out into many directions. They founted from an insignificant incident, when Moody, a lad of ten, walked into the dark world alone in search of work. His widowed mother could not support the large family, so she farmed little Dwight out for his "sleeps and eats."

On that first outgoing journey an old man gave Dwight a penny, and laying hands on the boy's head, blessed him with a benedictory prayer. "That penny," Moody said fifty years later, "is gone long since, but that blessing lingers still."

Little did the old man know the wide reach of his hand-touch. It went into many avenues, into fast-flowing spiritual life movement, and finally reached another young man who was to be a founder of the Church of the Nazarene -- William Howard Hoople!

And it might be that much of our evangelistic fervor burst from Moody's evangelism. At least it is stamped by it. Let me tell you the story.

Won By A Song

Moody the evangelist took New York city by storm. He stormed the gates of hell with his love-message. He wooed and won men, literally loving them into the kingdom. Sankey, at his organ, sang them into the fold. Lifting that golden voice and throwing back his massive head, he would sing "The Ninety and Nine," and men would flock into the Good Shepherd's fold. Thousands came to hear this gospel team -- God's greatest soul-winning duo.

And among the hundreds came the eighteen-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. William Gordon Hoople. This time Moody's meeting was conducted in the Y.M.C.A. Doubtless it was the singing he came to hear more than the preaching, for young William was blessed with a beautiful voice. The text we do not know -- the content of the sermon has passed from notice. But the song lingers in its sweet melody.

"Just as I am without one plea --" came the heaven freighted words from the golden voice of Sankey, as he led the altar workers in hymns of surrender and consecration. Those words laid down a bridge from earth to heaven.

And on that soul-bridge William H. Hoople walked into the arms of Jesus! The work was done. That glad January night in 1886 was hallowed with the angels' song, for a sinner had come home!

The Business Man At Work

William had been born at Herkimer, New York, on August 6, 1868, but his life-ways were not to fall in small towns. God had planned the sphere of his life to be metropolitan, and his folks took the wee lad to New York city. Here little Willie went to the public schools, and by the time of Moody's revival, he was a student at the Pratt Institute. Finishing at the institute he entered a business college in Brooklyn.

Then he went into business -- the leather business, at 50 Terry Street, New York city. Into his business came God as a silent partner, and the firm of Hoople (and God) prospered and before long it had passed from the struggling into the flourishing stage. For the partnership did business on its knees.

At home the young business man held family devotions, and at the office, he held office devotions, praying with his clerks and customers. This practice continued for years, until in 1893, while reading his Bible and holding office devotions, the Holy Spirit became the sanctifying partner in the firm, and the leather merchant went home to tell his wife, Victoria, whom he had married two years earlier. Then leather could no longer hold him!

Out of Leather

Quickly he threw off the leather harness, and put on the harness of God, and went to work in helping build the kingdom. He asked God to put the heaviest kingdom harness on him possible. He preached on the streets, in rented halls, and wherever a tiny crack in some mission door appeared.

Came January, 1894, and leather merchant turned holiness preacher decided to open a mission of his own in Brooklyn where he could be free to proclaim the heart-cleansing message, which he had experienced in his shop.

He asked no denomination for its support, for God had called him to holiness evangelism in the heart of that great city.

He asked no church for its seal of ordination, for God had ordained him to be a preacher to the metropolitan multitudes.

Came May of that year, and this city mission preacher, working in God's harness, followed the divine gleam and organized his partner's (God) mission into God's Church, called The Utica Avenue Pentecostal Tabernacle. Yes, the beginnings were small-thirty-two charter members -- but God was with the group, and the preacher's dynamic personality, housed in a tremendous body, drew others to him.

Hoople was a mighty man in frame as well as spirit, for he stood six feet and six inches (when he took off his leather shoes) and pushed the scale beam up at 250 pounds.

The Widening Circle

Such a man could not long be bound by a single congregation. He wooed the Spirit diligently and God led to the building of a church edifice on Utica Avenue, Brooklyn, and the congregation voted that God's leather man should become their pastor. The sparks of Hoople's personality struck out over the great city with its millions of inhabitants.

The following February (1895) saw a second church organized from this city preacher's work, the Bedford Avenue Pentecostal Church, and shortly afterward came the Emmanuel Pentecostal Tabernacle.

God granted this city preacher a broad vision of a prosperous work. Though small the beginnings, William Howard Hoople could not be content for the kingdom's work to remain without a lifting horizon. In December, 1895, the three-church affiliation became The Association of the Pentecostal Churches of America, a denomination with three churches!

And Hoople was out under the stars with a denomination which his own spiritual genius had brought into existence. Of course there were other men who helped him, such men as H. B. Hosley, John Norberry, Charles BeVier, and later L. B. Reed (father of our pastor, Dr. L. A. Reed), but the dynamo which made the work go was Hoople.

The denomination to which he gave spiritual birth laid its hands in ordination upon their founder! Doubtless in church annals a more unique situation cannot be discovered than this, a church founder ordained by his spiritual progeny.

In 1895, Howard Hoople, city pastor, welcomed into his child-denomination's fellowship, its first ordained minister to apply for membership -- Dr. H. F. Reynolds. In 1896, New England's holiness band, known as Central Evangelical Holiness Association, united with the Hoople movement in New York city, and then God was mightily with the Church of the Nazarene in the East.

When The Rafters Rang

For ten years Hoople pastored his Utica Avenue Church. The growing movement in the West, pioneered by Phineas Bresee reached with its influence across the nation. The growing movement in the East, pioneered by William Hoople, reached with its influence across the nation, even into India.

In God's plan it was inevitable that the two should come together and form a solid front across America. Hoople's Utica Avenue Church, in April, 1907, was the scene of this uniting. Dr. Bresee was there, and other notables from both coasts were present.

When the marriage agreement was signed and the two churches became one "the rafters shook with the demonstration of joy," affirms Dr. L. A. Reed, who as a young man was in the audience. "That occasion," declared Dr. Bresee, "was epochal."

The movement grew rapidly, but William Hoople could not be pulled out of New York city. He was content to be a city pastor, with a parish of nine million. For a while he did consent to become District Superintendent of the New York District, but that was all.

Pastoring Utica Avenue for ten years, he later assumed the leadership of the John Wesley Church of the Nazarene, which he had founded. Here he built a large plant, housing what in time became the most flourishing church in the eastern section of the denomination. For thirteen years he led it on from height to height.

His famous Hadley Male Quartet, of which he was a member, spread Hoople's influence in the city, for it was a victorious group of men. If there were no other way through, the quartet helped Hoople sing his way through. When this quartet sang to an audience of six thousand at a meeting of J. Wilbur Chapman's revival in New York city there were few dry eyes.

"Over There"

When America entered World War No. 1, Hoople went to France under the Y.M.C.A., and worked incessantly at the front. Here he won many lads to his Master. With the signing of the Armistice, he was sent to Siberia with the A.E.F. Later this gave him an opportunity to visit his missionary daughter in China, where he widened the circle of his preaching ministry.

On returning home he became the city preacher again, and with incessant labors proclaimed the glad doctrines which Moody had taught him years earlier. After a seven-week illness on September 29, 1922, the preacher laid off God's harness and walked the throne way to a heavenly mansion.

"Jesus," he breathed just before passing, "is my best friend."

Source: "Twelve Early Nazarene Leaders" by Basil Miller

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