

OK, I want/need to bring this current thread - or rather, this current tangle of threads - to a close. I started out talking about what, looking back, I thought favorably about my three years at Moody Bible Institute, and what I felt resentful about it. This got me on to other things, which I was happy to do, since ten days ago I was at the end of the semester and the end of a book project (which happened simultaneously) and I was burned out and brain dead, and I couldn't get up the energy to write anything about serious scholarship on the blog. But I'm recovered now, and can get on to more important things than me and my life. Which, frankly, would be most everything!!

But I do need to spend this final post on the original thread to explain in very brief order what I am resentful about when it comes to my education as a 17-21 year old at Moody. There are three things, all of which I could expand at length, but since I want to move on to other things, I will make just a few comments on each.

The first has to do with social life. Moody was a highly regimented environment. There were all sorts of rules involving social behavior. Some of these rules were draconian. There was no chance of having a normal young adulthood there, and I've long resented the fact that I missed out on lots of things that are normal, healthy, and important for full social and emotional integration into society. Among the rules were the following.

There could be no drinking (even a beer: drinking age in the country at the time was 18), no drugs, no smoking. These parts were obvious. We were also not allowed to dance, to go to movies, or to play cards. (Seriously: cards are of the devil.) We were not allowed to have sexual relations of any kind. Those were reserved for marriage. (Which is one reason so many people got married very young at Moody. That, of course, is in many instances a recipe for disaster, as history later then bore out). By no sexual relations, I not only mean no sexual intercourse. I mean no sexual contact of any kind, including touching and kissing. There was a famous "six-inch rule" - a couple was supposed to keep six inches apart at all times. Yup.

On top of all this there were dress codes. Men could not have hair touching their ears. And no beards. Women were not allowed to wear blue jeans. (Too sexy, I suppose.) Their dresses could not be more than an inch above their knees (this was in the days of mini-skirts.). Monitors would sometimes measure to make sure. I resent all this now. I missed out on a young adulthood.

Second thing: my education. Or lack of it. I've already mentioned that I was and still am grateful for the massive inundation that I received in the Bible. I do not say "biblical studies" because there was in fact very, very little scholarship involved. There was mastery of the Bible. And of what very conservative evangelical scholars said about the theology of the Bible. But in terms of academics, there was not much more.

These were the years where I should have been, and where I so desperately now wish that I had been, studying in the great disciplines of the humanities and social sciences and hard sciences. I am not a science guy, and never have been. But still, I \*should\* have been studying the basics of chemistry, biology, and physics. I had none of that. I am hugely ignorant as a result. In addition, I obviously never had courses in cultural anthropology, sociology, or psychology.

Much more than that, I regret very much not having plunged at that stage of my life into English (our only courses on that were basically on writing, so we would learn how to communicate the gospels), history (apart from church history, taught with a very strong

fundamentalist slant), philosophy (you can imagine what \*that\* was like at a place like Moody!) , classics, modern languages.

These are all fields that I love. And I never had a chance to touch a single one of them.

Some readers are thinking, Well, that was your own fault! You are the one who decided to go there! Yes indeed, I completely agree. But I was young and ignorant and was directed there by an older man whom I trusted, when - as I now know — I shouldn't have trusted him further than I could throw him. I was passionate for learning about the Bible, and so that's what I threw myself into. But how desperately now do I wish I had spent these formative years of my life reading great literature, learning modern languages, studying in depth the Greek and Latin classics, being trained in history, and on and on and on.

It's true that I did spend two years finishing my degree at Wheaton, and there I did indeed take courses in many of these areas. That was great, and it awakened in me an interest in real academic work, the study of human knowledge (not just the Bible). But in effect I had only two years to do it in. I crammed four years of education into two. Those were the only two years of my life that I had a broad range of classics in the liberal arts. Every day of my life I feel that I was cheated out of a great education.

The third reason for my resentment is related, and is in a sense the flip side of the coin. Even though I am grateful that I learned so much about the content of the Bible, I am highly resentful of the approach to education taken at Moody. It was three years of indoctrination. It was not three years of learning how to think, how to analyze, and to assess, how to evaluate, how to come to one's own views, how to reason to a conclusion. It was three years of learning the right answers. Right answers from within a very narrow and stifling ideological/theological perspective.

These right answers were the key to eternal life and earthly happiness. We simply had to learn the answers and ... we would have the answers. How stupid. How ignorant. How mind-numbing. How mind-killing. It is not simply that we were not taught how to think or encouraged to think. We were actively \*discouraged\* from coming up with our own views, establishing our own perspectives, deriving our own conclusions. Doing such things was seen as dangerous. We had to toe the line. And the line was very clearly marked.

I am possibly most resentful about this last area. I did not start learning how to think until I left Moody, and then it took me much longer to learn how to think than normal intelligent human beings take, since I had to drop so much baggage that I had been burdened with. And this was emotionally difficult, because Moody not only loaded me up with baggage, but the people loading the baggage insisted that the only way to have a happy life and blessed afterlife was to carry that baggage all the way to the end of the road.

I don't feel I started to become fully human until I realized that they were completely wrong, and that their approach to education was, in fact, sinister. And I resent that I underwent that kind of treatment from people that at the time I considered to be leaders and responsible adults.

I want to stress that there are things about Moody that I appreciate. But more than appreciation I really do feel resentment.



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