



THE
CAMBRIDGE
SEVEN







THE
CAMBRIDGE
SEVEN



JOHN POLLOCK

CHRISTIAN FOCUS





© John Pollock

ISBN 1-84550-177-2
ISBN 978-1-84550-177-8

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Published in 2006

by
Christian Focus Publications,
Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire,
IV20 1TW, Great Britain.

www.christianfocus.com

Cover Design by Danie Van Straaten

Printed by Norhaven

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying. In the U.K. such licences are issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.





PROLOGUE

Early in 1885, on a wet winter's night in London, the Strand was crowded with carriages and hansom cabs converging on Exeter Hall.

The 'large room' holding three thousand was filling rapidly with men and women of all ages and ranks. Ladies in silks and jewelry, whose carriages waited to carry them back to Belgravia or Mayfair, mingled with flower-girls and working women in plain dark dresses who had found their way on foot from East End slums. Smart young city men were sitting beside drab shopmen and kindly rogues who, on a superficial glance, might have seemed more at home in a music hall.

On the platform sat forty Cambridge undergraduates. Above their heads hung a large map of China, stretching from side to side. On the table lay a small pile of Chinese New Testaments.

At the stroke of the hour the Chairman entered, followed by seven young men slightly older than the undergraduates but all, from their dress and bearing, men of education and position. After prayer, a hymn, and some introductory remarks those, whom the world had already dubbed the Cambridge Seven rose in turn to tell the crowded hall why they were leaving England the next day to serve as missionaries in inland China.

One by one they spoke – Stanley Smith, of Repton and Trinity, a former stroke of the Cambridge boat; Montagu





THE CAMBRIDGE SEVEN

Beauchamp of Trinity, a baronet's son; D. E. Hoste, till lately a gunner sub-altern, son of a major-general; W. W. Cassels of Repton and St. John's, a Church of England curate. Then came Cecil Polhill-Turner, an Old Etonian, who had resigned his commission in the Queen's Bays (2nd Dragoon Guards) to join the others; and his brother Arthur, of Eton and Trinity Hall. And lastly C. T. Studd, the Eton, Cambridge and England cricketer, acknowledged as the most brilliant player of the day. One by one they told how in the past year or eighteen months God had called them to renounce their careers and give themselves for Christian service overseas.

The Cambridge Seven struck with force the consciousness of a generation which set much store on social position and athletic ability. A century later the story of how the Seven was formed is still relevant. Any account of God's working on the human soul is timeless, but the Cambridge Seven provide particular evidence about growth in grace and on God's calling to full-time service. Furthermore, the events of 1885 had a formative influence on the history of missions, and of Christian work in universities throughout the world.

The Cambridge Seven emerged when Britain had been stirred to the depths by the work of D. L. Moody, the American evangelist. Seventy years later, when this book was first published in 1955, Cambridge University and all Britain were being stirred by the work of another American evangelist, Billy Graham. Yet again, thirty years on, the Centenary of the Cambridge Seven followed the great meetings of Mission England when thousands of young men and women were among the nearly ninety-seven thousand people in England who responded to Billy Graham's call for commitment to Christ.

Thus a reissue of this book is timely. I have rewritten parts and have introduced several contemporary letters





PROLOGUE

which were not available in 1955. I am very grateful to the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, as the China Inland Mission has become, for allowing me to publish them, and especially to Dr. A. J. Broomhall, former C.I.M. – O.M.F. missionary, who is writing the definitive life of its founder, Hudson Taylor, for researching them for me in the archives, and for Dr. Broomhall's advice and theirs.

In the Prologue of the first edition I wrote: 'If China is again a closed land, though not now without its Christian witness, other lands are open, and fields at home are waiting.' At that time, three years after the withdrawal of all but a beleaguered handful of western missionaries, it almost seemed that Hudson Taylor, the Cambridge Seven and their thousands of fellow-workers had achieved comparatively little by their devotion and sacrifice.

Thirty years later, in the Centenary year of the Seven, the world knows that the Christian church in China has not only survived but grown beyond all measure.

