

"WAS MOODY RIGHT?"

It is with very much diffidence I put the question. It is indeed with such diffidence that only the importance of what is involved in the question causes me to put it. And whilst I feel called upon to state my own impressions, I put the question not so much to answer it as to endeavor to call forth such an expression of opinion as will be a decisive answer whether to the effect that Moody was right or to the effect that he was wrong.

The occasion of my putting the question was as follows: I was at two of the enquiry meetings, absence from town preventing a greater attendance. On both occasions Mr. Moody surprised me with his manner of dealing with enquirers. In the two meetings on Friday, the one at four and the other in the evening professedly, that is expressly dealt with enquirers stating that at them both he would answer the question "what must I do to be saved?" The surprise I felt at the enquiry meetings was repeated at these two meetings. At the first enquiry meeting Mr. Moody pointed out and graphically illustrated how impossible it is to be pleasing to God whilst we indulge in sin, and having enforced this point asked all to stand who would from that moment cast away sin. Quite a number stood and recorded themselves as resolved to put away sin. At the second enquiry meeting his address took the form of an urgent pressing of the command, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" and concluded by a request to all who wished from that time to obey that command to stand up. As before a number stood up and recorded themselves as from that moment resolved to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Upon the afternoon of Friday when he made the announcement that then and in the evening he would set himself to answer the question "What must I do to be saved?" giving as the reason for his doing so the conviction that there were many just then in Toronto anxiously putting that question, he occupied himself with urging that the way to be saved was by obeying God, quoting Hebrews to the effect that "He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him," referring to the familiar instances of Noah entering the ark, the Israelites putting the blood on the door posts, and their being saved by looking at the serpent of brass as instances of being saved thro' obeying the Lord, and thereby emphasizing the lesson that the way to be saved is by giving obedience to God.

Now it is with reference to all the manner of answering the question of "What must I do to be saved?" that the question is put "Was Moody right?" To that question I am obliged, according to my present knowledge to answer, No! I am obliged to answer it with a very emphatic No! According to my present knowledge it is no proper presentation of the way of salvation to one enquiring about it to say, obey God, put away sin, seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Instead of directing that, as it appears to me, is seriously misleading. Of course these things are said with a very vivid recollection of the famed enquirer who is the first recorded to have put the question in set terms, "What must I do to be saved?" with the not less famed reply "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." That I understand to be the only legitimate reply to the question. I suppose it is unquestionable that in the various forms in which he put it this was Mr. Moody's meaning. Mr. Moody most positively and directly declared his acceptance of the atonement on the cross as the only way of salvation. He must, therefore, have had it as underlying these other presentations and as being led up to by them. But surely the fact of its underlying them and they leading up to it, shews that it was not they but it that is the way of salvation. Thus our question becomes since salvation is thro' the blood of atonement alone, was it right to present it thro' the forms "put away sin, seek first the Kingdom of God, render obedience to God?" There is a condition of things in which that would be right. It would be right in the case of one who was thoroughly established in the proper answer to the question, who knew and accepted of the truth of salvation being thro' the atoning blood. To such it might well enough be exhorted "Seek first the Kingdom of God, put away sin, obey God." But it would be well enough said because they would know what it all led to, that is to place their trust in Christ and His atoning sacrifice for their own salvation. They would know that the only way to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness was by personal trust in Christ and His finished work, they would know that the only way to obey God

was by receiving salvation thro' the atoning sacrifice of His Son, they would know that the only way that they could efficaciously put away sin was by receiving the sprinkling of the blood that cleanseth from all sin. But the very fact that to them such a presentation of the way of salvation which Mr. Moody made might be appropriate makes it all the more apparent that it would be an altogether inappropriate and misleading presentation to those who were not in their position. To such it must have been purely misleading. That Mr. Moody had such was apparent to any who looked over the composition of his meetings whether up or down stairs. Indeed it is to be feared that there were many such whose appearance did not indicate it. For it is to be feared that there are many contentedly worshipping in our churches who are far from being established in the truth as to the way of salvation, and would receive the exhortation to put away sin, and obey God, and seek first the Kingdom of God in a very different sense to that which Mr. Moody intended, to whom it would prove the fatal poison of salvation by works. To all but the class we have referred to it could not but prove to be so. Every one who was not thoroughly grounded in the way of salvation must have been fatally misled. This may be emphasized by referring to some of Mr. Moody's illustrations of the way to be saved being by obedience to God. Each of those illustrations afforded, and we have no doubt was intended by the Divine Spirit to furnish a beautiful illustration of how a sinner should be saved, and it was, to say the least, a most unfortunate, perplexing and obscuring of the way to be saved by representing them as instances of obedience. They were instances of obedience. But the obedience was an entirely subordinate element in them. The main element in them was faith. The obedience was but the outcome of the faith. For that we have the direction of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews which tells us that Noah's making and entering the ark was an act of faith in God so that he was saved not by his obedience but by his faith. It is so in the other cases. In the blood on the doorposts, in the looking at the serpent of brass, in the fleeing to the city of refuge, the main and the efficient element is faith from which the obedience came, and without which there would be no obedience. So with the sinner what saves him is not obedience but faith. But even that is not quite correct. It is not his faith that saves but the atonement of the cross thro' his faith. He is saved by the atonement and he enjoys its saving efficacy thro' his faith in it. And here it is there comes in the putting away sin. There is no possibility of any one trusting to the saving efficacy of the sacrifice on the cross and at the same time clinging to any sin. To trust in the cross means a universal abandonment of sin. So that believing in Christ's atoning sacrifice as securing our salvation is the evidence that sin is absolutely given up. And other evidence there is none. My saying that I resolve to have done with it is no evidence. My trusting to Christ for salvation is incontestable evidence. Thus we are at this point, at all points, thrown back on the sacrifice on the cross and faith in it as the only way of salvation. Thus we are brought back to the apostolic answer as the only admissible answer to the question "what must I do to be saved?" and we are brought back with a very grave accumulation of questioning to the enquiry, "Was Moody right?" So far as I am able to see he was gravely at fault. Clearly, decisively he ought to have pointed to Christ on the cross bearing the sins of men, and to faith in that as being our salvation. Justly he emphasised that salvation as an immediate and eternal thing. It was strangely nugatory of that to present obedience to God as the way of salvation and the seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and the putting away of sin. These are not instantaneous things. They are life long works, and if they present the way of salvation, salvation instead of being instantaneous can be an assurance only when it is a realised fact in eternity. It is otherwise when the atonement on the cross and faith in its saving efficacy constitute the way of salvation. Then salvation is instantaneous and eternal, for then the obeying God, the putting away of sin and the seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness are guaranteed. They are guaranteed by Christ Himself in this, as in other assurances of His word "Because I live ye shall live also."

I shall be very ready to see and shall be glad to see that this is all a mistake. I shall be very thankful to any one who will make it plain that I have misread Mr. Moody, that by a perversion of some kind I failed to apprehend Mr. Moody, and that without any obscuration Mr. Moody to all enquirers as to the way of salvation repeated the Baptist's cry "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."