

2
GREAT QUESTIONS

ANSWERED.

TWO COLLOQUIES

BETWEEN

D. L. MOODY AND WM. S. PLUMER.



NEW YORK:
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,
90 BROADWAY, COR. 20th STREET.

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GREAT QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

I.

*A Scene At The Depot Meeting, (Philadelphia),
December 31, 1875.*

IT was near midnight. The close of the year 1875 was at hand. The depot church was crowded. Twelve thousand persons sat listening intently to the words of the earnest evangelist. Mr. Moody had concluded a sermon from the text, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." The appeal had come home with power to many who now longed for words of personal counsel, or who were burdened with anxious doubt. An ordinary inquiry-meeting, such as usually follows Mr. Moody's sermons, was not practicable then and there; for the services in the main room were to continue until the new year opened. Said Mr. Moody, "You always

show an interest in the inquiry-meetings. I often see some of you who are outside looking in at the doors to see what is going on in there. Some of you have been in there. Some of you would like to go there to-night ; but we've no chance for such a meeting now. So I propose to turn this whole meeting into an inquiry-meeting. Here is the Rev. Dr. Plumer, of South Carolina. He is seventy-four years old. He has been living on borrowed time for four years. For fifty-five years he has been sitting at the feet of Jesus. I'm going to put him on the witness-stand, and question him before you all. Dr. Plumer, will you take the pulpit ?"

The venerable clergyman, with his commanding form and patriarchal presence, arose and, with tremulous movements, took the stand before the vast congregation. He gave his Bible greeting from the 73d Psalm to the waiting hearers. Mr. Moody plied him with questions in his own peculiar way. In reply, every word was spoken with distinctness and with deep feeling, as if under a sense of weighty responsibility in thus witnessing for the Lord. It was a most impressive service. Many a soul present seemed to feel himself the

questioner, and to listen as for his life to the answer.

THE COLLOQUY.

Dr. Plumer—I wish to give a year-text to this assembly. It is from the 73d Psalm : “Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.”

Mr. Moody—Dr. Plumer, we often speak of “conviction.” What is conviction ?

Dr. Plumer—Conviction is a clear persuasion that a thing is true. Religious conviction is a clear, settled persuasion of five things : *First*. That I am ignorant, and need instruction. *Second*. That I am guilty, and deserve wrath and need pardon. *Third*. That my heart is vile, and must be renewed. *Fourth*. That my condition is miserable ; I am “wretched and miserable and poor.” *Fifth*. That I am helpless ; I am without strength ; I can not save myself ; I can not think a good thought without divine grace.

Mr. Moody—What is the use of conviction ?

Dr. Plumer—The use of conviction is not to punish a man for his sins ; nor is it to make him any better. The devils in hell have been under awful conviction for a long time, and not one of

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them is any better. The sole object of conviction is to shut up the soul to the faith of Jesus. The sole object of conviction is to bring the sinner to accept salvation by atoning blood.

Mr. Moody—Is any given amount of distress
• necessary to genuine conviction ?

Dr. Plumer—Lydia seems to have had no distress ; we read of none. God opened her heart, and she attended to the things spoken of Paul ; but the jailer of Philippi would probably not have accepted Christ without some alarm. If you will accept the Son of God, you need have no trouble ; there is nothing in mere trouble that sanctifies the soul.

Mr. Moody—Well, doctor, what is conversion ?

Dr. Plumer—Glory be to God ! there is such a thing as conversion. If there was not, everlasting chains and darkness would be our doom. To be converted is to turn from self, self-will, self-righteousness, all self-confidence, and from sin in every shape, and to be turned to Christ. The turning-point in a man's conversion is his acceptance of Jesus Christ ; then he closes in with Christ and gives Him all his confidence.

Mr. Moody—Why must a sinner come to Christ for salvation ?

Dr. Plumer—Because there is salvation in none else. All the angels in heaven and all the saints in heaven and earth can not save one sinner. He must come to the Saviour. I will tell you why. Here are quintillions of tons of atmospheric air : why does not that support life without your respiring it ? You must breathe it or you die. For the same reason you must make Christ yours, or you perish notwithstanding what He has done. The sight of a river will never quench thirst, and the sight of food will never satisfy hunger. You must come to Christ, and make His salvation yours.

Mr. Moody—Can a man be saved here to-night, before twelve o'clock—saved all at once ?

Dr. Plumer—Why not ? In my Bible I read of three thousand men gathered together one morning—all of them murderers, their hands stained with the blood of the Son of God. They met in the morning, and before night they were all baptized members of Christ. God added to the church in those days such as should be saved. If

you are ever saved, there must be a moment when you accept Christ and renounce the world.

Mr. Moody—What is repentance?

Dr. Plumer—It is turning to God with abhorrence of sin and cleaving to Christ with purpose of obedience. A man truly repents of his sins when he does not commit the sins he has repented of; therefore saving repentance always terminates in purity of life and in reformation. A thorough change of heart is followed by a thorough change of character.

Mr. Moody—How can I know that I am saved?

Dr. Plumer—By the fact that God is true. "Let God be true, but every man a liar." If I accept Jesus Christ, it is not Mr. Moody's word, nor Mr. Sankey's, nor Dr. Newton's; it is the Word of the living God, whose name is Amen. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life."

Mr. Moody—What if I haven't got faith enough?

Dr. Plumer—Glory be to God! if I can touch the hem of my Saviour's garment I shall be saved. A little faith is as truly faith as a great deal of faith. A little coal of fire in the ashes is as truly fire as the glowing heat of the furnace. Jesus says not, If you have great faith you will be saved, but

"He that believeth shall be saved." Oh ! come and trust Him fully ! Give Him all your confidence, and if your faith is not as strong as it ought to be, cry as the disciples did, " Lord, increase our faith."

Mr. Moody—But I don't know that I have the right kind of faith.

Dr. Plumer—You will hardly be able to analyze your faith and say whether it is exactly of the right kind. The thief upon the cross did not say, " If I had a little more faith, or a better faith, I would ask Thee to remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." He offered his prayer with the faith he had, and Christ accepted him. You must have faith in God through grace, and then your faith must have works, to prove it to be of the right kind.

Mr. Moody—I don't feel that I love Christ enough.

Dr. Plumer—And you never will. To all eternity you never will love Him as much as He deserves to be loved.

" Had I ten thousand thousand tongues,
Not one should silent be ;
Had I ten thousand thousand hearts,
I'd give them all to Thee."

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Mr. Moody—When the temptation comes, it is so much stronger than my resolution that I yield. What shall I do?

Dr. Plumer—Look to Jesus. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Christ can give us the strength of giants. Jesus is the best Master and the best Friend in the universe. Glory be to His name forever!

II.

A Scene At The Hippodrome Meeting, March 30, 1876

THE great Convention of March 29 and 30, 1876, at the Hippodrome, in New York, had just closed. Most of the members still remained. At eight o'clock the house was filled, every seat being occupied, and hundreds standing. Mr. Moody, followed by Dr. Plumer, of South Carolina, entered. The usual devotional exercises were held. Mr. Moody then arose, and said: "The exercises of this evening will vary from those commonly had at this hour. I shall not preach, but shall call on Dr. Plumer to answer many questions of great importance; these questions relate to the way of life. Dr. Plumer has long been studying the Word of God. He will please take the stand."

Mr. Moody—Dr. Plumer, I am living in the world, with eternity before me. I am accountable to God; I have broken His law. What must I do to be saved?

Dr. Plumer—There is but one safe answer to that question. It sounds out from the jail at Philippi: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (9)"

and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Acts xvi. 31. That is the substance of all the Scriptures on this subject summed up in a few words.

Mr. Moody—Is faith in Christ essential to salvation ?

Dr. Plumer—So says the Lord Jesus Christ : "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John iii. 18.

Mr. Moody—Many in the inquiry-room tell us that we are making too much of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. Plumer—If they mean that we are making too much of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, that cannot be so ; for He is All in All ; the First and the Last ; the Author and Finisher of Salvation ; the one Mediator between God and man ; the Prophet, Priest, and King of His Church. If they mean that we are making too much of faith itself, that cannot be so, unless we go beyond the Scriptures. The words *faith* and *believe* occur in the New Testament about five hundred times ; and in a large number of cases salvation is clearly connected with believing. Jesus taught us this when asked, "What shall

we do, that we may work the works of God?" He answered, "This is the work of God that ye believe on the name of Him whom He hath sent," and, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." John vi. 29 ; viii. 24.

Mr. Moody—Does our faith, or our want of faith, decide our relations to God the Father?

Dr. Plumer—The Scriptures so affirm: "Who-soever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father;" "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath the Father and the Son;" "He that hateth me, hateth my Father also." 1 John ii. 23 ; 2 John 9 ; John xv. 23. No man can refuse to confess that Christ, the Son of God, is come in the flesh, without denying and dishonoring God the Father.

Mr. Moody—Is true faith wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost alone?

Dr. Plumer—Paul says: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, *faith*," and so on ; and, "No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Galatians v. 22 ; 1 Cor. xii. 3. Elsewhere he says, "Faith is of the operation of God;" and John says, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God:

every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God."

Mr. Moody—Is there no substitute for faith in Christ Jesus?

Dr. Plumer—None whatever. The want of faith mars everything. I remember John Calvin thus puts it: "The annihilation of faith is the abolition of the promises." Many Scriptures justify this remark. In the great commission given by Christ to the preachers of His Gospel, He says: "He that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16. These words are awful, and they are true: "He that believeth not shall be damned;" so says the Son of God, our final Judge.

Mr. Moody—What is that faith which saves the soul?

Dr. Plumer—Because faith is a simple and not a complex act, it is not easy to explain it. Some things are clear respecting it. Believing on Christ, believing in Christ, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, are all phrases found in the

New Testament, and all teach the same thing. True faith receives the divine testimony respecting our Saviour. It is a cordial belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, is come in the flesh, and has died—the just for the unjust—that He might bring us to God. It is a hearty persuasion that Jesus Christ is the sole and sufficient cause of salvation to lost men. Jesus Christ offers to save us, and faith consists in taking Him at His word. It accepts the truth as it is in Jesus. Reliance on the person and finished work of the Redeemer, is of the essence of faith. By this faith we receive Christ himself, John i. 12 ; and rest on Him alone for salvation, Acts xv. 11 ; By it all believers are one in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 28 ; By it they all receive of His fulness, Philippians iii. 10 ; By it sinners are justified, Romans v. 1 ; It purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9 ; It works by love, Gal. v. 6 ; It overcomes the world, 1 John v. 6 ; It quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked, Ephesians vi. 16 ; It is very much an exercise of the heart, Romans x. 10 ; and yet it is most reasonable. If in any case it is right to receive human testimony, it is in every case right unhesitatingly to accept the witness of God.

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Mr. Moody—Can faith be explained by the sense of feeling ?

Dr. Plumer—The Scriptures call on us to feel after God, "If haply we may find Him." Acts xvii. 27. See that blind man groping his way at noon. There is light enough, but his eyeballs are sightless. He is in earnest, but he sees not how or where to go. Thus Bartimeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. He said to himself, "Now is my time." So he started. Perhaps he stumbled, possibly he fell ; but he was soon up and at it again. And as he went, he cried : "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Some tried to silence him, but he cried so much the more, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." He held on his way as best he could, till he found the Saviour and got the blessing.

Mr. Moody—Is the sense of *taste* ever used in the Bible to illustrate faith ?

Dr. Plumer—Several times. Hear the prophet David, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good ; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." Psalm xxxiv. 8. The meaning is, "Make trial of this way ; let experience resolve your doubts." One may read and hear much of the excellence of

honey, but he will better know its sweetness by tasting it than by all descriptions given of it. Those who have tasted have certain knowledge; they *see* that the Lord is gracious and the Saviour precious; they know whereof they affirm. The deaf never admire music, the blind are not charmed with the rainbow, because they have no experience in these things. The man that comes to Christ and tastes His love, *sees* that the Lord is gracious.

Mr. Moody—Is faith ever spoken of as *hearing* the Gospel message?

Dr. Plumer—Many a time. "Incline your ear," saith God. "Hear, and your soul shall live." And Jesus himself says, "He that is of God heareth God's words." And He often said when on earth, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Indeed, Christ loved such language so much that, sixty years after He was glorified in heaven, He sent seven epistles to as many churches, in each of which He says, "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." O, perishing men, hear the glad tidings, and your souls shall live.

Mr. Moody—Is faith in Christ the same thing

as *looking* to Christ? So much is said in Scripture about looking, that we should like to hear what is the difference between faith and *looking*.

Dr. Plumer—From the days of Moses, *looking* seems to have been used to express *faith*. For their sins, God sent among the Israelites venomous serpents. These bit many, and much people of Israel died. By God's direction, Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it on a pole, so that the people might see it. The message sent through the camp was, "Every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." It is not a stretch of the imagination to suppose that one may have come to his brother's tent, and said, "There is good news. A remedy is provided for this dreadful poison. By God's command, Moses has put a brazen serpent on a pole, and if any one will look at that, he shall be healed." Perhaps the bitten man was far gone. He may have said, "I fear it is too late; I am almost blind; I am already half dead. How can I look? I cannot live." But the other bids him be of good cheer, helps him to the door of his tent, and directs his eyes to the weather-beaten tabernacle and to the figure on the pole. Soon the poisoned man says, "I think

I do see something glistening in the sun. Yes, I see it ; I feel better ; I am well ! O, how strange ! Glory be to God !" From that day, looking has fitly expressed faith. By the evangelical prophet the Saviour says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else." Isaiah xii. 42. And the Son of God himself says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." John iii. 14, 15. Let the dying sinner, let every dying sinner, look to Jesus Christ and live.

Mr. Moody—Can people look to Christ tonight and be saved ?

Dr. Plumer—All God's commands on this point require present and prompt obedience. Do not trifle with God. The bitten Israelites did not first take a dose of medicine. There is no remedy for sin but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. Moody—How else do the Scriptures teach us the nature of the act of faith which saves the soul ?

Dr. Plumer—They call Jesus the living bread,

which came down from heaven, and call on men to eat and to live. John vi. 51. They speak of salvation as the water of life, and call on us to drink. John iv. 14; vii. 37; Rev. xxii. 17. They speak of receiving Christ. Col. ii. 6; Luke xix. 6. They speak of fleeing for a refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us (Heb. vi. 18), as the manslayer fled to his city of refuge.

Mr. Moody—Are we ever commanded anywhere in Scripture to embrace Christ?

Dr. Plumer—The word embrace is not found there; but the command is in other terms: "Kiss the Son." In Western Asia it was common for persons who had been at variance, after the settlement of their difficulties, to come together and kiss. The father kissed his prodigal son upon his return. This custom has been introduced into Western Europe. General McComb told me that he was once called to settle a difficulty between two officers of the French navy. Having heard the story of each, he made up his mind on the matter, and announced his decision to the parties; then at his bidding they embraced and kissed each other. This was a final settlement.

Now there is a sad separation and alienation

between Christ and the sinner. We greatly misunderstand Him, but He does not misunderstand us. He knows how vile and guilty and wicked we are. He calls. He offers terms of peace. They suit us exactly. Shall we longer refuse them? Ye dying sinners, "Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." Psalm ii. 12. Even a drop of His wrath falling into a guilty conscience will put any man on earth into torment like the torment of the damned.

Mr. Moody—Does faith express *trust* in the Redeemer?

Dr. Plumer—Paul uses the very phrase: "Trusted in Christ." Ephesians i. 12. Where he says: "I know whom I have believed," the margin reads: "I know whom I have *trusted*." In the Old Testament the verb *rely* is found three times, and in each case it has the meaning of believe. Dr. Chalmers once called on a woman who was near death. She had a sense of her sins, but was in darkness about the way of salvation. In various ways he tried to lead her to right views of the Gospel, but all in vain; at length he used a word in the Scottish dialect. When one walks

across a ditch on a plank, he *lippens* to the plank—he trusts his entire weight upon it. So the Doctor set before her the Redeemer and His grace, and said to the sick, “Canna ye lippen to Him?” She replied: “Is that what ye mean? I canna lippen to ony else.” O, let us trust in Christ!

Mr. Moody—In believing, do we make a surrender to Christ?

Dr. Plumer—Certainly. The word surrender may be taken as the act of a hostile army. Rebels against a just authority should throw down their arms. Perhaps by a surrender you mean the making of a deposit. Thus Paul had that very idea when he said, “I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him,” 2 Tim. iv. 8; literally it is, He is able to keep my deposit. As if he had said, “I have deposited my soul, my eternal all, my mortal interest, with Christ, and I am persuaded that He will keep them all safe; there I leave them—He will not fail or deceive me.” When we give up our valuables to men, they often disappoint us; but when we intrust our souls to Christ, we are dealing with the Son of God, who is both able

and willing to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him.

Mr. Moody—If a sinner prays heartily for mercy through Christ, is that an act of faith?

Dr. Plumer—The prophet Joel, speaking of Gospel times, says, "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Peter quotes these words as applicable to his hearers on the day of Pentecost. Paul repeats them in his epistle to the Romans as applicable to all men. In Joel, the Hebrew word for *Lord* is *Jehovah*. In applying this text to Christ, the apostles declared that Jesus is Jehovah. Thus they establish His divinity; for Jehovah is the incommunicable name of God. Yes, our Saviour is Jehovah, is Lord of all, Lord of glory, Immanuel, God with us, the true God, over all God blessed forever. Let men in true faith call on His holy name, and they shall be saved.

Mr. Moody—I am sometimes told that I have no right to say, and advise people to, come to Christ. Is that Scripture?

Dr. Plumer—There is nothing in the Bible to countenance such an idea. When the Lord Jesus came, early in His ministry He said to the

toiling, distressed, and weary thousands on the plains of Judea, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." Afterward He complained of many "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Coming to Christ, and coming to God by Christ, are phrases expressing the same act of the soul. Come ! O, come to Christ !

Mr. Moody—But they say Christ is now in heaven, and we cannot come to Him, because He is where we cannot come to Him.

Dr. Plumer—Let Paul answer : " Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend unto heaven ? (that is to bring Christ down from above) ; or, Who shall descend into the deep ? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead) ; but what saith it ? ' The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart ; ' that is, the word of faith, which we preach : that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 6-10.

Mr. Moody—Then what is it to come to Christ?

Dr. Plumer—The phrase "Come to Christ" is never found in Scripture until Christ came to earth in person. When He appeared, then there was a fitness in the thing. To come to Christ is to have such a state of mind and heart as would lead one to apply to Him in person for grace and mercy if He were here on earth. Had He sent His ministers here to say that He was over on Broadway, and would grant mercy to all who should come to Him and sincerely ask Him for eternal life, would you go to Him? Well, I have a better message than that. You need not go to Broadway. Jesus is with us. Hear Him: "I walk in the midst of the golden candlesticks;" "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." So that if any soul will now and here apply to the Lord Jesus for grace and salvation, on the terms of free grace, he shall live forever. O, is not that good news? Who will joyfully accept it?

Mr. Moody—But how must I come to Christ?

Dr. Plumer—Come just as you are—poor, lost, guilty, miserable, helpless—having no merit

of your own, all your righteousness being filthy rags, and your goodness as the morning cloud and the early dew.

Mr. Moody—A man came to me the other night, and told me that he came to Christ, and Christ would not receive him.

Dr. Plumer—Surely that man was mistaken. Jesus says He will not cast him out : “ Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” In the Greek it is a double negative : “ I will not ; no, I will not, cast him out ! ” There is His word. Then you have His practice. It is not His custom to reject sinners that come to Him for mercy. Nay, He never rejected one. Where is a single case ? He welcomed the vilest publicans and sinners, poured salvation on a dying thief, and prayed for His own murderers. Since He left this world for His throne in glory, He has trodden to hell many a cruel tyrant and many a bloody persecutor who refused His grace and hounded His people ; but, glory be to God ! Jesus has never trampled on a broken heart, and He never will.

Mr. Moody—Is it a sin for those who are not Christians not to come to Christ to-night ?

Dr. Plumer—Certainly ; that is *the* sin of men in Gospel lands. “He that believeth not hath made God a liar,”—that is, he is doing all he can by example to destroy confidence in God’s moral character for truth and honor. In the same way unbelief impugns God’s wisdom, power, and grace, as set forth in the whole scheme of salvation. Besides, unbelief is a sin against the remedy. Christ said, “When the Spirit shall come He will reprove the world of sin, *because they believe not on Me.*”

Mr. Moody—There was a man in the inquiry-room the other night who quoted the words, “Many will seek to enter in and shall not be able.” How would you answer him ?

Dr. Plumer—Those awful words are in the Bible and are true. But let us see the connection in which they are spoken : “Strive, agonize, to enter in at the strait gate ; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and will not be able ; when once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open unto us,’ and He shall say unto you, ‘I know you not whence you are.’ ” O, yes ; it

will then be too late ; ye will not then be able to enter in, the door will then be shut. But that sad state of things is not yet upon us. Hear the Saviour in the last book of the Bible : " Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Rev. iii. 8. O, SINNERS, SINNERS, SINNERS, enter in and be forever blessed !

Dr. Plumer added : And the time for doing this necessary work is the present. " Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation." I would not for all this world advise or encourage any soul to put off repentance and closing in with Christ, even for an hour. Eternity is at hand. The Judge standeth before the door.

A point of time, a moment's space,
Removes me to yon heavenly place,
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