

TWENTY-FIFTH THOUSAND.

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# MR. MOODY'S LATE SERMON ON HELL.

A Lecture. By JOHN PAGE HOPPS.

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As I told you, in announcing this lecture last Sunday, I have no liking whatever for the subject of to-day, neither do I find any pleasure in speaking of the sayings and doings of other people: but it is well that you should know what is going on in the world around you, and it is necessary to test prominent popular teachings by the standards which we, whether rightly or wrongly, believe to be safe and true. In the present case, however, there are special reasons for dealing with this subject. Mr. Moody has been accepted by millions as the messenger of God and the medium for the operations of the Holy Ghost. He is admired, believed in, and widely accepted, as a modern evangelist or prophet, set apart by God to bring the nations to His feet. It is impossible, therefore, to avoid the conclusion that we who stand alone in standing aloof from his teachings and work should justify ourselves before the world.

I might have attempted to give a general and comprehensive view of Mr. Moody's teaching, or I might have chosen some other topic, such as the possibility of instant conversion, or the reasonableness of salvation by faith or emotion, or the value of his favourite doctrine of redemption through blood: but I prefer to consider this sermon of his on Hell for this reason mainly,—that everything turns upon it. He came here because of Hell, his work is to save people from Hell. To use his own words in this very sermon, (which let me explain, appears verbatim in an organ of the movement—“*Signs of Our Times*”) —“If I believed there was no Hell,” he said, “I am sure I would be off to-morrow for America.” He added, “You would not find me here, going from town to town, spending day and night preaching and proclaiming the Gospel, and urging men to escape the damnation of Hell. I would go back to my own country, and take things easy.” That, then, is his own account of it; so that the subject of Hell is *the* subject. He came here because of Hell; he preaches in order to save people from Hell; the whole thing is a piece of fireworks, ending in smoke, if his Hell is not the reality he says it is. Another thing must be explained. In spite of the disclaimer that has been now and then put forth, Mr. Moody makes much of this subject of Hell. How could it be otherwise? He comes on purpose to warn us,



to inform us, to entreat us, to alarm us, and to save us; and, though it may be denied, I affirm it, after a close watching of the whole movement, that Hell and the Devil have been freely used to produce the state of mind that made the reception of his message possible and easy.

The sermon before me is his last on the subject, but it is only one of many,—it is neither better nor worse than his others on the same subject: though, if anything, it is milder, less brutal and less indecent, than some of the others. I use those two words “brutal” and “indecent” deliberately. More than once,—once, to my knowledge, in Manchester and once in London, he pictured good “beautiful girls” in Hell—not because they were wicked, but because, to use his favourite phrase, they were “out of Christ,” or, in plain English, because they could not agree with Mr. Moody, and accept what he told them about salvation by blood. He pictured those girls as given over by Satan in Hell to the lusts of his devils, with not even a policeman to hear or help them. I call that both indecent and brutal: what *else* it is, in reference to God, Jesus, and the angels, I shall shew presently. In this very sermon, he still harps on these girls, in a way that suggests unpleasant feelings about the speaker. He tells how he saw a “lady” weeping at the door of the inquiry room, but a “woman” came and “shoved” him away: these are his own words. The hopeful emotional person was a “lady,” the person who interposed was a “woman,” and he says she “shoved him away,” telling him that the “lady” was her daughter, and that she did not wish her “to be associated with Christians.” A most improbable story, and one that would probably resolve itself into a thoughtful mother doing her best to save her child from hysterics,—a piece of good sense which, quite in the fashion of the Moodys and Talmages of the day, was at once magnified into the falsehood of her saying she did not wish her daughter to be associated with Christians,—a thing scarcely any woman would say. Mr. Moody in telling that story, cried out “Is there such a mother here to-night?” followed by “May God have mercy upon you!” and this,—“It is a thousand times better for your daughter and your children to be associated with Christians than it is to have them go down to death and be associated with fiends as eternal ages go on.” That is bad enough, but worse follows. Mr. Moody is not content with the brutal and vulgar threat of eternal fiends if the young lady is not allowed to go into hysterics,—or, not to jest about it, if she is not allowed to go into his inquiry room and “find Christ;”—but he goes on, in his too familiar style, to drag in again the old indecent picture of this young lady with the libertines of Hell. He seems to like it, and I must say that the frequent occurrence of this particular picture suggests the most serious thoughts about his own state of mind. He goes on to say;—“If a young lady, going home to-night, should be spoken to by some drunken man, how alarmed she would be; but did you ever think that in that lost world libertines and drunkards and murderers shall be your companions?”



Now I am going to use some plain language about that. First, I say that it is a burning disgrace to the British people that such brutal thoughts and brutal and essentially vulgar language should be encouraged, in the name of religion: second, that it is provocative of mournful thoughts that the man who habitually indulges in such abominable ideas and speeches should be the most popular evangelist of the day, endorsed as such, not only by the mob, but by my lords and my ladies in the capital itself. I say this reveals where we really are on the subject of religion: it shews that, in regard to our thoughts of God and the future, we are only at the barbaric stage, and that a mighty revolution must be accomplished before the country generally, in matters pertaining to religion, can be considered either rational or humane. To vast multitudes, the old theory of religion is infallibly true. Man was created pure and happy: he fell, dragging down in his fall all races and generations of mankind. The result of that fall was exposure to the wrath of God and the punishment of eternal Hell. Christ came, to bleed and die in our stead. God accepts the vicarious sacrifice. We have nothing to do but believe: salvation is then secure: but unbelief, or being "out of Christ," will end in the misery of that eternal Hell. That is the theory; and, though Unitarians in their complacency, are apt to imagine it is dying out, it is still, as Mr. Moody's success proves, the ruling faith of the British people.

And yet, anything more barbaric, more inhuman, more horribly cruel and hideously unjust, could not be conceived. This "young lady" who is weeping at Mr. Moody's door is not a wicked person: she is anxious and interested even, she would shudder if, in going home, a drunken man spoke to her: yet, in Hell, "libertines and drunkards and murderers" will be her "companions" if she fail to "find Christ." Why? Mr. Moody leaves us alone with the shameful atrocity, unjustified and unexplained. When people are punished here on earth, even by imperfect men, they are punished for *something*, and their punishment has some relation to their offence. We should think it scandalous to punish a child as we punish a man: we should think it monstrous to punish the thief who steals a loaf of bread, as we punish the swindler who heaped up riches by forgery and lying. For a first offence we do not punish as for a second or a third. All kinds of considerations are introduced to make the scales of justice true. Some young criminals are not even punished at all, but are sent to a reformatory—a kind of compulsory school; and, when they learn to do well, they are gladly admitted to the open world, and have free course among their fellows. Now will any one tell me why this that is right with men should be all wrong with God? Why, even with *wicked* women who have to be imprisoned, it is our custom to keep them apart from "libertines, and drunkards, and murderers;" and, from one end of the country to the other, there would be a cry of horror if in the obscurest prison even the worst women were subjected to the horror of being turned loose and unprotected upon the society of other prisoners, known to be "libertines,



and drunkards, and murderers" That cry of horror would be a thousand-fold more intense if, not the worst of women, but some "young lady" prisoner were subjected to that degradation, peril, and shame. Yet this is what Mr. Moody lays to the charge of the Almighty. It is *He* who has ordained the allotments of the future life; it is *He* who has declared that all who are "out of Christ" shall be damned; it is *He* who will turn "beautiful" young girls into Hell, regardless alike of justice, humanity, or the credit of His own name or reign. *Some* one ought to brand that as an insult to Deity; *some* one ought to make a stand for the honour of the Almighty; *some* one ought to speak a word for the God of Jesus; *some* one ought to say that this is blasphemy, as horrible as it is infamous; *some* one ought to say that the man who uttered this atrocity should have been sent from this country, followed, not by benedictions and adulation, but by stern sharp words of sober British sense. But we are farther behind than we hoped we were: the religion of the nation is still the religion of brutality and fear: the dread of Christendom is *Hell*; its hope is *Blood*; and it is left for a Unitarian—like the voice of one crying in the wilderness—to rebuke this horrible profanity, and speak a word for Humanity and God.

But the worst half of this miserable picture of Hell remains. This poor girl being surrendered to the "libertines and drunkards and murderers," one naturally asks;—*And what about the saved in Heaven?* The answer Mr. Moody gives tells us as much about Heaven as Hell, and the answer is a frightful impeachment of "the redeemed." On earth, if this "young lady" were spoken to by a drunken man going home, she would have help not far away. The British public, with all its selfishness and sin, has even taxed itself to provide policemen for the protection of decent girls: and if no policeman were by, the man would be a dastardly coward and no man who would not take his place to protect her. Nay, if we knew of but one village in the land where young girls were exposed to the dangers of the streets, defenceless against "libertines and drunkards," to say nothing of "murderers," the country would be aroused, to man that village with maintainers of order, security and law. But, in Mr. Moody's Hell, all is chaos, and riot, and ruin, with not even a policeman to protect "young ladies" against indecent, drunken, or murderous fiends. But what I want to know is;—where are the *saved* all this while?—what has become of the philanthropists, the reformers, the teachers of this lower world? Mr. Moody tells us. He declares that not one will lend a hand; not one will ever say a word, or aim a blow, for the rescue of the lost. These are his words;—"There will be no Bible in the lost world." If you get into that lost world, there will be no minister to pray for you, no earnest sermons preached there. . . . Bear in mind, there will be no friend to come and put his hand upon your shoulder, and speak loving words to you there. . . . You will not have friends in that lost world. . . . You may have a praying wife now that weeps over you, . . . but there will be no wife there to weep over you



and pray for you,—you will be separate then.” *Then I want to know what has happened to them all.* I want to know what has happened to that “praying wife.” I want to know what horrible miracle has been wrought upon her that she can be a saint in glory, content and happy, while her once loved husband is panting and screaming in Hell.

Think of the *millions* of wives, husbands, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, friends in Heaven, who have husbands, wives, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, friends in Hell. What are they all doing? Why do they not all clamour and cry at the very gate of Heaven, and beseech the good Lord of Glory to let them out, that they may at least *try* whether they cannot save that which is lost? How can they bear the hateful splendour, the glory, the ravishing music, the unbroken calm? Shame upon angelic fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters, if they are happy, while millions of lost children, and parents, and brethren, and friends are in Hell! O beautiful angels! break the strings of your golden harps, or hang them on the willows of some new Babylon! Cry, as poor earth-captives once cried, “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” for you *are* captives, and in a strange land, if your kindred and your children are in Hell.

But kindred and friends are not all. What of the noble spirits of all ages and nations, the choice souls who on earth lived to teach the ignorant, save the fallen, restore the wandering, and help the weak? What has happened to them, that they seek and save no more? And what has happened to Jesus of Nazareth? On earth he went about doing good: he sought out the sinner, he spoke hopefully to the most despairing, he turned no sorry soul away. But what does Mr. Moody say? He says, in this sermon:—“You came here to-night to hear Mr. Sankey sing ‘Jesus of Nazareth passeth by;’ but bear in mind you will not hear that song in the lost world: or, if you do, it will not be true—*He does not pass that way.*” How does Mr. Moody know? Or if he is right, I want to know *why* Jesus does not pass that way: I want to know if *he* has nothing to say about that young girl and the “libertines, drunkards, and murderers”: I want to know whether he is tired, or helpless, or hopeless. I want to know who is responsible for this gigantic horror,—that Hell is supremely wretched, supremely hopeless, and full of cruelty, injustice, and crime, and that Heaven makes no effort to mitigate, instruct, or save. Some one must be responsible for the hopeless misery of Hell, and some one must be responsible for the horrible selfishness or inability of Heaven; and it is an urgent question,—Who?

Mr. Moody says of the lost, “*If they would, they could not*” receive Christ and find mercy. Why? *Who* has ordained that? *Who* has given life to men under this horrible condition, that they shall have no real chance here, and then be shut up to hopeless inability for ever? *Who* has made improbability a fact of this life only? *Who* has decreed that the first few steps—the first experiment—of life shall determine its eternal character? *Who* is it that has so ordered



things that, anywhere, the wish to improve shall be eternally denied? There is only one reply: it is this,—*So God has ordered it.* Then I say plainly;—If such a God there be, He is *Himself* the Arch-Demon of the Universe; His cruelty is unspeakable, His injustice is immeasurable, His rule is the most detestable of tyrannies, His Heaven is the scandal of the Universe, and it is shameful to be saved.

When I proceed to inquire how Mr. Moody knows that all he says on this subject is true, I find a reply. In this sermon he says: "There was a time when I did not believe it, but God revealed it to me." He does not tell us *how* God "revealed" these horrors to him, but I presume he relies upon a few stale texts which seem to threaten eternal torments, and of which he has made the most, with the help of an hysterical temperament, a morbid imagination, and a tricky style of oratory. Of these texts I will say nothing, for I cannot stay to dispute the meaning of a Greek adjective when the question is the very honour and character of God. But God is "revealing" Himself in other ways than by means of half-a-dozen texts. He is revealing Himself in the human heart, in the human conscience, in the human intellect, in the common charities, the common justice, and the common humanities of life; and all these revolt against Mr. Moody's barbaric Theology, his savage Deity, and his brutal Hell.

Mr. Moody says much in this sermon that I do not care either to repeat or to reply to. He tells a story of a man who died declaring his "damnation" was "sealed," which I solemnly declare I do not believe; the story lacking nearly every internal evidence of credibility, and having nearly every characteristic of the old stock stories of the kind. But if the story be true, it is a ghastly illustration of the effect of Mr. Moody's teaching, for, as he himself unwittingly confesses, it was his persistent haunting of this man with threats of perdition that affected him in his weak condition, that clouded his last moments, and sent him to his grave with the cry that he was lost. And so, says Mr. Moody, with a sickening mixture of the revivalist, the actor, and the vampire, and so "he lived a Christless life, and died a Christless death, we wrapped him in a Christless shroud, nailed him in a Christless coffin, and bore him to a Christless grave." "O how dark," he adds, "O how sad." Nay, but I reply,—O how sickening, O how tricky! I suppose his hearers would weep, and make haste to close with his oft-repeated offer,—'Don't delay; better come straight away now.' O it is pitiful! This man talks about being "in Christ," about "finding Jesus." Did it never occur to him to reverse it, and to picture Jesus finding us? They buried Mr. Moody's friend in a "Christless grave," and left him to his Christless Hell, and Mr. Moody has no spark of hope for him! God help us to regard it all as a horrible nightmare! God help us to trust Him, and to believe that Hell is not eternally hopeless, that Heaven is not eternally selfish. The poor soul stumbling from earth, confused and blind and harassed and ignorant, does not *deserve* to be thrust down

to black night, and horrible despair; and it surely cannot be sinful for me to think that the good God has provided for education, and help, and progress on the other side. To Him I come: to Him I cling,—my God, my Father, and my Friend. When I go to that unseen world, I look to see all His good and blessed ones employed in teaching, and comforting, and guiding, the dark, the sorrowful, and the sinful; and when I think of Heaven for myself, I can only say—Give me, O God, my humble place among the healers and the helpers of the sick, the despairing, and the lost.

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