



“Shall I enter the Army?”

Moody said, “No.”

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The nineteenth century witnessed the greatest advance the Christian church had ever known. Missions, education and evangelism flourished and prospered. Great names emerged: Livingstone, Spurgeon, Booth, Finney, and Brooks. No name, however, loomed more mightily than that of Dwight L. Moody. From the depths of his great faith flowed a torrent of saving and cleansing triumphs. When he died in 1899, the greatest monuments to his Divine labors were thousands of human beings in Europe and America who had experienced spiritual rebirth as a result of his God-inspired power.

Yet, it is a curious fact that with all this ongoing publicity, the story of Dwight L. Moody as a nonresistant Christian is almost unknown. A careful reading of the official, authorized biography of the great evangelist written by his son, William R. Moody, reveals the full story.

Dwight L. Moody was a young man of 24, living in Chicago when the firing on Fort Sumter launched the tragic Civil War. Like all large cities, Chicago felt the excitement of this struggle; near the southern limits of the city Camp Douglas was started for the massing and instruction of recruits. Some of his own con-

verts were among those who enlisted. Moreover, "a company was also raised among his friends and former associates in business, and on all sides he was urged to enter the service of his country."

His son points out that the cause of the Union appealed to the youthful Moody very strongly. For he had been an ardent abolitionist, having listened to the powerful oratory of men like William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips and Elijah P. Lovejoy. More amazing, his biographer-son records, were the public demonstrations against slavery in which he had joined.

But, in spite of all these heavy pressures toward the war, Dwight L. Moody could not enlist. Read his own words on the matter: "There has never been a time in my life when I felt I could take a gun and shoot down a fellow being. In this respect I am a Quaker." Precisely! This was the identical attitude of the Quakers, Mennonites and Dunkards in the Civil War: Anti-slavery, pro-Union but faithful to the commandment of Jesus Christ to... "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

This conviction was maintained in his personal life. Once Moody was the silent spectator to a rather violent argument. To a friend he commented, "Mac, the world is in great need of peacemakers."

This conviction was also manifested in his preaching. One of his most famous sermons was called, "Good News". This tremendous message contains a famous passage which plumbs the very depths of forgiveness as taught by our Lord. Moody quotes Christ's famous farewell charge to His disciples: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." The imagination of the preacher is brought to the sermon. He imagines Peter saying, "Lord, do you really mean

that we shall preach the gospel to every creature?" The answer is "Yes." Then Peter asks, "Shall we go back to those Jerusalem sinners who murdered you?" "Yes, Peter, go back there and tarry until you have been endued with power from on high. Offer the Gospel to them first.

"Go search the man who spat on my face; tell him I forgive him; there is nothing in my heart but love for him. Go search out the man who put that cruel crown of thorns on my brow; tell him that I will have a crown ready for him in my kingdom, if he will accept salvation; there shall not be thorns in it, and he shall wear it forever and ever in the Kingdom of the Redeemer.

"Find out that man who took the reed from my hand and smote my head, driving the thorns deeper into my brow. If he will accept salvation as a gift, I will give him a scepter, and he shall have sway over the nations of the earth. Yes, I will give him to sit with me on my throne.

"Go seek that man who struck me with the palm of his hand; find him, and preach the gospel to him; tell him that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin and my blood was shed for him freely.

"Go seek that soldier who drove the spear into my side; tell him there is a nearer way to my heart than that. Tell him that I forgive him freely; and tell him I will make him a soldier of the cross and my banner over him shall be love."

Here Dwight L. Moody has created a stirring picture of the Prince of Peace and His utter willingness to forgive seventy times seven; His compassionate love for those who do Him evil. This is the source of all true non-resistant testimony. Let us pray that God will raise up more true apostles of God's redeeming love like Dwight L. Moody. □

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