

A SERMON

TO

THE MEDICAL STUDENTS

DELIVERED BY

LUCRETIA MOTT,

AT CHERRY STREET MEETING HOUSE, PHILADELPHIA,

ON

FIRST-DAY EVENING, SECOND MONTH 11TH, 1849.

Revised Phonographic Report.

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SERMON.

“Thee we reject, unable to abide
Thy purity, till pure as thou are pure;
Made such by thee, we love thee for that cause,
For which we shunned and hated thee before.
Then we are free. Then liberty, like day,
Breaks on the soul, and by a flash from Heaven
Fires all the faculties with glorious joy.
A voice is heard, which mortal ears hear not,
Till thou hast touched them; ‘tis the voice of song,
A loud Hosanna sent from all thy works;
Which he that hears it, with a shout repeats,
And adds his rapture to the general praise.”

This inspired language of the simple and artless poet, arose in my mind, as the secret prayer was offered:

“Oh Thou my voice inspire,
Who touched Isaiah’s hallowed lips with fire!”

Aware that, to many present, the opening of a meeting of this kind, without the harmonious note—the sacred hymn, would be, to say the least, novel; if indeed, it would not divest it of the

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character of a religious meeting; and the service, of the nature of divine service;—aware also, that many are accustomed to the offering of prayer on their behalf; it is due to these to say, that some of us believe we may understand the sacred harmony and melodious note, arising in the soul—singing and making melody in the heart, without a dependence upon measured lines or the music of the voice; that we may offer no less in the secret of the heart, offer aspirations to Him who heareth the sincerely-devoted always, and maketh them “joyful in his house of prayer,” without the intervention of words, or the aid of the priest or minister.

Is not the time arrived, that intelligent, spiritually-enlightened minds, should have such free access to this throne of grace, as to render less necessary, in the assemblies of the people, the delivery of the oral prayer? The recommendation of Jesus—the beloved, the blessed of God—appears to be to this end. “Enter into thy closet, and there pray in secret.” Even while he bowed before the Father in outward prayer, he said: “I knew that thou hearest me always, but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.”

My prayer is that this occasion may be blessed

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both to the hearers and to the speaker. That the hearers may be impressed with the importance of coming together for the consideration of their highest and best interests; and that the speaker also may be benefited, by the deep impression that without divine aid, no good result can be expect or received.

I have desired for months, aye, for more than a year past, this opportunity with you, my friends; those of you for whom this meeting was especially called. In walking the streets of this city, at this season of the year, and approaching the places where ye are wont to gather for your instruction, maternal desires have often flowed from a heart, touched with solicitude for young men, separated from the tender care, the cautionary admonition of parents, of a beloved mother or sister; that you may be preserved, in innocence and purity, while surrounded by the allurements of this city—the many temptations to vice of almost every description. While I may not speak of the things that are done in secret—delicacy may revolt from an exposure of the “rioting and drunkenness, the chambering and wantonness,” that abound in our midst; due regard to the conviction of duty to invite you hither, will not allow me to be silent, and avoid an allusion to vices, of which some may think it “a shame to speak.”

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I called you not here for any theological discussion. The religion we profess—the principles of Christianity we believe it our duty in inculcate, are not wrapped in mystery, or in theories that are dividing and sub-dividing Christendom. In the view of many, the gospel is not preached, unless it embrace a certain scheme of salvation and plan of redemption. Faith in Christ has become so involved with a belief in human depravity and a vicarious atonement, imputed sin and imputed righteousness, that a discourse is divested of the character of gospel preaching, and regarded as little other than a mere lecture, if this scheme and plan—this system or theory, be not embraced.

I confess to you, my friends, that I am a worshipper after the way called heresy—a believer after the manner which many deem infidel. While, at the same time, my faith is firm in the blessed, the eternal doctrines preached by Jesus, and by every child of God from the creation of the world; especially the great truth that God is the teacher of his people himself; the doctrine that Jesus most emphatically taught, that the kingdom of God is within man—that *there* is his sacred and divine temple. This religious doctrine is simple, because it appeals to self-evident conviction. It is divested of mystery and mysticism, for it is not

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necessarily connected, with anything miraculous or extraordinary.

This noble gift of God, is as legitimate a part of man's being, as the moral sense with which he is quickened, the intellectual power with which he is so abundantly endowed, or as the animal propensities which are bestowed for his pleasure, his comfort, his good. All these are equally of divine origin. The religion offered to our acceptance tends in no wise to degrade man, to lessen his proper self-respect, or lead him to undervalue any of the gifts of the great Creator. I believe man is created innately good; that his instincts are for good. It is, by a perversion of these, through disobedience, that the purity of his soul becomes sullied. Rejecting, then, the doctrine of human depravity, denying that by nature we have wicked hearts, I have every confidence, every hope, in addressing an audience of unsophisticated minds, that they may be reached, because I know that the love of God has previously touched their hearts; that He has implanted there, a sense of justice and mercy, of charity and all goodness. This is the beauty and divinity of true religion, that it is universal. Wherever man is found, these great attributes of Deity are there found—a nice sense of justice, a quick perception of love, a keen apprehension of mercy, and of all the glorious

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attributes of God; without puzzling the mind with attempts to reconcile His imagined infinite justice, with his prescience or his infinite power.

Christianity has been lamentably marred in its glory and beauty, by the gloomy dogmas of the schools. Many, however, are now enquiring for themselves, and acknowledging the heavenly light within them. They begin to understand the divine mission of Jesus; how it is that his coming was and ever is to bless mankind, by turning every one from his iniquities; that in him, in the great truths he preached, all nations shall be blessed.

In the exercise of the intellectual powers, in the advancement and discoveries in science, the vague theories of past ages are yielding to fact and demonstration, so as to require no dry argument to prove their truth to the hearer. So also in religion, the highest concern of man. Theories long held in darkness, are now brought to a strict examination; the people are exercising their rational powers, and bringing that which is offered them, to the light of truth in themselves. In this there is much to hope. The intelligent mind receiving truth in the obedience of a little child, comes to be quick in its perception and understanding, of all that belongs to the soul's salvation.

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This is no mere Quaker doctrine. Certain also of your own writers bear this testimony: "All mysteries of science and theology fade away, before the grandeur of the simple perception of duty, which dawns on the mind of the little child. He becomes subject from that moment to a law which no power in the universe can abrogate. He hears a voice which, if faithfully followed, will lead him to happiness, and, in neglecting which, he brings upon himself inevitable misery." This is the faith that we preach. It commends itself to the understanding and heart of the hearer, bringing him to a close examination of his daily life and practice. Another writer has observed: "The divine principle in man is given, not for the gratification of our curiosity, but for the government of our lives." Were this kept in view, the tone of the preaching on this day of the week would be changed. Abstract theories, as well as the attempted descriptions of a future world, would give place to the enforcing of the great practical duties of life. For while any verbal or ceremonial standard shall obtain, as the essential of Christianity, the standard of pure morality and practical righteousness is proportionally lowered. Especially so, if the theory shall teach, that good works are of no avail, making a wide separation between faith and practice. We have not so learned Christ.

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I would then urge upon your consideration how far you are faithful to that in your hearts, which you have felt to be near to you, in your solitary moments, when your prayer has ascended, as I doubt not it has at seasons, from the altar of every heart now present. When the quick response of the Father's love has shewn you in what your duty consists, how far, I would appeal to you in what your duty consists, how far, I would appeal to your best feelings, does your conscience acquit you, that you have been obedient to the heavenly vision, that you have confessed this divinity before men? Are ye willing to acknowledge to your companions, oh ye young men, that you cannot conscientiously do this, or are conscientiously bound to do that? Believe me, this confession of the Saviour is of far more consequence to you, than a belief in a mysterious divinity. The divinity of Christ was not in mystery or miracle. It was in doing the will of his Father. He was "the son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness."

Cultivate this ennobling view; be obedient to the truth; so will you make advancement in your several neighborhoods and become wiser than your teachers. You will exalt the standard of justice and mercy above that around which your Fathers have rallied. One object in inviting you here this evening was, to speak plainly, as regards

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the prevailing errors and sins of the time. This is a most important day,—a notable age in which we live. Great principles of truth, noble views of humanity are being advocated. Faith in human nature is increasing, and many are coming, from every department of society, and investigating great questions of human concernment. The former dependence on the monopoly of the pulpit is broken, the people are thinking and acting for themselves and their fellow human beings, in the various relations to society. And what is the result? Look at the great temperance movement. Is not this reformation one of the greatest moral miracles of our age? Many are the families in this city, as well as elsewhere, in this and other lands, many the mothers, daughters, and sons, who are hailing the temperance reform; who behold the rescue of their husbands and fathers, and are offering praises unto Him, who has put it into the hearts of the people to plead on their behalf; and to restore such as have fallen. Are you willing, my young friends, who are just coming upon the stage of action, in your various relations in society, to aid in carrying forward this great movement? Will you be faithful, in this great work, by example and precept, and “walk worthy the vocation unto which ye are called?” By practicing total abstinence from

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that which intoxicates, by ceasing to hand the wine as an act of hospitality to a friend, and by going forward to rescue those who have sunk to the lowest degradation, you may be instrumental in setting the feet of many upon the rock of Temperance, and putting the song of total abstinence into their mouths.

Your growing knowledge of the system of man impresses the importance of observing every law of his physical being, in order to be preserved a perfect whole. The light of truth has revealed to you your noble powers, and the responsibility of exercising them in the purity with which they have been bestowed. If then by your studies you are made intelligently acquainted with these things, and if superadded, you have a quick sense of the divinity of the soul, responding to and according with this knowledge, how increasingly incumbent is it upon you to carry out your principles among your associates, so that you be not found in the back ground in the great reformation that is taking place in human society.

This is part of my religion—a part of true Christianity, and you must bear with me, my friends, if I press upon you duties, having reference to your different relations in society, to your intercourse with men, wherever you are placed.

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It has been my privilege and pleasure to meet with some of you in our Anti Slavery Rooms. When these have been disposed to come there, though perhaps from mere curiosity, to see what the despised abolitionist was doing, I have been glad to meet them, and to offer such considerations as would induce a reflection upon the relation which they bear to our fellow beings in their own country and neighborhood. This, in the view of many, is a subject of delicacy—lightly to be touched. Still it is an essential part of Christianity; and one object in asking your audience this evening, was to offer for your consideration some views connected with it, in the hope that you would at least patiently hear, and “suffer the word of exhortation.”

There are many now looking at the subject of slavery in all its bearing, who are sympathizing with the condition of the poor and oppressed in our land. Although many of you may be more immediately connected with this system, yet it is coming to be regarded as not a mere sectional question, but a national and an individual one. It is interwoven throughout our country, into much with which we have to do, that we may well acknowledge we are all, all “verily guilty concerning our brother.” There is, therefore, the greater re-

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sponsibility that we first examine ourselves and ascertain what there is for us to do in order that we may speedily rid ourselves of the great evil that is clinging to us. *Evil?*—this mighty *sin* which so easily besets us. There are those here who have had their hearts touched, who have been led to feel and have entered into sympathy with the bondman, and have known where the evil lies. I believe there is a work for you to do, when you return home, if you will be faithful to yourselves. You will be brought more deeply to enter into feeling with the poor and oppressed slave; you will find that the mission of the gospel is “to bind up the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captive.” It would be a reflection upon the intelligence and the conscience of those who are here, to suppose that they would always resist the wisdom and power with which truth is speaking to their hearts upon this subject. There are many disposed to examine, to cultivate their minds and hearts in relation to their duties in this respect. May you be faithful, and enter into a consideration as to how far you are partakers in this evil, even in other men’s sins. How far, by permission, by apology, or otherwise, you are found lending your sanction to a system which degrades and brutalizes three millions of our fellow human beings; which denies to them the rights of intelligent edu-

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cation, rights essential to them, and which we acknowledge to be dear to us.

Is this an evil that cannot be remedied? A remedy is nigh at hand, even at the door. The voice has been heard saying "Proclaim liberty to the captive, the opening of the prison to them that are bound." "Proclaim yet liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." To this land peculiarly is this language applicable. In this land especially are we called to be faithful in this subject. Be true to your conviction of duty then, oh my brethren, and you will have the blessing of beholding your own country purged of the iniquity, and be brought to acknowledge that the divine hand of mercy and love has been stretched over our land.

[Here a few persons, irritated by this reference to the question of slavery, left the meeting.]

It should not be strange that the allusion to this subject should create some little agitation among you; and while I can but regret it, I stand here on behalf of the suffering and the dumb, and must express the desire, that there may be a disposition to hear and reflect, and then judge. I speak unto those who have ears to hear, who have hearts to feel. May their understandings not be closed! May they be willing to receive that which conflicts with their education, their prejudices and preconceived opinions. The subject of slavery

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you must know, is now agitating the country from one end to the other. The Church and the Legislative Hall are occupied with its discussion. It will be presented to you in all its various bearings, and let me urge such faithfulness to the light which you have, as shall prepare you to become able advocates for the oppressed. So shall the blessing descend upon you as well as upon those for whom the appeal is made. I should not be true to myself did I not thus urge this subject upon your consideration. When you have opportunities for meditation and reflection, when your feelings are soothed by the circumstances around you, may you be led to reflect upon your duties, and the responsibility of your position in society.

I long for you my friends, that you may be so true to your best feelings as to be preserved from the temptations with which you are surrounded, that your hearts may be preserved in unsullied purity. And in so far as any of you have swerved from the right, and have gone down to the chambers of dissipation, or been found in any indulgence from which your better nature would revolt, oh, be persuaded to make a stand in your course, to return, repent, and live. The God with whom we have to do, our tender Father “who is plenteous in redemption, and abundant in mercy,” requireth only that those who have departed from the right shall return, shall give up

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their practices and walk uprightly. "As I live, saith the Lord, if the wicked shall depart from his wickedness and do that which is right in my sight, his wickedness shall no more be remembered. In the righteousness which he doeth he shall live." Are any of you, then approaching the state of the poor prodigal, in your indulgences, in giving unbridled license to your propensities? Remember, that the Father's love is ever near, that he will meet you as you may be disposed to turn from your course and return to his love. He will meet you, as the parable beautifully illustrates, and conduct you to his heavenly mansion, where his banner over you will ever be love.

When we read the numerous revelations unto the faithful of the present day, the advancement in truth and knowledge, in moral duty and obligation, we may well hail the age in which we live, the generation coming on the platform of humanity. Even now behold the nations, beginning to discuss the great question of peace. It has recently been brought before the British Parliament, as well as our own National Legislature, by the statesmen of the age, whether there is not a more rational mode of settling national disputes, than a resort to arms. The labors of an Elihu Burritt, and others not a few, to enlighten the people on both sides of the Atlantic, on the bless-

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ings of peace, the glorious principles of the Messiah's reign—the readiness on the part of many, who have been heretofore wedded to their forms and religious services, now to regard war in its just light, as belonging to a barbarous age, unfit for the intelligence and spiritual growth of this time—the increasing faith that true principles are capable of being applied *now*, and that it is no visionary idea that the “sword may be beaten into the ploughshare and the spear into the pruning hook,” that “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more:”—these all give evidence that “the kingdom of God is at hand,” when “violence shall no more be heard in the land, wasting and destruction within her borders.”

Not only is this hope filling the minds of many of the faithful, but they behold the spirit of mercy spreading over the country.—The prisons are visited; insane hospitals are erected for meliorating the condition of suffering humanity; efforts are made to remove the gallows and other barbarous inflictions from our midst; and an increasing regard for the poor and the lowly, leading many to give countenance to systems which shall raise these, and tend to equalize the condition of the human family. If that quality which is our nation's boast were recognized, we should not see large

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classes, crushed by existing monopolies, laboring for their scanty pittance. True Christian democracy and republicanism would lead us not to “look upon our own things merely, but also upon the things of others.” The practical precept of the Son of God requires, “whatsoever we would that men should do unto us, even so should we do unto them.”

This then is the religion that is offered to your acceptance. I would not weary you with words, fully believing that each has a Teacher within himself; and obeying this, we need not that any man should teach us. It will be found superior to any other revelation, to everything external. Come then, to this principle, this Word of God in the soul, and you will be led into all righteousness and truth, though you may now shrink from their presentation here.

We have the revelation of God as much in this age as in any that has gone before us, and if we have faith, we shall do the things done in former times and greater—that which has been spoken in the ear in closets, shall be heard upon the house-top.

May all the difficulties that have hindered the progress of true religion be removed. May it be stripped of the gloomy appendages of the sects,

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and presented to view in its pristine purity and beauty, bearing the impress of the Divinity. Nothing of gloominess, nothing of dullness connected with it; nothing that debars from innocent cheerfulness, or conflicts with any of the rational powers with which we are gifted. The noble intelligence of man has not been allowed its proper place. There is ever a blessed harmony between every revelation of truth and reason, when not corrupted by the false dictates of appetite, or clouded by tradition and superstition.

Let us then be true to our calling, preserving the holy union of faith and righteousness, religion and humanity; so shall all the mists and clouds of ignorance and prejudice be dispelled. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun as the light of seven days."

These great and glorious principles filling our hearts, liberty, like day, would break upon the soul, and fill all the faculties with glorious joy. A voice would be heard that mortal ears her not till Thou, Oh God, hast touched them

"But oh, Thou bounteous giver of all good
Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the crown;
Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor,
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away."

And in acknowledging, O God, that every good

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and perfect gift is from above and cometh from thee, the Father of lights, we are bound to prostrate ourselves before thee and to bless thy holy name, and in remembrance of thy many mercies, to ask of thee a renewed clothing of the spirit which breathes glory to thee in the highest, on earth peace and good will to men; even thine own spirit which resisteth not evil, nor revengeth wrong, but which through thy power, is enabled to bless them that curse and to pray for them that persecute. We are sensible that this cannot be attained by our finite comprehension, that thou hast veiled it from human understanding; for thou continuest to hide these things from the wise and simple and reveal them unto babes.

Grant, then, O father, that we may be brought unto such a child-like state as to receive all the mysteries that belong to thy kingdom. We would ask to be kept so humble by thy mighty power that we vaunt not ourselves, saying that by own own hand we have gained any victory. But we would acknowledge, that thou only hast the power, and that to thee alone belongs all the glory.