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LETTERS AND ADDRESSES

BY

GEORGE THOMPSON,

DURING HIS MISSION IN THE

UNITED STATES,

From Oct. 1st, 1834, to Nov. 27, 1835.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY ISAAC KNAPP,
No. 25, Cornhill.

1837.
MR. THOMPSON'S FAST LECTURE.

In these days of slavish servility and malignant prejudices, we are presented occasionally with some beautiful specimens of Christian obedience and courage. One of these is seen in the opening of the North Bennett-street Methodist meeting-house, in Boston, to the advocates for the honor of God, the salvation of our country, and the freedom of enslaved millions in our midst. As the pen of the historian, in after years, shall trace the rise, progress and glorious triumph of the abolition cause, he will delight to record and posterity will delight to read, the fact that when all other pulpits were dumb, all other churches closed, on the subject of slavery, in Boston, the boasted 'cradle of liberty,'—there was one pulpit that would speak out, one church that would throw open its doors in behalf of the down trodden victims of American tyranny, and that was the pulpit and the church above alluded to. The primitive spirit of Methodism is beginning to revive with all its holy zeal and courage, and it will not falter until the Methodist churches are purged from the pollution of slavery, and the last slave in the land stands forth a redeemed and regenerated being.

On Fast Day morning, 9th inst. Mr. Thompson gave a very powerful discourse from the pulpit of the Bennett-street meeting-house. The house was thronged to excess at an early hour; and although the crowded auditory had to wait for the appearance of Mr. Thompson, an hour beyond the time appointed for the meeting, (he having had the erroneous impression that the services commenced at 11, instead of 10 o'clock,) yet their attention was riveted to the end.
Mr. Thompson took for his text the 23rd chapter of Isaiah, exclusive of the two last verses. He stated that he had made choice of the chapter just read, because of its full, significant, and emphatic bearing upon that grave and interesting topic, to which it was expected he would that day draw the attention of his hearers. The text contained all that was necessary to illustrate the importance of attention to the subject of slavery, and explain the duties connected with that subject. It pointed out the consequences flowing from a faithful discharge of those duties, and moreover, directed us to the means by which we were to bring others to a sense of their sins, and the discharge of their obligations. Thus was the subject in its length and its breadth, brought before us. Founding our remarks upon the word of God, and carefully drawing our directions thence, we should be kept from falling into error, touching our faith and practice.

To whom was this chapter addressed?

The chapter was manifestly addressed, not to the profane, ungodly, and openly irreligious, but to those who professed to serve God—persons scrupulously attentive to the externals of piety. 'Declare unto my people their transgressions—unto the house of Jacob their sins.'—unto those who seek me daily, who delight to know my ways, who ask of me the ordinances of justice, who take delight in approaching to God, who fast often, who afflict their souls, who bow down their heads as bulrushes, who spread sackcloth and ashes under them. Shew unto these their transgressions and their sins.

What were the sins of this people?

1. In the day of their fast they found pleasure. It was not a day of inward mortification—of penitent prostration of soul—but of pharisaical and self-complacent attention to outward forms and ceremonies, the observance of which obtained for them amongst men the reputation of superior sanctity.

2. On that day they exacted all their labors. While appearing to serve God, they were robbing the poor—multiplying tasks—growing rich by the labor of their slaves at home.

3. They fasted for strife, and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. Their fasts were too frequently
mere political observances—for political ends. To promote the ends of war—animosity—sectarianism—controversy and strife. In a word, these outwardly holy and sanctimonious Jews were HYPOCRITES, SLAVEHOLDERS, OPPRESSORS, WARLIKE POLITICIANS, neglectors of the great moral and social duties.

What were this people to do?

1. *Loose the bands of wickedness.* Dissolve every unrighteous connection. Have no fellowship with sin or sinners, &c.

2. *Undo the heavy burdens.* Remove every unjust restriction, taxation and disability, &c.

3. *Let the oppressed go free.* Set at liberty all held in slavery. All innocent captives, &c.

4. *Break every yoke.* Release from servitude all held by unjust contracts. Abandon compulsory labor.

5. *Feed the hungry.*

6. *Succor the friendless and homeless.*

7. *Put away pride and prejudice.*

8. *Refrain from injurious speech.*

What effects were to follow?


2. *Restoration.* 'Thine health shall spring-forth speedily.' Bishop Lowth hath rendered the passage, 'Thy wounds shall speedily be healed over.' And Dr. Clarke, 'the scar of thy wounds shall be speedily removed.'

3. *Reputation.* 'Thy righteousness shall go before thee.' Thy justice shall be made manifest. Thy integrity shall appear to men. The world shall admire thy righteous conduct.

4. *Defence.* 'The glory of the Lord shall be thy recompense.' Or according to Lowth's translation—'The glory of Jehovah shall bring up the rear.'

5. *The spirit of prayer—and the answer of prayer.* 'Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou
shall cry, and he shall say, Here I am—or, ‘Lo, I am here.’

6. Brightness and light where all had been obscurity and darkness. ‘Then shall thy light rise in the obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day.’


8. Fertility, culture, beauty, order, freshness, fragrance. ‘Thou shalt be like a watered garden.’

9. Health, purity, perpetuity, abundance. ‘Like a spring of water whose waters fail not.’

10. The reparation of national dilapidations. ‘They that be of thee shall build the old waste places. Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations. Thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in.’ Or, according to Lowth, ‘And they that spring from thee shall build the ancient ruins. The foundations of old times they shall raise up. And thou shalt be called, the repairer, of the broken mounds—the restorer of paths to be frequented by inhabitants.’

Thus, all the desolations of war and wickedness shall be repaired.

Here are promised to a just and obedient people—Light, Health, Glory, Reputation, Defence, Direction, the Spirit of Prayer, the Answer to Prayer, Restoration, Fertility, Beauty and Perpetuity.

To give the subject a present and practical bearing, he should consider generally the nature and advantages of national penitence.

1. The scriptural manifestations of a genuine national repentance.

True penitence did not consist in profession, outward prostration, dejection of countenance, bodily austerities, grievous penances, abounding ordinances, or splendid benevolent enterprises. All these might exist with Slavery, Oppression, Uncharitableness, Persecution, Proscription, and Prejudice. True repentance was a living, active principle, producing righteousness in the life—the abandonment of every wicked way. God detested external humiliations and sacrifices when they were unaccompanied by poverty of soul and practical piety.

Did this nation give forth those proofs of penitence
which the scriptures required? Was there not slavery, oppression, the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and the speaking of vanity, abroad over the whole nation—and amongst professing christians, too, notwithstanding the schools, colleges, churches, Missionary Societies, Bible Societies, and other institutions that had been multiplied without number? Were the fasts of this people such as God had chosen? Look at the slave regions of the land! How black the gloom! How death-like the stillness! How deep the guilt! How awful the curse resting upon them! Look over the entire face of the country. The general and state governments utterly paralyzed. The churches thoroughly corrupted. The people in guilty indifference. The ministers of religion almost universally dumb—or openly and wickedly vindicating oppression. Mr. Thompson then went on to specify at length the acts necessary to prove the genuine penitence of the nation.

Individuals should emancipate their slaves. The general Government should be forced by the voice of the people to purge the District of Columbia. The States should legislate in accordance with the principles of the constitution and the requirements of the text.

The churches ought to act. Let the churches preach emancipation—warn slaveholders—put them under church discipline—bear with them for a time, and if fruit be not borne, put them out of the church, which they defile by their soul-trafficking pursuits.

II. The distinguished and abounding blessings secured to a truly penitent and obedient nation.

Under this division, Mr. Thompson dwelt largely upon the safety and advantages of immediate emancipation, and illustrated those portions of the text which speak of the blessings consequent upon the adoption of a righteous, merciful and truly obedient course of conduct.

1. The spread of knowledge.
2. The dissemination of the scriptures.
3. The acquisition of national character.
4. Restoration of fertility to a now almost exhausted soil.
5. Augmentation of the wants of the population, and the consequent increased demand for the manufactures of the country.
6. A pouring out the spirit of prayer.
7. A blessing upon the various enterprises to advance the kingdom of Christ at home and abroad.

These, and a multitude of blessings of an infinitely various character, would be the portion of this nation, if the commands of God’s word were obeyed, and the oppressed set free.

III. The imperative duty of such as desire to advance the blessedness and prosperity of their country in church and state, by bringing the people to true repentance.

‘Cry aloud, spare not, &c.’

These words implied the adoption of all proper means of exhibiting, clearly and universally, the transgressions of the people. These means should be open, bold, unsparing, effectual. The drowsiness, deafness, indifference, avarice, and blindness of the people required a fearless and unsparing denunciation of sin.

Not only was it our duty to show the folly, inexpediency, unprofitableness, and impolicy of slavery, but the transgression and the sin of slavery.

Much fault was in the present day found with the measures of certain Abolitionists, because their measures were strong, bold, and unsparing. Let it be remembered, that crying ‘aloud’ was God’s method—God’s command.

Finally—God’s promises were invariably connected with obedience to certain commands, having reference either to the outward conduct or the dispositions of the heart. In the case in question, if the duties prescribed were not performed, instead of the blessings promised, their opposites would be our lot. Instead of light, there would be darkness. Instead of reputation, dishonor and infamy. Instead of light and comfort, horror and shame. Instead of moral and physical fertility, all would be barrenness. Instead of advancement, decay. Instead of strength, weakness. Instead of guidance, perplexity. Instead of salvation, dishonor and destruction.