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# ROBERT OWEN'S LETTER

TO THE

SENATE OF THE 28<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,

REQUESTING PERMISSION TO DELIVER

## A COURSE OF LECTURES

IN ITS CHAMBER, ON

AN ENTIRELY NEW STATE OF HUMAN EXISTENCE.

ALSO,

## ROBERT OWEN'S LETTER TO THE PUBLIC,

ON BEING INFORMED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE THAT, BY ITS RULES,  
IT COULD NOT BE GRANTED FOR LECTURES ON ANY SUBJECT, OR  
PERMISSION IN THIS CASE WOULD BE GRANTED.

ALSO, THE CONCLUDING PART OF

## ROBERT OWEN'S LAST LECTURE

OF THE COURSE WHICH HE DELIVERED

IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON.

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These are preliminary measures intended to arouse public attention to the introduction of the development of an *entire change of society in principle and practice.*

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WASHINGTON:

PRINTED AT THE GLOBE OFFICE.

1845.

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## ROBERT OWEN'S LETTER, &c.

### MR. OWEN'S LETTER

*To the members of the Senate of the 28th Congress of the United States, now met in session in the City of Washington.*

HONORABLE SIRS: I have to propose to the present Union of these States and Territories, which, it is now evident, is destined to become, at no very distant period, the future "federative Union of the western hemisphere," measures so new and extensive, that to bring them under immediate beneficial consideration of the proper parties requires, not ordinary, but extraordinary means. It is, therefore, I address this letter to the Congress of the United States, to inform its members that I have to propose, not for the advantage of any individual, class, party or country, but for the permanent interest of all now living, or who may live hereafter, to recommend the immediate commencement of an entire change, in principle and practice, of the present state of society for another; for one as far superior to that which has been alone known, as this is to the most crude and degraded condition in which human nature has been found to exist.

It is no less than to change that which is fundamentally erroneous and perpetually injurious to all, for that which is fundamentally true, and which, as long as humanity shall continue to be created, will be practically beneficial in a high degree to all.

This change will introduce those divine means (for that which is true is alone divine) which shall make truth the only language of mankind, and charity, justice and kindness, the practice which will be alone known among them.

By this change the sole causes of ignorance, poverty, division, vice, crime and misery will be forever removed, for these all proceed from the same fundamental errors; and by this change, man will be trained and educated from his birth to cordially love his brother; to practise, at all times, real virtue, (now only known in name,) and in consequence, to enjoy such an increase of happiness as those whose characters have been formed under the present crude and irrational state of society have not yet had their mental faculties sufficiently cultivated to enable them even to imagine.

The causes of ignorance and poverty in the mass, of disunion, crime and misery among all, will be made evident; those causes will be removed, never to return; they will be replaced by other causes, which will continually produce wealth, wisdom,

union, and happiness most beneficially for every one of every rank and condition.

By this change, there will be, ere long, no complainings in your streets; no distress known in your States or Territories, except that which is unavoidable to human nature from the death of beloved persons.

You, perhaps, and very naturally, as society has been hitherto constituted, may doubt the possibility that it is practicable to effect so great and glorious a change in the condition of the human race. Before coming to such conclusion, it would be well to call to recollection that the time is not distant when it was universally deemed an utter impossibility to travel safely twenty miles an hour, and still more so, if practicable, to transmit our thoughts to others at a greater rate than a hundred miles a second.

It is well known to you that ignorance, poverty, disunion, crimes, and misery, now extend, in all directions, through every ramification of your Union and surely it must be most desirable to stay these evils in the shortest possible time.

In this era of man's history, when the signs of the times evidently indicate that some great change in his condition is about to take place, if any inventions or discoveries have been made, through singular and rare experience, calculated to remove forever the causes which have produced and reproduced continually his greatest evils, and the discoverer is willing and prepared, for the benefit of all without advantage to himself, except that arising from the great pleasure of accomplishing lasting good for all, to make these causes known, with the easy and early mode of removing them, surely the most fit place for their first full and open promulgation is before the government and Congress of the United States of North America, while the Congress is assembled in session; before the executive and legislature of the first people who call themselves freed among civilized nations; free to hear, free to investigate, free to adopt whatever can be proved to be eternally true in principle, and permanently beneficial in practice.

After a long life of varied reading, deep reflective extensive practice in all the most essential divisions of the business that will be required in a rational state of society, much personal communication of confidential character with many of the most advanced and prominent men of the last half century having also been admitted behind the scenes of g

ernment and of the professions, as well as into the arcana of the commercial and manufacturing mind and interest; knowing, likewise, the causes of the oppressions, wants, and desires of the industrious classes; and having, moreover, been placed, during many years, under the most favorable circumstances to enable me to make the most valuable use of these advantages, I now state to you and to the world, that these inventions and discoveries have been made and are full ripe to be applied to practice for the great and lasting benefit of all within these States and Territories, and, through their successful example, of the population of the world.

This is a subject so deep and extensive, and so much hidden from the public mind, that, at first, even by much teaching and great attention of the taught, it will be for some time but partially understood, and, in its wide-spread influence through every ramification of society, comprehended only by the most advanced, experienced, and strongest minds to be found within your extended and varied population.

It may, however, be reasonably expected that many of this class of mind have been sent by their constituents to this Congress, and that, in this metropolis of the New World, there are now collected in and around the government, legislature, and Supreme Court, men of science, of extensive and varied experience, statesmen, and others, the most competent, by their united acquirements, to consider and decide what new things at this eventful period can be discovered and carried beneficially into execution to enable society to apply its immense past century of inventions in aid of manual labor, instead of being, as hitherto, blindly applied to oppose and degrade it.

I therefore now ask—but as no favor to myself, for I have none to request from any government or people—the use of the Senate chamber of Congress, in which, either in the forenoon or evening, to deliver two explanatory discourses, and a third to reply to written questions of the audience, to remove any doubts from their minds which may arise during the delivery of these discourses.

From what has been said, the subject of these discourses is intended to solve the great problem of the age, to explain how a new power, derived from science, at present enormous in its extent, illimitable in its daily increasing rapid progress, and now most ignorantly and injuriously applied, may, by a natural, and therefore wise direction of it, be made the most powerful agent for good to man, that man has ever yet experienced.

In consequence of the national and universal importance of this subject, the audience in the Senate chamber may be anticipated to be the executive, the members of the Senate, of the Supreme Court, the head of the departments and others, ladies and gentleman; for in a rational state of society, the position and condition of women will be more improved even than that of the men.

When this short course shall have been delivered, and time sufficient allowed for reflection, I will deliver a public course of lectures in some building in the city, explanatory of the entire new system of society; of that system which, in practice, is to introduce and perpetuate the happiness of future ages, and greatly improve the general condition of the present generation. These lectures will be given with a view to terminate many of the most afflicting of the present miseries of society in the shortest time, and to pre-

vent their existence throughout these States in the next generation: in fact, to put an end, as speedily as practicable, to the present irrational and conflicting chaos of society.

Many who have not thought much upon these subjects will naturally think and say, that this great good for man is unattainable by man's efforts; but it may be asked, has not man been made the agent of all great discoveries? And how can any one take upon himself to say this is impossible? It is now evident that no man can say what is impossible, what new ideas or combination of new ideas may be suggested to or put into other men's minds; especially in those the most experienced in the varied divisions of society.

As the plans to be proposed will supersede most, if not all of the petty questions which now uselessly torment governments and people, the use of the Senate chamber is asked in the name and for the benefit of all who are now suffering in mind or person throughout this Union, and the territories which may be annexed to it.

It may be added that this is no ordinary application for trivial purposes. It may indeed be asked, "If the causes, which perpetually continue ignorance, create poverty, disease, and divisions, and produce crime and misery among the human race, and the means of superseding them peaceably, and most beneficially for all nations and people, have been discovered, why should those now living, even the adults of the present generation, not enjoy some of the advantages of this progress in civilization, as far, at least, as the unfavorable circumstances in which, through an erroneous system of society, they have been placed, will admit?"

And why, may I be permitted to ask, also, should not these superior circumstances be now created, which can alone enable the present generation to well-form the character of the next generation, to well-employ them through life, and place them under those superior circumstances which will the most effectually and permanently promote their well-being and happiness?

Honored sirs, your friend, and the friend of humanity.

ROBERT OWEN.

WASHINGTON CITY, President's Square, Jan. 28.

ROBERT OWEN'S ADDRESS

To the public, preparatory to his lectures on an entire change of society in principle and practice.

So the Senate chamber and hall of Congress cannot yet be appropriated to discourses on the means to commence and secure universal prosperity, excellence, and happiness. The public mind, it seems, is not sufficiently advanced for this step. It is, however, progressing with gigantic strides; and ere long these halls will be willingly applied for purposes so beneficial, so truly charitable, so magnificent, and so godlike.

The request was made, in order to obtain the means of opening to the elite of this Union the simple, sure, and scientific measures by which, advantageously, all who now live, or who may live hereafter, might be well educated from birth, physically, mentally, morally, and practically; well and pleasantly occupied, physically and mentally, according to age and capacity, through life, and be well placed, so as to insure the greatest amount of individual and general happiness. This was a request, as it appears, too much in advance to meet the present views of a majority

even of the elected representatives of these States. It is well, and their decisions were no doubt founded in present wisdom. Measures, such as are to be now placed before the public mind, should not be hastily taken up or adopted by any party, or without careful consideration by those in responsible authority. These measures are true and good, or erroneous and evil, to the extremes of both results. If true, they will prove far more beneficial in practice to the human race than the most sanguine mind has ever imagined. If erroneous, their tendency is to undermine and derange all existing notions and practices; but if these cannot be changed, then man can never become either rational or happy. The new principles and practices intended to be explained, it is most conscientiously believed, must produce a new state of society, beautiful in its order, beneficent and magnificent in its results. The advocate of principles leading to these momentous results, was desirous to submit them at once, in the most public manner, to the ordeal of the strongest minds and greatest experience to be found among the most free and advanced, and second most powerful, united population on the globe—a population now ardently pressing to become, if possible, in power as well as freedom, the first.

He was desirous that the extent of the good or evil might be the most speedily known over these States, and through them to the world; that the good, if good, might be enjoyed in the shortest time, or that the evil, if evil, might be stayed, and proclaimed at once to the world to be an error of such magnitude that all the powers of society should be applied in the most efficient manner to terminate its further progress, and destroy it forever.

But the resolves of the Senate and House of Congress have decided otherwise; therefore, the truth or error, the good or evil, must be submitted yet longer to unofficial public opinion, that it may be sifted to its foundation, and probed through its more immediate and remote ramifications, before the authorities of these States shall be called upon, as a government, to express its impressions for or against measures so tremendous, for good or evil, in their present and future results. But decision by the public, or unbiased existing authorities, is becoming urgent. There is already in the civilized world an under-current strong in favor of these newly advocated principles and practices, and it is hourly increasing in strength, without official authority to wisely guide or direct it. This is a dangerous position for all erroneously founded constituted authorities; while this state of things continues, their difficulties will daily increase. The propounder of this new state of human existence desires no displacing of any authorities or individuals; he wishes only to see the great change effected, if found to be good for all, without force or fraud, violence or disorder, of any kind, and without evil to any one.

He believes the principles which he advocates to be eternal, unchanging laws of nature, most beneficial for humanity, and that the practices naturally and necessarily emanating from them will be permanently highly advantageous to every party, class, and creed in all countries; he therefore is irresistibly impelled to urge their examination and most severe scrutiny now, by the most enlightened minds that can be induced to apply their attention to this new and startling subject—a task, in fact, which it is the first duty now for all competent to undertake. To bring this all-important subject, so much dreaded by the ignorant and superstitious, to the bar of public

opinion, while the concentrated mind of these States is yet detained in this city, the founder of the rational system of society will give two lectures in the Concert Hall, near to Brown's Hotel, Pennsylvania avenue, on Wednesday and Thursday next week, the proceeds of which will be applied to commence a fund to establish in Washington a scientific infant school, which is so much now required to lay a solid foundation for a superior physical, mental, moral, and practical character. The particulars of the lectures will be advertised in the city newspapers.

ROBERT OWEN.

WASHINGTON CITY,

President's Square, Feb. 18, 1845.

#### Mr. OWEN'S LECTURE.

Mr. OWEN concluded his course of lectures in Washington with the following statement and peroration, which, with the previous part of this concluding lecture, made a deep impression of intense interest on his audience, and which it is not likely they will ever forget.

The time has arrived, in the due course of nature, for "truth without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man," to be proclaimed to the world for permanent benefit of all nations and people.

The most important truths for man to learn and to act upon are—

1. That the population of the world is now in a low state of physical, mental, moral, and practical bondage.

2d. That the discovery has been made by which mankind may be relieved from this bondage.

3. That the removal of this bondage may now be made without injury in mind, person, or property, to any man, woman, or child.

4. That it may be removed now, with great and lasting benefit, from the whole family of man.

5. That the cause of this bondage lies deep in ancient errors, and for which none living can be righteously blamed.

6. That the removal of these errors will withdraw all sin and misery from human society, except the sorrow and pain which may arise from accidents, disease, and death; but the evils and sufferings which will naturally arise from these causes will be so reduced, in another and greatly superior state of human existence, that they will be but a minimum only of deduction from the general happiness of all.

7. That the errors which have produced, and which now produce, the sin and misery of the world, are the *three fundamental misconceptions* which our early ancestors made respecting *human powers and faculties*, and which lamentable mistake they have transmitted to us, their children, even at this day.

8. That our early ancestors knew not how to investigate facts, so as accurately to ascertain the laws of nature, but were governed by the changing and uncertain influences of their imaginations.

9. That these imaginations led them to mistake surface appearances and first impressions for substantial permanent realities; and to retain and stoutly maintain them for thousands of years. Such were their first impressions respecting the universe, while for unnumbered thousands of years they believed that the earth was its centre, that it was flat, and fixed in one position, and that the sun moved daily around it. And the man who promulgated the opposing truths would have been burned alive, had he

refused to retract in public, what he was compelled to know in the secret of his mind was true.

10. That in like manner our ancestors imagined that each individual makes himself what he becomes at maturity; that he decides by an independent faculty, or will of his own creating, what he shall think, believe or disbelieve, and that by the same faculty of power, at his own control, he can create his own feelings, and like or dislike, love or hate persons or things, regardless of the influences which their qualities may make upon his own organization or nature.

11. That these misconceptions of the imaginations of our inexperienced ancestors are now the cause of the sufferings of the human race, except those naturally proceeding, as previously stated, from accidents, disease, and death.

12. That "truth without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man," demonstrates, from the facts hourly existing around all, that these fundamental notions of our ancestors are mere imaginations arising from first, or surface appearances, and cannot withstand the test of investigation by the intelligent and experient.

13. That from these three imaginations of our ancestors have alone emanated the governments, laws, religions, classifications, and institutions known through the past history of our race, even to the present hour.

14. That these three imaginations of our ancestors have alone brought sin and misery into the world, and created and maintained all the inferior and evil qualities which have hitherto tormented man through all the changes of society which he has yet made to obtain relief from.

15. That the new sufferings which have been created under every change and form of society, soon instigated the sufferers to desire and effect some new mode of change, in the vain hope that this new change would remove or relieve their afflictions of body and mind. Hence the varied governments, religions, laws, and institutions of past ages, and their utter failure to produce virtue, or goodness, and happiness to any portion of our race.

16. That, under all these changes, the physical, mental, and moral evils of the human race have been continued without intermission.

17. That it could not be otherwise, according to the laws of nature, so long as these changes emanated solely from the three fundamental erroneous imaginations of our ancestors; because they are the only cause of falsehood, division, ignorance, poverty, envy, hatred, malice, deceit, jealousy, ambition, contests, conflicts, wars, superstitions, massacres, spiritual and worldly pride, with the total want of charity and kindness—all of which are, through these melancholy misconceptions of our ancestors, made to pervade the human race to-day the same as in all former times. The misinformed and superstitious attribute these perpetual failures to make men reasonable and rational beings, enjoying the natural happiness of their existence, to man being bad by nature, instead of their own ignorance of its nature.

18. That as long as these three errors shall be at the foundation of society, there can be no reasonable or solid ground to hope that any one of these evils enumerated can be removed, although ten thousand or millions of changes in succession were continued to be tried.

19. That there is no hope for man to escape from this chaotic state of insane personal and national

and universal conflict of opinions and interest, or to remove sin and misery from human society, except by the change of these three most gross fundamental errors, and their entire abandonment for the three divine laws of nature which are opposed to those vain imaginations which have ever been the father of lies, and the true origin of all the notions respecting the evil spirits of the earth and heavens, or of Satan and his angels of mischief.

20. That there is no hope for the human race ever becoming reasonable or rational in feeling, thought or action, until the character of man shall be based on the three divine and eternal laws of his nature, and society shall be constructed, from its foundation, in all its parts, and as a whole, to be in unison with man, and both to be consistent with these unchanging, most beneficent, and all glorious laws of that Power which gives motion and life and mind, and sustains the universe in its everlasting onward course.

21. That these three fundamental laws of human nature are: 1st. That man is created unknown to himself physically, mentally, and morally, by the great mysterious creating power of the universe, and for which man can never deserve merit or demerit; 2d. That human opinion, belief and disbelief, are formed for all individuals, by the strongest impressions made on the mind of each, and for which none can deserve merit or demerit; 3d. That all of human-kind are so created that they must like and love those things and qualities which are agreeable, and dislike those things and persons which have been made to be disagreeable to their individual nature.

22. That for man to become wise, good, and happy, he must be entirely removed from those external circumstances which society has created and combined in accordance with the three fundamental erroneous imaginations of our ancestors, and he must be new placed, amidst new formed circumstances, made to be in accordance with the three divine laws of humanity, that he may become, through the natural influence of those circumstances, a reasonable and superior rational being.

23. That by this change in principle and practice, in forming man and society, the cause of sin and misery will be removed; the effects will, of necessity, cease; and Satan, so called, or the evil spirit of ignorance, will take its flight from the earth, no more to torment poor deluded and abused human nature.

24. That with this change of the three errors of our ancestors for the divine laws of human nature, there will be no real difficulty in speedily making men wise and good, and the earth into a terrestrial paradise; for all the means now superabound to enable society easily to effect both. The only thing wanting to insure this change rapidly over the earth, is the want of honesty and moral courage in men trained from birth in false principles to act and speak the truth: a defect created in men and women by the three fundamental errors on which their characters have been formed, and on which society has been hitherto alone constructed.

25. That it is, therefore, the highest interest of one and all, of every class, creed, and clime, that this change in human existence should now be made without delay, that all may enjoy an ever-increasing prosperity and happiness.

There is, however, one apparently insurmountable difficulty to be overcome, before this great change in human affairs can be accomplished; one that appears too deep-rooted, too widely spread over all quarters of the world, and too gigantic in its pow-

er for mortal man to attempt to contend against. This is the power of **PREJUDICE**, forced into the minds and upon the habits of all men, by their local position; a position which inflicts upon them their geographical language, religion, manners, habits, associations of ideas, and conduct, and thus compels all men, without exception, instead of being trained to become rational beings, to acquire the character of irrational animals, to the deep injury of all the inhabitants of the earth. How is this universal evil to be fairly met and overcome, without creating misery by the conflict, to all these localized animals? Mortal man, by any power which is ordinary language he can call his own, would never think of attempting that which now appears to all men of the old world most wild and visionary, nay, not to be exceeded in folly or insanity by any of the most extravagant or mad enterprises ever undertaken by man in his most rude and irrational state. Well, then, what earthly power can be brought to this mighty conflict against localized irrational man, to obtain the victory over him for intelligent, rational man; that the human being may no longer remain, or his offspring be forced to become, the mere geographical creatures of local impressions, producing and reproducing continually local errors and associations of ideas, destructive of real knowledge, of virtue, and of happiness? Evidently most vain would it be for any mere earthly power to enter upon this more than mortal conflict. A new and divine weapon must be obtained from that source whence man has derived his organization, and his mental faculties; a weapon of such might and power as shall, when daily wielded, and with certain aim directed, sever the gordian knot of human ignorance and prejudice so effectually, that it shall never more be the cause of inflicting error and misery on man.

But where is this divine weapon to be found? or, when found, who will have the temerity to wield it, and commence the conflict to destroy the localized

animal of prejudice, give victory to rational man, and place him, secure forever, upon the throne of reason, supported by charity and affection, and thus sustained, enable him to govern the world in peace, with ever-increasing prosperity?

Rejoice, all ye who have so long desired to see the period arrive, when all of the human race shall become wise, and good, and happy; for this weapon of mighty power has been discovered!—its name is **TRUTH**! Its sharpness and brilliancy, now that it is, for the first time, fully unsheathed to open view, no mortal can withstand. It is a weapon derived direct from the Supreme Power of the Universe—the source whence, alone, Truth has ever been obtained, or can ever emanate. Yet who shall wield this divine weapon? who, among the sons of men, have been trained from their youth upward, to practise with it? who will now dare firmly to grasp it, and boldly go forth to battle against the accumulated prejudices of ages, and cry "**VICTORY OR DEATH!**"

My friends, fear not. The appointed hour is come. The victory is near at hand. It is already secured; there is a little band—insignificant in number, but they have shielded themselves in impenetrable armor—have cast all worldly consequences far away; lovers and worshippers of truth, without admixture of error, they have no fear of man, or of what man can do against them. Already have they practised with this divine weapon, and are familiar with its use. They have firmly grasped it; they have gone forth; they have entered upon the conflict; and they return not, until ignorance, falsehood, superstition, sin, and misery, shall be banished from the abodes of the human race; and peace and charity, reason, truth and justice, love and happiness, shall reign triumphant and forever, over the whole family of man, wherever man shall exist; and slavery, and servitude, and oppression, or evil of any kind, among the sons of men, shall be known no more!