

**HEART TO HEART:
FRANK TALKS ON
FAMILIAR THEMES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649298112

Heart to Heart: Frank Talks on Familiar Themes by Alexander Lyons

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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ALEXANDER LYONS

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FRANK TALKS ON FAMILIAR THEMES

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA
BY

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Brooklyn, N. Y.

FIRST SERIES

NEW YORK
BLOCH PUBLISHING COMPANY

1921

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Introductory.

THIS LITTLE PUBLICATION is a sheaf of gleanings from The Supplement, a monthly publication of mine in which for some time I have tried to talk Heart to Heart to people whom I regarded as willing to welcome courageous thinking and speaking on the part of someone else, even if they were indisposed to indulge that luxury themselves. I had long felt that there are some in and outside my congregation whom I ought to reach. Week by week, year in year out, I had been addressing and otherwise influencing in various ways and degrees, thousands of men and women of diverse ages and cultural conditions. This had been going on for years. These people had not been harmed or otherwise wholly untouched. If they had, they would either have dropped me or from me long ago. So I thought that if I have to any extent helped some, why not enlarge the sphere of my usefulness? Utility is an outstanding mark of God's creation, and man, as far as we now see, its master product, should not be content with less than being as useful as he possibly can. But those whom I was not reaching did not come to me. Some thought I was too frank and resented my candor by not coming, altho they continued to hold me in what I have good reason to denominate a loving regard. Accordingly, I have not been one of those Rabbis to whom flock all their own people and many others, according to newspaper reports printed at a long distance. Some of my people, not unlike some in many other congregations, are content with religious instruction, spiritual inspiration, and moral impulse, in homeopathic doses at irregular and widely separated periods. They are a sort of unconscious Jewish Christian Scientists, content with piety by proxy, or with the administration of religion by absent treatment. But I have refused to be a "Healer" while posing as a Rabbi for which I had long prepared. I was, as I still am, unwilling to do less than as much certain good as I can. If some folk whom I might benefit would not come to me, I felt that I ought to go to them. Hence the publication of my little magazine, The Supplement, in which for several years, month by month, I have furnished Heart to Heart what in part constitutes the messages of the present publication which, like the pages from which they have been culled, is put forth as a labor of love. Its dominant motive is missionary. Its goal like its source is to try to add a little to the world's much needed store of courage co-operation and cheer.

Gift of
Gladys Isaacson

HEART TO HEART

A SUPPLEMENTARIAN.

Be a Supplementarian! This sounds like something antediluvian, but it isn't. It is to have faith, unqualified and unceasing faith, in a Supreme Being of unlimited power, who is guided by perfect wisdom in the service of absolute love, from whom we came, upon whom we can depend, and to whom we are responsible. Do not wait to prove this. It can't be done. Nor can it be disproved. It must be accepted and will prove an invaluable working theory of life if you give it a chance. Let sense of duty be your constant guidance. Let service be your striving. Supplement the lives of as many others as you can by being and behaving as fraternally as you can. Live, let live, and help others to live. Keep an open mind. Welcome criticism but exercise your own judgment and don't sacrifice yourself to craven fear. Have intelligent convictions and the courage to carry them across. Have respect for all men, more for yourself, and most for God. Be cheerful, especially when you are cheerless, not so much for yourself as for others. Meet even your tearful trials without whining and turn them into laughing triumphs. Compel sorrow to bless you with smiles by converting it into moral substance. Be serious when you smile and, better still, smile when you are serious. Despise insincerity. You can fool others but not the Almighty whereas by trying to do so you will only make a fool of yourself. Live thus with all that it implies and you will make the world somewhat better and yourself a Supplementarian.

A SUBLIME SOUL.

A short time ago I was summoned to speak the parting words at the burial of a young woman. She was, though a Jewess, the inmate for many years of a Christian institution. Crippled from the very start of life she was helpless and dependant. And yet over her silent shrivelled form there commingled the tears of Christian and Jew. Rarely had I witnessed a deeper or more genuine grief. Why was it so? Death was a relief, one would have said. But he would have spoken without a knowledge of the facts. Her life was happy, a joy to others as well as to herself, a joy to herself because a joy to others. For

she was so appreciative, so considerate, so kind. She taught others patience, courage, endurance. She was sadly and sorely handicapped but accomplished more than do many who are whole. She exemplified and proved the supremacy of spirit, the priceless possibilities of a sublime soul. It was only her shrunken and distorted body that was buried, its unconquerable tenant soared to the untrammelled opportunity of the immortal realm. And as I contemplated her trial and her triumph I could not but think what ingrates some of us are who have so much, accomplish so little, and yet complain that we haven't more.

ENEMIES.

It's a handicap for any person or enterprise not to have an enemy. Enemies are one of God's methods of preventing men from becoming molluscs. An enemy is an unintentional friend. It is commonly said that God gives us our relatives while we choose our friends. I doubt that some of our relatives come from God. They suggest another source. I do believe, however, that God gives us our enemies and that we are selected by our friends.

INIMICAL FRIENDS.

Talking of friendly enemies reminds me of inimical friends. The inimical friend is usually one who does not know the difference between criticism and fault-finding. He doesn't help you; he only gives advice. If you are a minister he comes to you in a solemn subdued way and says, "Now see here, Doc, I am one of your best friends and I want to advise you so-and-so." If you are not the fool he takes you to be you know that neither in the congregation nor outside of it has he ever given any evidence of that rare sacred thing called friendship. But he tells you that he is your friend, otherwise you wouldn't know it, and then he proceeds to criticize. The difference between such friends and an enemy is oftentimes only a difference of method, for how much better than an enemy is the pretended friend who never does anything but criticize?

AN OCCASIONAL GOD.

Some people come to the house of worship only when they are in trouble. How can you expect God to mean much to you then when he seems to mean nothing to you at other times. You can't treat God as you do some of your friends, remembering Him when you need Him, ignoring Him when you don't. An occasional God is not the God for your occasion.

Building a Better World.

In simple and majestic language are we told (Genesis 1) of the primal chaos out of which came the order beauty and beneficence of the world. The process was initiated and unfolded as it was because the spirit of God with the tender touches of a fluttering bird hovered upon its surface.

Once again great changes are astir in the womb of time. A new world is coming to birth. Nothing will be just as it was. Manufactures will be multiplied. Commerce will be broadened and enriched. The sciences will be promoted and strengthened. Time will be gained and distance diminished. Singer and seer have the inspiring theme of a new-created world.

And yet greater still are the moral changes already in progressive realization. The world had been too clannish, too unsympathetic, too unfraternal, and yet loudly pretentious. It was largely an iridescent bubble that under the shimmer of a superficial glow held little more than air, and not always pure air. And now the bubble has been punctured and rudely shattered. Co-operation, the parent of sympathy, and sympathy, the mother of co-operation, are growing and spreading. Not only in the trenches, but out of and far away from them, mankind are learning and what is far better are practicing the long neglected lessons of brotherhood. The trench especially will triumph in moral realization and victory where the pulpit has only prated and failed. Men cannot suffer and sacrifice together without being drawn and welded more closely together. And so Chaplain Tiplady is right when he tells us in his stirring book "The Soul of the Soldier," that there is obtaining in the fighter at the front "a deepening in character and manly quality, a broadening in mind and creed, and an impatience with can't and make-believe." The world is repeating the experience of Jewish history, exemplified again and again. Israel was divided before its exile into Babylon. It came forth from that furnace in unity. The solidarity and mutual sympathy of all Jewry is largely the product of suffering. So with the world. For a time, at least, it will be more fraternal and more truly moral, because more deeply and genuinely spiritual. As of old when the morning stars of creation first scintillated their glances of light upon the world so today a more beneficent world-order is about to beautify and bless a new day because once again the spirit of God is touching and thrilling the hearts and consciences of men into a novel devotion to an old but neglected duty. Imperialism

will yield to humanism, dynasty will be supplanted by democracy, and the curse of Cain will be removed from the brow of the world by the gentle but determined hand of a world-belting brotherhood.

Now, in this process of transformation, our boys here and especially abroad are playing a determining role. Every Allied soldier is a pioneer, a herald, a crusader of the greatest cause for which men have ever suffered. And these boys are putting us under a growing obligation that we can never fully repay. They will return transformed to a world that through them will be re-formed. The least we can do is to take thought and make timely resolution to try to match their growth with our progress. Beautifully has this been suggested and sung with winning conviction by one who so touchingly said:

"Somewhere, dear God, in this great world of thine,
Lives he who once was absolutely mine—
Before the war with all its horrors grim
Called to its manhood that it needed him.
So close we walked that naught could come between,
But now in dreams alone, his face is seen.
So close he held my hand I could not fall,
And now but silence, as of some dark wall."

"I know not if tonight, on land or sea,
His prayer ascends to ask Thy care of me,
But I do know that when he comes again—
When earth is rid of all this scourging pain—
He will be different, and I, too, must grow.
So help me, God, a fitting mate to be
When my beloved comes again to me."

Yes, we too, must grow, through change. Away with our pretense, our narrowness, our intolerance, our lack of sympathy and of brotherliness. Let us think less of our denomination-ism and more of our dignity. Let us judge others and ourselves, not by creed, colour, or country, but by character. We shall thus help to build a new and better world, and we shall so do if the spirit of God always hovering over us will be permitted to touch us to the ecstasy of a higher hope, a broader vision, and a more loving loyalty.

FAILURE OF THE CHURCH.

One of the tragic results of the failure of the church to democratize and thus bring its best opportunity and offering to everybody is that many people who need the cultural influence and spiritual stimulus of a great institution are compelled to resort to places poorly provided where they are not only not benefited but deteriorated. Church managers who take their trusteeships seriously will please think this over.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

A New York church, Forty-seventh Street, bears over its portal the legend: "We preach Christ crucified." I could not but think that that has been a tragic blunder of Christendom through its entire history. The "Christ crucified" has been responsible for the still unended tragedy of the Jew crucified. For the Christ crucified once the Jews have been crucified millions of times. If Christendom had preached Christ vivified instead of crucified and better still had vivified His spirit in their lives Jews and Christians and Christians among themselves would have avoided mutual hate and the world be much better than it is. Christian readers will kindly think this over and pass it along to the gentleman who provides them their spiritual provender. It may not in every case be a palatable morsel but it will be of inestimable practical profit if carried out.

A CHOSEN PEOPLE.

Some Jews are very proud to consider and call ourselves God's chosen people. I believe that in the proper sense they are. It would, however, be occasion for greater pride if instead of saying that God chose us we could conscientiously say that we have chosen God.

CHOSEN JEWS.

A Jew is chosen to the extent that he is choice. Please bear this in mind you Jews who pride yourselves upon being part of a people to whom you have not only been no help but a hindrance.

PRYING IMPERTINENCE.

A young woman of my congregation applied once for a position at the Brooklyn headquarters of the N. Y. Telephone Co. She was well recommended for character and ability. Her qualifications were sought and when these were stated and seemed unobjectionable she was asked as to her religion. "I am a Jewess," she said. "Well, I shall let you know," said the company's agent. The young woman did not hear further and accepted a desirable position with an important law firm. Now I do not say as some might that this young woman was rejected on denominational grounds altho it is unqualifiedly certain that there are many firms in New York who will not employ Jews even though they enjoy a Jewish patronage which self-respecting Jews should withhold. What I do say is that it is a piece of prying impertinence on the part of an employee of a public service or any other corporation to question an applicant's