

451
C51
copy 2
Cheever
859

TWO SERMONS
on the
Tragedy at Harpers Ferry
by
Rev. George B. Cheever D.D.

E 451
.C51
Copy 2

Cheever & Clarke

TWO SERMONS

ON THE

Tragedy at Harper's Ferry.

THE CURSE OF GOD AGAINST POLITICAL ATHEISM: WITH
SOME OF THE LESSONS OF THE TRAGEDY
AT HARPER'S FERRY.

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE

CHURCH OF THE PURITANS, NEW YORK,

ON SABBATH EVENING, NOV. 6, 1869.

BY REV. GEORGE B. CHEEVER, D. D.

BOSTON:

WALKER, WISE, & CO

245 Washington Street.

1859.

E451
.C51
Copy 2

~~22.5~~
5/10/14

IN EXCHANGE
Cornell Univ.
2 FE1905

00

PRENTISS, SAWYER, & CO., PRINTERS,
19 Water Street, Boston.

Generated on 2022-07-18 01:24 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/loc.ark:/13960/t7gg71532
Public Domain / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd

DISCOURSE.

If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. — MATT. VI: 22, 23.

THE purpose makes the man, and as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. If for God in his heart, then for God everywhere; if for self and the world in his heart, then for self everywhere.

Principle and Expediency are the watchwords that divide the world as truly and thoroughly as light and darkness, sin and holiness. But expediency assumes the form and reputation of principle, and carries a great part of the world on the side of wrong, under the profession of wisdom and conservatism, teaching the right. The conflict is fundamental. A selfish expediency is the native habit of mankind, and the first battle against it is when a man is converted from the power of Satan unto God. When he comes under the government of righteous principle, and makes the will of God his rule, instead of consulting and obeying what is, or seems to be, expedient in his own view for his own interest, or convenient for his own will and pleasure, he is a converted man — a true Christian.

He cannot be a Christian, and remain on *both sides* the fence, a time-server. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." He cannot be a Christian and remain *on the fence*, waiting to jump with the tide of popular applause, or at the suggestion of expediency, and, until that decision, serving neither God nor Mammon. He is always, however he may stand in this world, and seem to be facing both ways in the sight of man, on one side or the other with God, either for him or against him. We shall follow our text in its two great applications, first to our personal, second to our social and civil or political being and life.

I.—True religion consists in choosing and following what is right, and making that in all cases determine what is expedient. I speak now of all cases where the question of right, of duty, is involved; for there are many things, many junctures and affairs of life, where prudential considerations as to what is best form the whole field of consideration, and that which seems to a man's mind on the whole most profitable is best, and therefore ought to be pursued, is therefore right. It is right, because it is best. Wherever the balance of considerations is merely prudential—as, for example, whether you shall take passage for a sea voyage in a sailing vessel or a steamship, whether you shall embark your capital in one direction or another of varied forms of business or investments equally honorable and proper; ten thousand cases might be stated where that which, on the whole, you discover or conclude to be best, most advantageous and convenient for you, is right. It is not best merely because it is right, but right because it is best, there being no other moral principle involved in it, but a choice of benefits, which is no moral principle at all. And a man whose life is confined to such pursuits might possibly never be found acting in reference to any moral principle, or any consideration of it whatever; might live to the age of Methuselah, plodding on in business, or running a career of vast speculations in business, without ever having his soul stirred by anything higher than calculations of prudence. In such a case, the very absence and negation of moral principle would be the debasement and destruction of a man's nature, and the condemnation of his life. A life centering on self, absorbed in self, occupied wholly with self, and what is best for self, is a selfish life—a life of self-idolatry—a life in which self is the supreme principle, and, God being entirely disregarded, an immoral principle and an immoral life. The entire negation of high moral principle constitutes as perfect an immorality of character as the presence and power of a positive reigning vice. And it may be absolutely more difficult to raise a man up from the depths of such negation, from the dungeon of such a tomb, and inspire him with piety, than it is to break in violently upon great and raging sins, in which men have been held captive by Satan at his will.

We belong to God, and are bound to regard His will supremely in all things, and to seek His approbation, and carry into effect His law, both in ourselves and others. The eye single, therefore, is the eye that is turned towards Him, while the evil eye is the eye that is

turned towards self—turned away from God, and filled with self instead of God, as the supreme idol. You know that in the language of the very proverbs of society there is no more fitting description of a mean and worthless creature—a selfish, heartless, unsympathising man, from whom you can expect nothing good, great, or generous—than the phrase that he is always sure to look out for number one. Self always comes first between his sight and everything else under heaven; and until this depravity is broken and conquered, and he is taught and inspired by Divine grace to lose sight of self in God, and to say, Not my will, but thine, be done, God himself, in his view, and heaven and angels, are nothing but a grand contrivance for his own happiness. But when a man begins to love God, and to look away from self to Him, then it is happiness to him that God reigns; and as long as God reigns, he cannot be otherwise than happy in him, safe and happy in His love. He dwells in God and God in him; and as God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all, the whole being of the soul whose sight and affections are fixed on Him, is irradiated with His light; and as God is love, so he that dwelleth in God dwelleth in love, and if there were no interruption to this communion, would be baptised and bathed in the continual blessedness of God, as an experience inseparable from his own existence. Such a man is safe and happy, everywhere and under all circumstances, in God. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He may be the inmate of a dungeon, condemned to death by human law, but with God's law and God's love in his heart he will be as happy as an angel.

Thy shining glance can cheer
 The dungeon where I dwell:
 'Tis Paradise, if thou art here;
 If thou depart, 't is hell.

The path of duty will be made plain to such a man, and he will have courage ministered to him from God to walk in it, always making God's word, God's law, the light, the guide, the arbiter of conscience, and always endeavoring, in all things, to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and man.

For this, two great things are necessary—much prayer, and much earnest and prayerful study of God's word. Both these things are necessary, and if a man neglect either, he is liable to go

astray, and while he thinks he is acting from principle, to be acting from mistake or from mere selfish expediency. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." Prayer hides God's word in the heart, and the Holy Spirit abides there with it, and leads it into all truth and duty; and this being the case, a man having God's truth for his shield and buckler, and God's Spirit for his comforter, has need of nothing else, and need fear nothing. Hence the appeal of God, "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness — ye people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproaches of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings; for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to generation." The righteousness of God is the one permanent, eternal reality and rule, and the law of God is the manifestation of that righteousness for the guidance of human conduct. The law of God is a system of principles. He governs the universe upon principles — the principles of his own righteousness. They are of equal and universal application. They are not one thing in heaven and another thing on earth; one thing among God's friends, and another thing among his enemies; they are the same everywhere, and the standard of right and wrong is the same on earth as it is in heaven. Perfect obedience, supreme devotion to God, is the rule here, as it is there, and God will have his will done on earth as in heaven. The principles of God's law never vary. They are as immutable as himself. They never bend to circumstances, but go straight through the universe. They do not come into the world to be refracted out of their straight line in the gross medium of men's fancies or maxims of convenience or expediency; they cannot alter. Heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or tittle of the law shall fail. As a standard of feeling and action, as a standard of right and wrong, as a standard of duty under all circumstances, and of judgment in every respect, it is unerring and unchanging. Its principles were given forth, not to be judged, criticised, or evaded by God's creatures, but to be obeyed, and carried into unflinching execution. Their application is not to be prevented because of its condemning, overturning consequences in a world of sin; they are to be laid alongside the character and employments of men, though, to the anger of all, they make the whole world, with their whole business, guilty before God. The least concealment or alteration of any one principle of God's law would be of more evil

in any community than the overturning of that whole community could be by carrying out that principle to the uttermost. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, and especially against those who hold the truth in unrighteousness. And the business of the servant of Jesus Christ is to make constant application of the law of God, and bring its light to blaze and its power to bear upon every form of iniquity.

And although the principles of God's word, taken up resolutely, and carried straight through human society, make tremendous work with the principles of this world, yet that is the very application and overturning that God requires, whose conservatism is just this; the removing of those things that require overturning or may be shaken, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. The principles of God's word cut across and tear up by the roots whole plantations of the most cherished human maxims and laws. They do this with such amazing power, wherever any sinful practice has gained the sanction of time, and been winked at by a worldly Church, that even churches and ministers are afraid of their operation. The consequences of the unbending principles of the Word of God are so tremendous in their conflict with human passions, especially where sin is legalized and oppression carried on by statute, that even the professed friends of God shrink from meeting them. Nevertheless, those principles must be applied; they are our only salvation; the only hope of the world being made better is in them, and our only security from being swallowed up in the world's wickedness is in the great breakwater with them breasting the storm, when the waters roar and are troubled, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. The only true expediency is to act from principle, to obey God, to obey a conscience enlightened and guided by the Word of God, to ask in all things what God will have us to do, and having ascertained the path of duty toward God, to go forward and do it, leaving the consequences with him. It is no excuse for wickedness, though all the world should consent to follow it, and though all the statutes of mankind should command us to do the same. But by the Word of God alone can we know what is righteousness in principle and righteousness in law.

And here, in passing, let the importance of the Bible and its teachings in our common schools be noted, to have the common conscience of the nation so trained, to give the nation a common sense and

knowledge of equity and righteousness, so sturdy, so habitual, that tyranny shall quail before it, and legislators not dare the experiment of promulgating unrighteous law. Such a conscience, so trained, is the strongest, most impregnable safeguard of a nation's liberties.

II. — Here we advance to the second great branch of our subject. Adherence to the law of God, as supreme in political as social life, is our only security. It is impossible to describe strongly enough the infinite importance, at this present time, for all men, public and private, for us as a community and people, of keeping this great truth in view, and acting upon it. The most pernicious and alarming doctrines are being circulated among us; doctrines that at one and the same time go to the destruction of all conscience towards God, and all humanity and justice towards our fellow-beings; doctrines that take away our very right to demand and enforce freedom and justice against tyranny and injustice, and deprive us of the very possibility even of appealing to God against the iniquity and oppression of man; doctrines that deny and annihilate the inherent supremacy of conscience, instructed by the Author and Framer of our being, over all our actions, and commit that supremacy to the absolute sheer will of an oligarchy in power over us, or of the multitude who consent to put the will of that oligarchy into the shape of law, and then arrogate for it the sanction of the Almighty, at the same time announcing our duty to obey it, whether the Almighty sanctions it or not; nay, even though it be against the express interdiction of the living God; doctrines that at the same time, and by a fatal coherence and necessity of logic and of consequence, deny any inherent rights but such as are permitted and guaranteed by some written human constitution, and in creatures of a sable hue any rights at all, if any State or community, by law or declaration, deny them, withhold them. Doctrines that, in affirming that so long as anything whatever is put in the form of human law, so long its obligation of obedience is supreme and imperative, (no matter how infamous or oppressive the law may be,) take from God himself his own sovereignty over us, and from ourselves all right of resistance against wickedness in God's name — all possibility of the protection of our conscience and our liberties — all remnant of liberty itself worth possessing — since, by these doctrines, all that any band of usurpers have to do, in order to sanction, confirm, and render immutable and eternal their despotism, is to promulgate its principles and pretences

in a constitution, and pass its requisitions in the shape of law, which, while it stands, is imperative, and of which they can forever prevent the alteration or repeal. The whole scheme is one of complete practical atheism; and hell itself, the empire of Satan, would need no better foundation against the authority of the Lord Almighty.

Yet it has been shamelessly promulgated, in so many words, that the constitution of the people, their political constitution, is their Bible; and this for the purpose of defending the right of the government to pass, and the duty of the people to obey, one of the most inhuman, unchristian, irreligious, savage statutes, that, under the light of God's word, and in defiance and violation of his law, ever was passed on earth. It is not only affirmed that their political constitution is their Bible, but that any law whatever, which the legislature may please to pass, under the pretended sanction of that constitution, however wickedly perverted, and concerning which they can get it affirmed by a bench of judges that, in their opinion, it is constitutional, has an obligation of obedience attached to it above God's law—the Bible of God being supreme only in and for heaven, while the political Bible is supreme on earth, and so supreme that no appeal from it can be taken to God's Bible, so supreme that God's law cannot be quoted as above it—cannot be permitted to have any authority over the conscience under it. A people that will give way to such doctrines, that will applaud the speeches and the teachings in which they are conveyed, that will vote for men and put men in power who proclaim them, and signify their readiness and determination to enforce them, are as fast as possible cutting off all possibility of protecting their own liberties—are forging chains and manacles for their own souls, are offering up themselves on the altar of national atheism as the prey of tyrants, are on the eve of that irremediable betrayal and renouncement of their own inheritance of freedom, their birthright from God, of which there is no place for repentance, and after which there is no hope; of which God himself says, they have chosen their own way, I also will choose their delusions; they have chosen the statutes of Omri, and the statutes of Omri shall be their ruin.

The extreme of baseness and treachery towards God and man, to which these advocates of human tyranny have gone, is almost incredible. There are those who not only assert that any and every human law has the authority of heaven, and that men are bound to obey it so long as it is law, whether it be contrary to God's law or not, but

even that we have no right to go against any wrong, any wickedness, which a human constitution protects, and orders us not to interfere with, or which it is even asserted by the judges to protect, or which is by them pronounced constitutional. Here these men tie up our hands, and we, if we admit such pretensions of ungodliness, tie up our own hands, not only from all right and possibility of self-defence, if our own liberties are by pretended law taken from us, but from the equally sacred and grander and more noble and glorious right and duty of defending others, and protecting others from wrong and ruin. Could anything be more monstrous, more heaven-defying, than the doctrine that because a wrong or impiety is a vested wrong, secured by a constitution and laws in its favor, therefore we are cut off from all right of interfering against it, or claiming the rights of the victims crushed under it, or insisting upon their deliverance from such oppression?

Especially, could anything be more monstrous than such an atheistic claim in behalf of wrong, for immunity from examination and redress under a government professing to acknowledge God and his word and the religion of the Bible as of supreme authority, and professing distinctly to have been framed for the protection of the liberties and rights of every human being under it, to establish justice and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity; a constitution framed under an appeal to God, under a declaration that our very title to the state and dignity of a nation is drawn from the laws of nature and of nature's God, and under the promulgation of these truths as self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter it or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundations on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. The less is always included in the greater; and if the people have power and right to change or to abolish their constitution when its action is perverted to the support and protection of wrong, much more have they the right and power to resist such perversion; much more is the resistance of such

perversion their bounden duty and the duty of those who are called to administer the government.

If the government be framed for the establishment of justice and the protection of liberty for all, and of the just rights of all who are set under it by the Creator, then the constitution of such a government — a government meant for such purposes — and just only while it adheres to them, cannot be assumed to sanction any wrong in conflict with them, or to forbid the resistance and removal of any wrong, of which in spite of its object, and against the authority of God, from whom alone its sanction is derived, the constitution is perverted to become the instrument. It is, therefore, monstrous to say that we will go against wrong only so far as the constitution permits us to go against it; for in the first place, the Almighty has commanded us to go against all wrong, and especially so to administer government as that God's rights, and the rights of conscience towards God and justice to every creature may be protected by it; and in the second place, the rights bestowed upon men from their Creator are asserted, by the very declaration under which and in pursuance of which the constitution has been framed, to be inalienable; and, therefore, the constitution itself binds those who administer it, as well as the people who must watch over its operation, to go against any wrong which is against those rights, and not to suffer any law in behalf of such wrong to be executed.

Every sufferance of such execution, every lending of themselves, either on the part of magistrate or people, as instruments of such wrong in the name of law, and under the pretence of law, is just the deliberate commission of two crimes instead of one. First, it is the transaction of the original crime — injustice, inhumanity — which is a sin against both God and man; and second, it is the practice of the crime in the name of law, which is an added sin, especially against God, and is the daring assertion that human law is higher than the Divine. It is not only the practice of the sin, which is an act of disobedience against God and cruelty towards man, but it is the teaching of such disobedience to others, the enforcement of it by law against God's law. And God himself says, that while he who shall be guilty of breaking any one of his commandments shall be punished according to his crime, he that shall not only do but also teach such crime, such violation, shall be utterly cast out from the kingdom of heaven. And our blessed Lord condemned in the strongest terms the Scribes and Pharisees and rulers

of the nation because they had dared, under pretence of God's authority, to do and to teach things contrary to God's law, or which made God's law of none effect, perverting and setting aside its authority. And no wonder; for God has said, in that very book out of which our blessed Lord drew and expounded his own commission as the Messiah and preacher of righteousness, that the throne of iniquity shall not have fellowship with him which frameth mischief by a law.

And the whole Word of God, both Old and New Testament, burns, blazes, with intensest fire of Divine anger, against this complication of atheism towards God and cruelty towards man. In very many ways it is so reprobated, that none can possibly mistake; none following and obeying man rather than God can possibly plead ignorance or innocence.

Wo unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed, to turn aside the needy from judgment and to take away the right from the poor among the people. Wo unto them that justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him. Wo unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, bind it with unrighteous law, and bind their sin about as with a cart rope. Oh, my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err and destroy the way of thy paths; and the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself to such commanded wickedness; therefore forgive them not. Therefore my people are gone into captivity; therefore hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure, as must always be the case when the way of sin, which is the way of hell, is established by law, and your very rulers and political guides cry out that you have no right to interfere with it and nothing to do but to obey it, because with a great lie they swear that it is in the constitution. But wo unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness.

And how fearfully literal, how appalling in the exactness of their application to our sin, in the various forms of exasperation assumed by it, are the curses, embodied and distributed in the Word of God. It is terrible to note them, and to observe that we ourselves not only justify but claim and compel their utmost application, by our renewal and justification of the very identical crimes against which they were first issued. Cursed be he that removeth his neighbor's landmark: and all the people shall say, amen! With what a sweep of wicked-

ness was the sin subject to this curse transacted by us as a nation, when the grand and sacred landmark of millions, protecting them from the abominations and cruelties of Slavery, securing them from the possibility of that wickedness ever entering among them, was broken down, obliterated, annihilated; and the people, instead of applying God's curse against the treachery of such a removal, consented to it, through their senators and representatives. And now they reap the fruits of such a treacherous consent.

Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way: and all the people shall say, amen! Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow; and all the people shall say, amen! **THE JUDGMENT OF THE STRANGER!** We have turned it into wormwood. We have taken the stranger, and the whole race of strangers, African strangers, and by the color of the skin have branded them as outcasts, dehumanized, chattelized, food only for the cruelty and avarice of oppressing States and traders in human flesh, denied all the rights of humanity, denied the existence of any rights that white men are bound to respect, law itself having been contrived for them, only as a cage, or a wheel, or an iron rack, to maim, to debase, and injure them. We have treated them with such concentrated, appalling, and complicated cruelty and wickedness, that the very name of *stranger*, God's sacred seal and claim for benevolence, mercy, protecting justice, is but a watchword of inhumanity and crime, at the very pronouncement of which there passes before the soul such a long procession of horrors, such an array of the vastness and detail of national and individual injustice and legalized barbarity, that the mind is almost maddened by the vision. And God hath said, in reference to all this, and to the sentence of moral assassination issued against the race of strangers from our Supreme National Tribunal of Justice, **CURSED BE HE THAT PERVERTETH THE JUDGMENT OF THE STRANGER!**

Then again, Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbor secretly: and all the people shall say, amen! Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person: and all the people shall say, amen! Come forward, ye that are guilty of this wickedness, and receive your appointed sentence at the hand of God. Hear this, ye that by legalizing the wickedness, by pleading a commission for it in human Courts, by sanctioning its mischief as being framed by law, intend to gain the reward of such iniquity, and to escape the curse! Hear this, ye marshals of a base, atrocious enactment of human cruelty

against the innocent fugitive from bondage, ye man-hunters, ye human hounds, basest of all villains that ever for reward give themselves up as go-betweens and cat's-paws for Satan's purposes, for the avarice, lust, and tyranny of wicked men! Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person! Your hounding and betraying of the Fugitive Slave, for the price of blood, is that slaying of his personality, which is set of God in the category of crime as equal with that of murder, and worthy of death.

And these atrocities could never have existed in our statute books, could never have been endured by the conscience of the people, nor ever could such impious daring and defiance against God and man have risen to such a pitch of atheism among our legislators and rulers, to be claimed as having the sanction of heaven, and setting aside and nullifying the divine law, except under the concealment, silence, and practical denial of that law, in these very respects, even by the church and ministry. Had the church and ministry spoken out at the beginning, and continued their testimony, had they, trusting in God and faithful to him, applied the fire of his word against this sin from the outset, it never could have risen to such a pitch of universal and desperate depravity; it would have been stayed and utterly abolished, long ere the present crisis. But now the word and authority of God are deliberately set aside, and the law of this wickedness is proclaimed as higher than the Highest. "Therefore," saith an avenging God, "as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust, because they have cast away the law of the Lord, and despised the Word of the Holy One of Israel."

Now, what are we to say to these things? Do we imagine, my friends, can we deceive ourselves so far as to dream, that a nation guilty of such practical atheism, under the comparative dimness of the old dispensation, could be cast forth from God's presence and blessing, and laden with such retributive curses, and that we, a Christian nation, under so much clearer light, with their own example before us as a warning, and their punishment as a proof, can escape, can be let off, under our commission of the same guilt? Is the casting away of the law of the Lord, and the setting up of a political idol of iniquity in its place, any less hateful in His sight, any more endurable in us than it was in them? Can we, of all nations of the earth, be such atheists and not be punished for it? Has

that which was sin among the Jews become righteousness among the Gentiles? Can an iniquity become righteous now by State sanction, by political platforms, which was only doubled in its iniquity and immensely exasperated, even then, by the very attempt to claim for it the guardianship of the State, and to set it under sanction of the law? Nay, the Lord will enter into judgment with the rulers and the princes of the people. Thy princes are rebellious and companions of thieves. Every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards. They judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the stranger nor the oppressed come unto them; but they dare to say, our party is the white man's party; and as to the negro, we are not our brother's keeper; but it is a false accusation against us that we wish to have anything to do with the protection of the rights of the blacks; and so have you taught cruelty and wickedness and rebellion against the Lord, and have attempted to set the assassination of the rights of a whole race of your fellow beings in your very constitution, as a compacted bond of such wickedness. Therefore, hear the Word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people. Because ye have said, we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement, when the overflowing scourge shall pass through it shall not come unto us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves; therefore, thus saith the Lord: Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away your refuges of lies, and the waters shall overflow your hiding place; and your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

Any compact with wickedness is an agreement with hell, but especially the pretence of such a compact, binding you to the extremest cruelty and injustice, in a covenant setting out with the declaration that it is for the more perfect establishment of justice and of freedom. The pretence of law for such rascality is only a vast exasperation of the villany, and the more law for such wickedness the less justice, the less sacredness, and the greater the obligation to resist such wickedness when it is taught in high places, and pretended to be sanctioned by the authority of law; for when this is the case, and men, in the name of God, do not resist, then everything goes rapidly to ruin; and as the prophet of the Lord declared, in this very case of old, except God raised up some gap men in this breach, except

the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah. Therefore, hear ye the Word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations. Your Sabbaths and your calling of assemblies I cannot away with. It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your appointed feasts my soul hateth. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear, for your hands are full of blood. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow; open thy mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction; open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

When will our own country and people once lay these things to heart? In what way, by what method of warning, of arrest, can we be made to feel that not even to Israel of old were these truths so appropriate, by reason of their sins, as on account of our sins they are to us? Will nothing move us, nothing awaken us, nothing bring us to repentance? Are we so insensate, so drunken with our prosperity, so mad upon our idols, as to imagine that we can take the very same sins on account of which God swept the Jews from the face of the earth, and not only practice them individually, but teach and command them, by law, enshrine them in our tribunals of justice, maintain them as elements of our religion and manifestations of God's righteousness, and still go on with impunity in such a career, and escape God's wrath? Even amidst the distant thunder of the coming tempest, while the big drops are falling that forerun the storm, under the very discipline of God's preliminary plague, the blood at Harper's Ferry being only the precursor of the blood of the first born, if the American Pharaoh, with Jannes and Jambres, resisting God, refuse to set his people free; even thus and now, we are publicly taught that man is to be obeyed rather than God, that the wicked laws of men must be sustained and followed, no matter what becomes of God's law, for that law is so sacred a thing, and so important to

be preserved in its majesty, that while it is law, though ever so opposed to God's word, it must be fulfilled. But the only majesty of law is the majesty of God's authority, God's righteousness, and if divested of that, if contrary to that, then the only obligation upon us is that of disobeying and denouncing it. God's law indeed must be fulfilled, and man's law, if contrary to God's law, must be disobeyed; and this is the only way to preserve a just respect for the government, or a remnant of human freedom on the earth. Yet these atheists tell us, "Obey even the bad law while it is a law, until it be repealed!" As if any tyrant on earth, or oppressive government, would ever repeal one of their unrighteous enactments, so long as they found the people willing to obey them. As if Nebuchadnezzar's law of image-worship would ever have been repealed if Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, instructed by our modern politicians, had consented to obey it, and had taught the people to obey it while it was a law. Or as if the decree of Darius against prayer to God, in the law of the Medes and Persians, would ever have been repealed, had Daniel, according to the same atheistic teachings, obeyed it so long as it was a law; had he not disobeyed it, in the name of God, and gone into the lion's den in consequence, just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace. They broke up the tyranny by breaking the law, and that was the God-inspired and commanded method of protesting against it.

All the threatenings of God's wrath against the Jews, and the whole record of their fulfillment, are pages for our warning and instruction, to avoid the same sins, or meet the same retribution. All this hath the mouth of the Lord spoken for us, and we are on the verge of the same ruin, except we repent. If the justice of an incensed God was executed upon them, let none imagine that we shall be spared. When the Lord Jesus came unto his own, and re-pro-mulgated God's violated laws, he found the leprosy of the nation hidden even in the Church.

Stiff in the letter, lax in the design,
 And import of their oracles divine,
 Their learning legendary, false, absurd,
 And yet exalted above God's own word,
 They drew a curse from an intended good,
 Puffed up with gifts they never understood;
 He judged them with as terrible a frown,
 As if not love, but wrath, had brought him down.

Yet he was gentle as soft summer airs,
 Had grace for others' sins, but none for theirs.
 The temple and its holy rites profaned
 By mummeries, He that dwelt in it disdained,
 Uplifted hands, that at convenient times
 Could act extortion, and the worst of crimes,
 Washed with a neatness scrupulously nice,
 And free from every taint but that of vice.

Shall we despise the warning and the lesson, or lay it to heart?
 When men, through covetousness, with feigned words, make merchandise of you, and ye permit and sanction, and perpetuate by law, the making merchandise of men, be sure that your judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and your damnation slumbereth not. Let the inspired Christian Poet continue his strain. Judgment, however tardy, mends her pace —

When obstinacy once has conquered grace,
 But grave dissemblers cannot understand
 That sin let loose speaks punishment at hand.
 Oh, Israel! of all nations most undone!
 Thy diadem displaced, thy sceptre gone;
 Cry aloud, thou that sitteth in the dust,
 Cry to the proud, the cruel and unjust;
 Knock at the gates of nations, rouse their fears;
 Say wrath is coming and the storm appears.

Their glory faded, and their race dispersed,
 The last of nations now, though once the first,
 They warn and teach the proudest, would they learn,
 Keep wisdom, or meet vengeance in your turn.
 If we escaped not, if Heaven spared not us,
 Peeled, scattered and exterminated thus,
 If vice received her retribution due,
 When we were visited, what hope for you?

What hope, indeed! Let the fulfillment of the curses that have been summoned from the law of God answer, recorded for our warning in the divine history. It is a terrible array; but it is not to be denied that no small portions both of the Old and New Testaments are occupied with these vivid expressions of divine justice, these avenging lightnings of God's violated law.

It is not to be denied that God set forth these maledictions to be a power against sin, and a terror to evil-doers, and they do possess an efficacy when every other method would have failed. God meant

them to be applied. But a man cannot be fitted to deal with the divine curses as they ought to be used, without the same Holy Spirit in his heart by whose influence they were inspired. They are a sharp two-edged sword, and without the spirit of heaven-inspired love, a man may cut himself with it oftener than he does God's enemies, and he will be just as likely to grasp it by the blade as by the handle. Hence the great significance of the catalogue of a Christian's armor, in the sixth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, where the detail begins with the truth as a girdle, and righteousness as a breastplate, and the feet shod and quickened with the glad tidings of peace, and the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation; all these personal graces, elements of Christian experience in possession, in wearing and use, before the mention of the sword of the spirit as the weapon of war, and then follows prayer as always to be used inseparable from the whole.

Here is great instruction. If we would wield the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, with a divine, irresistible efficacy, we must have the spirit of that sword in our own hearts. We must know its power in living faith and experience, that we may cut and smite with it in every direction, in the right way. This is our energy unto salvation. This is the secret of success and permanence in every true reform. These are the weapons, and this is the spirit and temper of every true religious reformer. We must trust in God, and smite with his Word, and in him we shall conquer. But if we cast aside his Word, or if, without its spirit in our hearts, without a supreme regard to it, as our supreme rule, and to him who gave it, as our guardian and guide, we go forward in the strength of mere common philanthropy; especially if because a treacherous portion of the visible Church of God have perverted his Word to the sanction of sin, and received iniquity to their protection and embrace, we therefore suffer ourselves to lose our hold on God, our confidence in his truth, and throw away the Christian armor in this conflict,—then are we sure to be defeated; for except the Word of God be applied against this gigantic sin, nothing can cope with it; the edge of every other weapon will be turned. The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword against sin, and if the Church and the ministry would use it faithfully, trusting in God, sin would be conquered. Its sharpest edge is to be used, and it is not to be wreathed with flowers nor handled deceitfully,

nor the trowel of Ezekiel's false prophets to be substituted for it, daubing with untempered mortar. Used as God gave it, it has a power, even against the atheism and inhumanity of Slavery, that nothing else can have.

I say, used as God gave it, applied with all its native pungency and power, no hearkening to the cry, prophecy unto us smooth things, no concealment of the message, nor handling of the Word of God deceitfully, but according to his own command. Diminish not a word; my words, every one of them, whether men will hear or forbear; my word, as the fire and the hammer against sin, with a "Thou art the man," and "Thus saith the Lord," to the sinner. I say, used as God gave it. Some good people are fearfully and sanctimoniously set against applying the denunciations of God in the case of great and popular sins, and are very piously horrified, (the editors of some religious newspapers especially,) with the bitterness of such denunciations; prophecy not unto us right things, prophecy smooth things, prophecy deceits. But God gave these denunciations to be applied, not to be disavowed, nor evaded; and they have a force, in the right place, and an authority, that nothing else can have. Suffer me here to present you with an illustration of the efficacy of such plain speaking, when honeyed words, and a soft and flattering tongue, would have been the devil's stratagem. The anecdote was given me by a venerable Christian of the persuasion to whom it refers, and it is pointed and powerful. In the work of the Abolition of Slavery, by the Society of Friends in one of the Southern States, there was at first great difficulty and opposition. In one of their stormy discussions, an influential Quaker, who still held on to his Slave property, when it was insisted that they must all relinquish it, and the most persuasive arguments had been employed in vain, arose and declared that they had no right to make such a demand upon him, that his Slaves were as truly his property as his oxen, and that it was not obligatory on him to give up the one more than the other. Indignant at this assertion, another brother arose to answer him, and said: "Friend, that speech of thine came right out from the very belly of hell, yea, from the very belly of hell thou hast brought this speech." On their assembling the next morning, the man thus pungently rebuked said to his reproving brother: "Friend, thou didst hurt my feelings; thou didst much distress me by thine unkind speaking. I could get no sleep all

night for thy bitterness." "Friend," said his neighbor, "if thou hast been distressed I am glad of it; I am glad thou couldst not sleep, and I hope to God thou never wilt sleep again till thou hast freed thy Slaves." And he could not sleep again, and did not, till he had freed his Slaves; but had it not been for the faithful reproof of his brother he might have kept them to this day.

Read the twenty-seventh chapter of Deuteronomy, and then say for what purpose were these curses given, and to whom were they committed for use and application. To the Church and the ministry, for a great, wise, most merciful and good purpose, against the cruel, remorseless, gigantic sins of men and nations; against oppressors and those who sanction their villainies. It is the business of the Church and ministry to apply these withering denunciations, just as God gave them, to the precise sins which he has catalogued and classified there and elsewhere for their reprobation. They are tremendous weapons, which those only can use aright who are themselves inspired with God's love, and therefore know how to hate what God abhors and has forbidden.

They who do not hate what God hates, and who refuse to resist and oppose what God has commanded them to oppose, are false in their profession of love. They do not know how to love what is good and holy, unless they hate and abhor what is wicked, unjust, and oppressive. Who are they that dare step between God's truth and the sinner, to shield him from its reprobation? Who dare interfere with the maledictions of God's Word, and forbid or deny their application to the very identical crimes and the precise characteristics and personages, pointed out for such fire?

It is for the Church and the ministry to obey God, and in behalf of the oppressed, smite the rebellious and stout-hearted oppressor. God has revealed his most terrible, most awful declarations against such wickedness, on purpose for his people to apply them against those who are guilty of it. But if such who profess to have been the recipients of his grace refuse this mission, then let them refrain from denouncing, in their turn, those who, perhaps without the spirit of love, but to supply their treachery, take up the burden of those curses, and seem to occupy themselves wholly with them. If the Church do not curse at God's command, in sympathy with him, out of love, and in the spirit of righteous indignation in behalf of the oppressed and against the oppressor, then the world will curse, the heart of agonized humanity will

curse, out of nothing but wrath and hatred. If the Church and ministry refuse to apply these denunciations of God against sin, then the world will take them up and scatter them as firebrands, arrows, and death. If the Church do not use them as God intended, men out of the Church, driven into infidelity by the Church sanctioning sin, will brandish them with mere natural revengeful passion and heat. If this fire be not kindled on God's altar, in God's fireplace, the devil will scatter it all about the house. Or if conservative saints jump upon the safety-valve, to confine the steam and prevent the noise, then no wonder if it explodes to men's destruction. It is thus that such a man as John Brown, of Osawatomie, was thrown from his balance and driven to a course of desperation. The Church and the ministry would not give vent to that fire which God has committed to them for application against sin, and the consequence was, that a double portion of it in his soul exploded.

I have recently had the opportunity of learning something of John Brown's integrity and nobleness of character, both native and Christian, from his sister, a woman of Christian dignity and refinement; confident, that amidst all his enemies and trials, even unto death, her brother, under the ban of human law, human tyranny, employs the consolations of the presence of his Saviour. She described the boyhood and youth of her brother, as well as his riper Christian career, as being marked by one characteristic especially, above the train of common men, a keen sensitiveness to the wickedness and cruelty of injustice and wrong, a sensitiveness both of conscience and of feeling for the right against the wrong, above what she ever knew in any other person. And the thoroughness, uprightness, and consistency of his Christian character no man doubted that knew him. He was a man of prayer. And he believed himself to be under the guidance of God in his efforts against Slavery, and in behalf of the enslaved. He may have carried this feeling, this assurance, to the degree of supposing himself commissioned, here and now, for just such a violent and desperate raid against this atheistic and tyrannical wickedness, just where it is defying God and trampling upon man with impunity; commissioned, not only with the general and particular revelations of God's will and of the Christian's duty against such gigantic sin, but to lift up the standard as he has done with such unquestionable courage and heroism, in literal fulfillment of the

L. of C.

injunction to resist unto blood, striving against sin. We may rightly lay the responsibility of his mistakes, and, (if any man dare brand it as fanaticism to have and to exercise such extreme hatred against Slavery,) of his fanaticism in this matter, upon the insensibility and treachery of those who ought long ago to have fought against this wickedness, and conquered and abolished it, with the Word and Spirit of the Living God, but who have not only refused to oppose it, but taken it to their own embrace, and sanctioned it as a Christian institution, not only refusing all sympathy in behalf of the oppressed, but espousing and defending the cause of the oppressor. Such a soul as John Brown's could not endure such appalling wickedness, especially when the iron entered into his own heart, through the bodies of his own murdered children, and the destruction of desolated households.

A silent, conservative, treacherous church and ministry compel such a soul to do more, to feel more, to hate more, than its sensitive organization can bear; and it very naturally may give way under the pressure. If the church and ministry had done their duty, John Brown would have done no more than his; John Brown would have been found with the church, directing the great guns of God's Word against the sin of Slaveholding, and not at Harper's Ferry with carnal weapons. Let not those professed Christians who have neglected their duty presume to utter one word against that martial hero for having overdone his. The dumb dogs that never even yelped against Slavery are deep-mouthed in their denunciations of him. The man has committed no treason, but the silent church and ministry have. If the man should be hanged, it is their treason, not his own, for which he suffers. They who have sanctioned the iniquity and cruelty against which he has been fighting are the traitors, and the anguish of such treachery, if such a man brooded long over it, might have driven him almost mad, even if the murder of his own children had not been added to it. The inactivity and treachery of the church, amidst the prevalence of such enormities, drive some men into infidelity, but not a man whose communion is with God, not a true Christian such as John Brown is said to be; the mischief with him seems to have been that the failure and treachery of others, their unfaithfulness to God and the enslaved, filled him with more fire than he could keep within the bounds of wisdom and prudence. It is the declaration of divine inspiration itself that oppression maketh a wise man mad. Let those that are

without sin cast the first stone ; and depend upon it God had rather see such men made mad in such a way, than see the cowardice and treachery of the church, sanctioning oppression, and denying his Word.

John Brown has committed no treason, for he owed no allegiance to Virginia. And how could he commit treason when his sole object was to free the Slave ? How commit treason in going against a wickedness which God had forbidden, and which faithfulness to God's Word compelled him to oppose ? If John Brown, trusting in his Saviour, comes under that category of the wise men made mad by oppression, John Brown is safe in the loving protection of his Father. John Brown is received of God, though outlawed by those whose very government is itself a piracy against God's government, "framing mischief by a law," crushing and destroying the rights, families, and lives of innocent men, and putting to death men who choose to obey God rather than man. Men can only degrade themselves, and stamp their own pretended justice with eternal infamy, in hanging such a man upon the gallows. But they cannot harm *him* ; he is safe with God ; and we are safe only in obedience to God.

The great lesson of the tragedy is this : If the men of peace will not apply God's law against the sin of Slaveholding, in the shape of argument and earnest truth and the maledictions of God, the men of war will put it in the shape of bullets, and fight it out, and God will let them. Most of the wars in this world have risen from the scarcity and unfaithfulness of Christian warriors ; for if they will but fight God's battles with the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God, God himself promises that even men of violence shall turn their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and the nations shall learn war no more. God grant that this consummation may come ! But for us it never can come, if we hold on to our sins, if we do not apply the thunder and lightning of God's Word persistently, from the pulpit, on the Sabbath, and in every possible way, against this most stupendous of crimes against God and man, entrenched as it is in the bosom of the visible church, and enthroned on the Tribunal of our Supreme Justice !

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE AFFAIR AT
HARPER'S FERRY.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE INDIANA PLACE CHAPEL,

O N

SUNDAY MORNING, NOV. 6, 1859.

BY JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE.

B O S T O N :

W A L K E R , W I S E , & C O .

245 Washington Street.

1859.

PRETISS, SAWYER, & CO., PRINTERS,
19 Water Street, Boston.

S E R M O N .

There is but one subject upon which we can think this morning. Last Wednesday, a man was sentenced to death on the charge of exciting Slaves to Insurrection, of Treason against the State of Virginia, and of Murder. Probably many technical objections might fairly be raised against the verdict, and against the conduct of the Court. But his conviction was a foregone conclusion—it could not be avoided. Men who do such things as he did, set their life on a cast, and must be ready to stand the hazard of the die. He was thus ready—he is ready. From first to last he has shown no wavering, no desire to save his life. His whole course has been so convincingly conscientious, manly, truthful, and heroic, that his enemies have been compelled to honor him. For the first time within our memory, the whole North and South seem to be united in one opinion and one sentiment—the opinion that this attempt of Brown was unwise and unwarranted—the sentiment of respect for the man himself, as a Hero.

You have heard little from this pulpit upon the subject of Slavery for several years. In that time I have scarcely alluded to it; never spoken upon it at length. The reason of my abstinence was simply this, that I saw no necessity for speaking. The subject is being so thoroughly discussed in Congress, in the Legislatures, in the newspapers, in public meetings, and in private discussion, that it does not now seem so necessary to speak of it in the pulpit. But such an event as this calls up too many thoughts to allow me to be silent; and I therefore choose for my subject, “THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE LATE

AFFAIR AT HARPER'S FERRY." And I take for my text the twentieth verse of the sixth chapter of Mark :

"And Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man."

An attempt has been made to ascribe this event to the teachings of the Anti-Slavery party in this country. Well, they *are* the cause of it, in one sense, just as Samuel Adams and Josiah Quincy, James Otis and Patrick Henry were the cause of the bloodshed at Lexington and Bunker's Hill ; and just as the preaching of Christianity was the cause of the religious wars which followed. Whoever opposes tyranny and wrong in any shape, with words, will often cause a conflict of deeds to follow. Jesus said, "*I came not to send peace, but a sword.*" He knew that his teachings would not be peaceably accepted—would be resisted—and that bloodshed would follow. But where rests the responsibility? Not on Jesus, though his Gospel has been the occasion of war ; not on James Otis and Patrick Henry, though their words were the occasion of war ; not on those who oppose evil, but on those who maintain and defend it. Therefore, not on Anti-Slavery teaching, but on Pro-Slavery teaching, North and South, on the men and newspapers in Washington and Boston, who unite with the oppressors to put down Freedom and quench its light in the blood of its advocates ; on these and such as these rests the responsibility of this tragedy.

I. — The first cause of this sad affair is SLAVERY itself.

There is an "irrepressible conflict" between Freedom and Slavery. The opposition is radical and entire ; there can be no peace nor permanent truce between them, till one has conquered the other. Either Slavery is right or it is wrong. The radical question is this : — Can one man belong to another, as his property, or not? To this question there can be but two answers — *Yes* or *No*. There is no intermediate answer.

To this question the whole country formerly said *No*. North and South, every one used to say that Slavery was wrong. The great minds at the South — Washington, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Madison, Monroe, Christopher Gadsden of South Carolina — all believed that Slavery was wrong in principle and bad in its influence, and must gradually come to an end. The evidence of

this is ample. One fact I will mention. The territory north and west of the Ohio was consecrated to Freedom and secured against Slavery by a proviso, passed by the votes of southern as well as northern statesmen. When, afterwards, the people of the Territory of Indiana petitioned Congress to be allowed to hold Slaves for a time, on account of the difficulty in procuring free labor, their petition was reported adversely upon, by a committee, the chairman of which was Randolph of Virginia, who said, "They will thank us hereafter for rejecting their petition."

At that time all admitted that Slavery, in its principle and in the abstract, was wrong; and all said, "We expect, by degrees and gradually, to put an end to it."

There was no war then between Slavery and Freedom; no "irrepressible conflict;" for all were on the side of Freedom.

But time passed by and Slavery did not come to an end. The immense expansion in the consumption of cotton, and its increasing price — the demand always overlapping the supply — made its culture the most profitable work done in America; and this work was most easily and cheaply done by Slaves. At the end of a generation from the death of Washington, Slavery had become vastly more profitable in the Southern States than it was in his days. Now, the South *did not wish* Slavery to come to an end. It wished it to continue. I do not say that the Slaveholders were worse in this than other people. Their misfortune was to be exposed to a tremendous temptation, and they yielded to it. The people of New England might have yielded too, if they had been exposed to that temptation.

This was the first great change; this the essential change; this change of desire and wish — all the rest has followed that. For, though single men are illogical and inconsistent, mankind is logical and consistent. In the long run, people will either act as they believe, or else believe as they act. The Slaveholders were believing one way, but determined to act another. The situation was painful, and they broke away from it. Never was such a revolution in opinion as that which has taken place at the South within the last twenty years, on the subject of Slavery. Twenty years ago, nine Slaveholders out of ten would tell you they thought Slavery wrong; to-day, nine out of ten will tell you they think it right. So logical is man. As they made up their wills to extend, and not abolish Slavery, they presently made up their

minds to believe it right, and not wrong—a Christian Institution; a missionary enterprise; based on the Bible, and in accordance with the highest principles of duty.

I know very well that there was a transition period. While this great change of public opinion was going on, it was covered up and concealed with fine phrases. This was the period of what Bentham calls "*Fallacious Designations*." Bentham says "the object and effect of a *Fallacious Designation* is to avoid any unpleasant idea that happens to be associated with a person or class, and to present to the mind instead an abstraction or creation of fancy." Thus, says he,

Instead of 'Kings or the King,'	you say 'The Crown or Throne.'
" " 'Churchmen,'	" " 'The Church or Altar.'
" " 'Lawyers,'	" " 'The Law.'
" " 'A Judge,'	" " 'The Court.'
" " 'Rich Men,'	" " 'Property.'
" " 'Killing a Man,'	" " 'Capital Punishment.'

So in this country we said,	
Instead of 'Slavery,'	'Southern Institutions.'
" " 'Slaveholders,'	'The South.'

A good deal was accomplished in this way by the Slaveholders. Thus, in 1850, when it was proposed to exclude Slavery, by law, from the new Territories, it was said in reply,—"The South has a right to take its property into the territory purchased by its own treasure and blood." Translated into plain Saxon English, this meant, "Three hundred thousand Slaveholders, in the Slave States, rich enough to own, on an average, ten negroes each, insist, against the interest of thirteen million in the Free States, of six million of Non-Slaveholders in the Slave States, and of three million of Slaves, to carry Slaves into territories where there are none now, and to have the laws changed to let them do it." Mr. Calhoun first established this "*Fallacious Designation*" of 'The South' instead of 'The Slaveholders.' And, in his last great speech in the United States Senate, he carried it so far as to complain that in the annexation of new territory to the Union, "the North had obtained more than the South,"—not meaning that more territory situated at the North had been annexed, but that more had been secured to Freedom than to Slavery.

In the same way, in the Free States, we always have had a party who wish to cover up and conceal the radical opposition of

Slavery to Freedom, and Freedom to Slavery; to daub the wall with untempered mortar — to cry peace when there is no peace. They also make great use of these “Fallacious Designations.” They say ‘Our Southern Brethren;’ meaning, not the four million Slaves, nor the six million Non-Slaveholders at the South, but the three hundred thousand Slaveholders only.

But logic is too strong for phrases. Those who wish to postpone the deluge till their time is past, and to leave it as a legacy to their children and grand-children, find themselves more and more helpless in the increasing earnestness of the hour. The two parties, consisting of those who believe Slavery right and those who believe it wrong, are like the upper and the nether millstone; small, compared with the great bags and heaps of corn lying near them, but destined to go round and round till they have ground it all to powder.

Those who believe Slavery right, labor to fortify, extend, and strengthen it. They have passed the Fugitive Slave Law, defeated the Wilmot Proviso, repealed the Missouri Compromise, obtained the Dred Scott decision, and have determined next to re-open the African Slave Trade, and annex Cuba. No phraseology about “Our Southern Brethren,” or “Safety of the Union,” can conceal these facts.

On the other hand, there is a party which hold Slavery to be wrong. They hold it to be a wild and guilty fantasy that man can claim property in man. With John Wesley, they consider Slavery to be the sum of all villany. Holding this, they believe that the Slave has a right to assert his freedom whenever he can do so; he has a right to take possession of himself with the strong hand if he can. That which he has a right to do we may lawfully help him do, if we violate no other right in doing it; and we cannot lawfully oppose his doing it in any case. For the Slave either belongs to his master or to himself. If he belongs to his master, he is a thief if he tries to escape. If he belongs to himself, his master is a thief if he tries to keep him, and we are kidnapping if we assist his master in taking him. When Anthony Burns was taken down State Street, and the people on each side hoarsely roared “kidnappers! kidnappers!” at the soldiers who guarded him — their faces showed that they felt the truth of the charge. We may wear on our hat the cockade of the United States Marshal, or we may be called out as a military company, covered with

feathers and gold lace, but that does not vacate the principle. We are kidnappers and man-stealers still.

Here is the irrepressible conflict—which may be concealed under heaps of words, smothered by fine phrases, hidden by the exigencies of trade, of party politics, of sectarian ecclesiasticism—but which, like fire which you try to put out with mountainous heaps of straw, burns on and on till it breaks forth at last in a wide, destroying flame.

Here is the fundamental and primary cause of the Harper's Ferry affair—the antagonism between Slavery and Freedom. Any one who believes that Slavery is right must logically regard John Brown as a robber and brigand. But those who believe Slavery wrong; who justify the American Revolution; who admire Washington for contending with sword and fire against the government of Britain to free an oppressed people; who eulogize Lafayette for coming to aid us in that struggle; must believe John Brown to be a hero, and the martyr to a principle. The only ground on which they can find fault with him is for attempting prematurely what he had not power to accomplish; that is, for an error of judgment as regards means. It is true that no man has a right to encourage in any way a Revolution unless there is good reason for believing that it will succeed. The best cause will not authorize life to be needlessly thrown away. If a man thinks he sees enough good in prospect to justify him in throwing away his own life, he may do so on his own responsibility—but he ought not to waste the blood of others. But Brown did not mean to act recklessly—his character forbids that supposition. He was mistaken then—he erred in judgment as to what he could effect. He did not intend an insurrection, he says, but only an escape of fugitives. He is a man of truth, and I believe him.

II.—The second cause of this affair is False Conservatism at the North.

It is not with the purpose of retaliating charges made against Anti-Slavery men, but to express a conviction I have held for years, that I say,—if the dark problem of Slavery finds a bloody solution—that blood will cry from the ground against those who, for years, have been steadily laboring at the North to let down the sentiment of Freedom—the Traitors at home who have given moral aid and comfort to the Slave-power. Had it not

been for these, we should have resisted successfully the Annexation of Texas, or passed the Wilmot Proviso, or defeated the Fugitive Slave Law, or the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise. The Slave-power, defeated on these points, would have ceased from its aggressions; the lovers of Freedom at the South would have been encouraged; the border States would have been led to take measures for emancipation. Gradually, peacefully, and joyfully the cause of Freedom would have grown strong, that of Slavery weak — until, at last, surrounded by the hosts of Free labor, by emigrants from the North, by invading light and advancing religion; hemmed in by all this illumination and warmth, like the scorpion girt with fire, it would have turned its sting against itself —

The sting it nurtured for its foes,
Whose venom never yet was vain,
Gives but one pang and ends all pain.

But as if on a steamer, running at high pressure, men should be frightened at the noise made by escaping steam and so shut down the safety-valve and call the silence safety — so with us, these quietists think all danger to arise from noisy Anti-Slavery people at the North, and try to stop that noise. They think the danger, not from Slavery, but from talking about it; and so are themselves the cause of the evil they try to shun.

III. — The third cause of this Harper's Ferry tragedy is to be found in the low condition of the Religion of the country.

In such a conflict as that between Slavery and Freedom, Christianity, organized in churches, embodied in Christian men and women, should have come forward, to speak the Truth in Love. Holding fast to the Eternal Law of God, rising high above all considerations of mere expediency; it should have declared God's word supreme — above all politics, all legal enactments, all State necessity. Man, made in the image of God, cannot be the slave of his brother man. Proclaiming this, it should also have uttered it in love; with sympathy for the Slaveholder as well as the Slave; with perception of his difficult and dangerous position, of his strong temptations, and with an earnest desire to aid him by common sacrifices.

Unfortunately, little of this has been done. On the one side the supremacy of God's law has not been maintained, but we

have been taught from a thousand pulpits that man's lower law must be obeyed and not the law of conscience; on the other hand, when the truth has been uttered, it has not been always uttered in love to the Slaveholder, but often in bitterness, sarcasm, and contempt. In saying this I do not refer to professed Abolitionists alone. I think that we are always in danger of being unjust to those whom we do not personally know. It is not easy, at this distance, to be just to Slaveholders. But certainly there has often been a hard cold tone of invective used against the South; which is unjust, because it does not recognize their difficulty and their efforts; unchristian, because it does not feel toward them as to brethren.

The opposers of Slavery have sometimes opposed it more in the spirit of Elijah than in that of Christ — with fierce rebuke, with wild invective; and at last, as in the present instance, with the sword and rifle.

John Brown has been taught Christianity by a Church, which, binding up in one volume the Old and New Testament, calls them both the Christian Bible, and gives equal authority to the one as to the other. He is an Old Testament Christian; a Christian who believes in the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. Bred a Calvinist of the strictest sect in Connecticut, and holding firmly to his faith, he shares all the great and noble qualities that faith has so often produced, together with its frequent alloy. He is such a man as Calvinism produced in the Scotch Covenanters, in the men of Cromwell's Ironside Regiment, who did not do the work of the Lord negligently at Naseby and at Worcester. To this is added a touch of chivalric devotion and inspired enthusiasm, such as nerved the arm of the Maid of Orleans and of Charlotte Corday.

Let me give you an authentic anecdote of his strict and impartial sense of justice. Some years ago, when living in Western Pennsylvania, or on the Ohio Reserve, he found a man whom he believed to be a horse-thief. He arrested him and took him to jail. The man was convicted and sent to prison. But while he was in prison, John Brown furnished the man's family with provisions and clothing. The man had committed a crime, and Brown's sense of justice required that he should be punished. His wife and children had not committed any crime, and Brown's sense of justice would not allow them to be punished for another's

fault. The man who told this story is now Sheriff, I think, in Crawford County, Pennsylvania, and was at that time a boy in Brown's family, and was himself sent to town to buy flour and carry it to the house of the convict.

These are the three causes of this tragedy: — *First*, the radical hostility growing ever stronger between Slavery and Freedom. *Secondly*, the false Conservatism at the North, which, dividing our strength, has prevented Freedom from crushing the propagandism of Slavery in the bud. And, *Thirdly*, a Christianity which could not speak the truth with power, and at the same time with love. These three causes will produce the like effects again, only more terrible, unless some help comes from God's providence and man's fidelity.

Let us see if such help is likely to come. What will be the consequences of this affair?

I have heard it said that there will be no marked result from this event; that the waves will close over the head of this misguided but honored champion of the forlorn, and that in six months the world will scarcely remember him or his actions.

I cannot think so. To me this event seems freighted with consequences. It is like the clock, striking the fatal hour—the hour of the beginning of a new era in this conflict. There is something solemn, something ominous in this transaction. While we are talking, arguing, making speeches, having Anti-Slavery fairs and Anti-Slavery pic-nics; here is this old man, with his sons, taking his life and their lives, and going calmly forward to strike a blow at the heart of this system. You may call it madness, insanity—what you will—but it is the madness of Curtius leaping into the gulf which yawned in the forum; the insanity of the Roman Consul, who, dedicating himself to the infernal gods, plunged alone and in full armor into the ranks of the enemy, as a sacrifice for his nation.

It is the madness of Arnold of Winkleried, gathering into his bosom the deadly sheaf of spears—the madness of the three hundred who went to die at Thermopylæ—of the six hundred who rode into the Jaws of Hell, to perish in vain, because it was their duty to do and die. It is a kind of insanity of which a few specimens are scattered along the course of the human race—and wherever they are found, they make the glory of human nature, and give us

L. of C.

more faith in God and man. Such men die, but their act lives forever —

Their memory wraps the dusky mountain,
 Their spirit sparkles in the fountain,
 The meanest rill, the mightiest river,
 Rolls, mingling with their fame forever.

You cannot get away from it. Call it fanaticism, folly, madness, wickedness — it rises before you still with its calm, marble features, more terrible in defeat and death than in life and victory — the awful lineaments of Conscience. It is one of those acts of madness which History cherishes, and which Poetry loves forever to adorn with her choicest wreaths of laurel.

One consequence of the event will be, I cannot but think, the arousing of the nation's conscience. A thoroughly conscientious act awakens conscience in others. I have already mentioned its effect at the South. It has commanded respect where we might have expected violence. The quality of courage and nobleness in the man, in all his words and his whole manner, have evidently produced a most extraordinary impression. No bravado, no timidity — no concealment, no ostentation — perfect manliness, truth, and honesty, have been so conspicuous, that these qualities have touched the higher natures of Southern men, and awakened genuine feelings of respect and admiration. The Slaveholders have at last seen, face to face, a specimen of their "bête noir" — an Abolitionist. They find themselves compelled to respect him. Governor Wise now knows what an Abolitionist is; and finds him not a man wishing to murder women and children; but tender to noncombatants, careful of his prisoners' lives, doing no needless harm, but knowing no such thing as fear. Our text says that "*Herod feared John, knowing him to be a just man.*" This is one of those wonderful touches which mark the insight of the Scripture. The tyrant on his throne, surrounded by his soldiers, backed by the mighty power of Rome, was afraid of the prophet in his prison — afraid of him in his tomb — "knowing him to be a just man." The awful majesty of Justice penetrated through guards and courtiers, ante-rooms and festival chambers, and caused a thrill of terror to pass through the monarch's soul. So the Herod of Slavery fears John Brown, in his prison; will continue to fear him, in his tomb — "knowing him to be a just man."

Ten thousand Southern pulpits have been proving that because Abraham held Slaves, and Paul sent back Onesimus, therefore it is no violation of the golden rule to work negroes to death on the rice plantations of South Carolina and the sugar coast of the Mississippi. Ten thousand able editors, popular orators, and philosophic professors have been proving the same thing from statistics, ethnology, and anatomy. But here comes Old John Brown, believing Slavery a sin, and believing it so much as to fling his life away; and in their hearts and souls, the reverend and learned arguers feel that they are sophists, with no truth in them.

When such a deed is done, it is not the actual deed, but that which it announces, that is terrific. How many more John Browns may there not be behind? — so say in their souls to-day the whole population south of Mason's and Dixon's Line. This may be only the first drop of the coming shower. True, the whole writing and speaking public at the North disavows and condemns the deed, but what do those think of it, who, like John Brown himself, do not talk, but act? I cannot tell — neither can you. I know that great crimes and great virtues are contagious. Suicide is contagious. Murder is contagious. It may be that many a man, sitting comfortably in his easy chair, when he read the account, “wished himself accursed he was not there” too. We may be to-day on the brink of a civil war. A crusade is attractive to thousands, whether it be in the form of fillibustering against Cuba, invading Kansas from Missouri, invading Missouri from Kansas, following Peter the Hermit to Palestine, or following other John Browns into Virginia. I do not believe in these crusades, any of them. I think them all bad and wrong. But woe to the man by whom the offence cometh.

A better result than this will be the swift depletion of the border States of their Slaves, and the turning of them into the ranks of the Free. The Governor of Virginia already announces that no Slaves can be kept near the border who wish to escape. And one reason why no Slaves joined in this insurrection is, no doubt, that most of those who wished Freedom had already gone away. If the blow had been struck further south, it might have had a different effect on the Slave population.

There is a sad day before us. We shall be obliged to wait in silence, knowing that the soul of this hero is departing from the scaffold to the invisible world. But as the motive sanctifies the

action, so it also glorifies the doom. The man will go to his death in the same great spirit in which he has thus far spoken and lived. Could his life be spared, I should be grateful; if not, I must remember

That whether on the scaffold high,
Or in the battle's van,
The fittest place for man to die
Is where he dies for man.

One lesson let us not fail to gather. The only thing of much worth in life is the spirit in which a man acts. Not what we do, but the *motive* of the action, is the great thing. Since this affray, and the deaths at Harper's Ferry, there has been a violent and extensive conflict at the polls at Baltimore, and perhaps as many men killed. But who thinks of that? Who cares for it? Who knows anything about it? The motive was ignoble, a mere political squabble; and they who were killed died like dogs. But here the motive was noble, and they who were shot down, fighting for it, fell like martyrs, and lie soiled with no unbecoming dust.

The times are dark, and may become darker. I do not expect much from political parties, or from popular elections. But I have faith in the Divine Providence—faith in the coming Kingdom of Jesus Christ—faith that He, the Master, shall yet come to reign in hearts grateful for his love, and in minds submissive to his will. And, returning from the contemplation of these events, marching by us in the steady progress of history, to our own private life and duty, let us imitate the conscience and the devotion to right of all these heroic souls, and seek also for the faith in a Divine Love which shall sweeten the harsh rebuke with charity, and warm our souls with a hope full of everlasting peace and joy. Condemning all violence, bloodshed, and war, let us overcome evil with good, and, whenever we speak the Truth, speak it also in Love.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 012 028 343 1

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 012 028 343 1



Permalife®
pH 8.5