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## Radicalism and the National Crisis

Samuel T. Spear

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RADICALISM  
AND THE  
NATIONAL CRISIS,  
A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE  
SOUTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BROOKLYN,

BY THE PASTOR  
REV. SAMUEL T. SPEAR, D. D.

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OCTOBER 19th, 1862.

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BROOKLYN, *Oct. 20th*, 1862.

REV. S. T. SPEAR, D. D.

DEAR SIR:—Having listened with much pleasure and profit to your Sermon preached yesterday morning, we request a copy for publication in the hope that it may thus be put in the way of more permanent and extensive usefulness.

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## RADICALISM AND THE NATIONAL CRISIS.

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“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.”—  
Mat. 3 : : 10—

To place the axe at the root of the tree is a figure to denote, that the tree is to be cut down at the roots, not simply trimmed, but actually destroyed. The reason is found in the fact, that it does not bring forth good fruit.

By the use of this figure, John the Baptist meant to say to the Jews, that as a people they had fallen upon searching times. The great Teacher and Reformer was about to come, establishing a Kingdom of justice and truth. It would no longer do for them to say,—“We have Abraham to our father.” Principles and conduct were to be examined to their very foundations: Judaism was to be sifted; and whatever in the notions or practice of the people could not stand the test of truth, was to be discarded. In the person of Jesus a *radical* dispensation,—a ministry of truth that goes down to the very *roots* of things,—was about to commence its reformatory career. Such we take to be the meaning of the text in its application to the Jewish people.

There are many people, in whose minds the terms *radical* and *radicalism*, are about equivalent to the terms *fanatic* and *fanaticism*. To their understanding these words mean *evil*, and only evil, and that continually. Hence they are convenient terms to excite the prejudices of men, and awaken popular odium. Sometimes they are used as a substitute for ideas, and quite often as the *slang* phrases of those who have some interest in promoting error, or practicing iniquity. I have no desire to make a plea for extremists and fools; yet there is a grand and glorious meaning connected with these much abused terms, which I wish,

if possible, to rescue from all misapprehension and evil associations. I very much doubt whether it is best to be frightened simply because somebody cries out *radical*; and I am equally clear, that the term *conservative* has no natural right to monopolize the claim to either purity or wisdom. The so called conservatives are sometimes the weakest and most selfish of men. The Pope of Rome has always been a conservative; and so were the Pharisees in the days of Jesus.

Prosecuting the object I have just indicated, let me then—

IN THE FIRST PLACE, GIVE YOU A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE WORDS IN QUESTION. The true meaning of the term *radical*, the one which its etymology authorizes, is furnished by the figure of the text. It simply means to lay the axe at the *root* of the tree; and this means to go down to the bottom of things, and keep going down till you strike what may be properly designated as the *hard-pan* of fundamental truth. This is what John the Baptist did—what Jesus did—what the apostles did—what Luther did—and what all agency that is effectually curative of evil, must always do.

The specific *design* of this process is to find the truth touching the matter involved, and then set it forth in contrast with, and contradistinction from, the error or the vice which it is the province of truth to expose and rebuke. Hence the great inquiry is not, what do the Pharisees think? or what does Cæsar think? but rather what is truth,—truth in science, truth in practical life, truth in morals, and truth in religion? Such in all ages has been the professed aim of the radical spirit. I am well aware, that the history of this spirit has not always been equal to its profession. Sometimes it has been rash, impetuous, impatient, intolerant, dictatorial; sometimes also it has torn up the very foundations of society, being so vehement and lawless as utterly to fail of its own end; and yet it is equally true, that this spirit proposes to realize one of the grandest theories that ever inspired the breast of humanity. Fixing its eye on truth, it designs to assert it fearlessly and boldly, launching its sharp and oft repeated thunders against sin and error. Not infrequently, yea, perhaps generally, it makes a commotion in the world. It

stirs human society, and sets men to thinking. It is itself a very thinking spirit.

In relation to *humanity*—its facts, its conditions, its wants, its duties, and its destiny,—this spirit is the bone and sinew, the life and impulse of all real *progress*, alike in the Church and the State. The truth is, since the fall of Adam this world has never been just right; it is not so now; and it will not be for some time to come. There is a vast accumulation of error among men, and also a vast accumulation of iniquity, in various forms pervading human society. Human nature wants improvement. Society wants it. Hence the practical question is this:—Shall we leave things as they *are*, because they *are*? or shall we attempt to make them better, rooting out the error and the wrong, and introducing the truth and the right? This is the question with which we have to deal; and to it the radical spirit always returns but one answer. It clamors for correction, improvement, and progress. It is indeed the spirit of progress. The enlightened radical is the man of progress. The fact that things *are*, is not in his judgment conclusive proof that they *ought* to be. He takes the liberty of inquiring into their nature; and when he has reached a conclusion, he frankly and firmly tells the world of it. Galileo, for example, was an astronomical radical; he saw that, contrary to the notions of the age, the earth moved around the sun, and not the sun around the earth; by a perfectly radical investigation of the facts, he caught this truth; and although it subverted the cycles and epicycles of the old theory, although the Pope took the alarm and tried to keep him still, Galileo held fast to his conviction, and so far as he could, made it known to others. He was the man of progress; and the world now recognizes him as such. Those who would exorcise the Galileos in science, morals, and religion, are practically the enemies of all progress. They may not always intend this; yet this is the legitimate effect of their theory.

Such, in a word, is my analysis of the radical spirit, taken,—first, in its elementary meaning,—secondly, in its direct and specific aim,—thirdly, in its relation to the progress and development of man from an imperfect to a more perfect form of life.

This is what I mean by the phrase. This I hold to be the true and proper import of the phrase. I come then,—

IN THE SECOND PLACE, TO INQUIRE INTO THE ACTUAL HISTORY OF THIS SPIRIT IN ITS BEARING UPON THE INTELLECTUAL, SOCIAL, POLITICAL, MORAL, AND RELIGIOUS FORTUNES OF THE WORLD. This, as you see, is a question of vast dimensions. The answer that I propose for your acceptance with its reasons, is the following—: That while this spirit has, sometimes by misapprehension, and sometimes by excess, been productive of evil, its *general* history is one of untold blessings to mankind.

If you turn your thoughts to the field of purely *scientific* research, you will find that the men who have distinguished themselves on this field, and contributed most largely to the advancement of human knowledge, are not the men who have trodden the beaten track of their fathers, governed by the precedents of opinion, and content to retail old ideas, but the bold, the fearless, the original, the radical investigators of truth. These are the men who have made their mark upon the thinking of the world. Lord Bacon, in laying down the fundamental principles which should govern all investigation, and by those principles exposing the sophistries practiced by the schoolmen of the dark ages—; Sir Isaac Newton, in that profound inquest after truth, by which he at length discovered the great law, that gives regularity and harmony to the motion of the heavenly bodies—; Dr. Franklin, in catching the lightnings of heaven with a key, and resolving their phenomena into an electrical agency—; our own illustrious Morse, the inventor of the electric telegraph, in conceiving both the idea and the mechanism by which he could give a tongue to this agency—; John Locke, in his deep exploration of the origin of knowledge, correcting many of the cherished errors of former times—; these, and men of like stamp, were intellectual radicals, going to the bottom of things, advancing beyond the ideas which had preceded them, and cutting for themselves and for the world *new* channels in the great domain of thought. Plato did this in his age, and Aristotle, in his age. Such men refuse to bow to the authority of mere precedents. Assuming that ideas must at last rule the world, they not only drive the plough-

share of truth into the errors of the past, but also greatly enlarge the kingdom of human ideas. True, they may sometimes go astray; they may delude themselves and mislead others; yet to this class of men the world is mainly indebted for those sciences that have conferred such exalted honors on our nature, as well as those arts and inventions which have done so much to improve the condition of mankind. But for their life and mental activity, the intellectual status of earth would be stationary, perhaps retrogressive.

Passing out of the circle of pure science into the sphere of *reformatory* movements, we find that the progress of the world is largely due to the same style of agency. A reform supposes an evil existing in human society, intrenched in some fundamental error of thought, or fortified by some vicious feeling, or,—what is generally the fact,—supported by both of these causes in combination. Now in the very nature of things a reformer must attack this evil; he must make an exhibition of its nature; he must reason about it; he must try it by some standard of truth; he must make an appeal to the conscience of men; and in doing this he must of necessity lay the axe at the root of the tree. He proposes a fundamental change in the notions and practice of men; and this can be gained only by truth as fundamental as the change itself. The truth must be as deep as the error,—deep enough at least to go to the bottom of the error. Take an example.

The immortal Wilberforce, being impressed with the horrible iniquities of the Slave-trade as tolerated and fostered under the prestige and patronage of the British government, exposed it, and denounced it, in the English Parliament and before the British public, till the moral sense of the nation awoke to the enormity of the system, and sternly demanded that it should come to an end. The merchants of Liverpool, and the merchants of London, the men who were interested in this infamous traffic, denounced Wilberforce as a radical, a fanatic, an agitator; like the men of Ephesus, when their craft was in danger, they cried out,—“Great is Diana of the Ephesians”; even Pitt, contrary to his personal pledges, had not the moral courage to breast the



storm and do his duty; yet Wilberforce, the radical, the man whom all honest men now delight to honor, held steadily to his purpose till he carried the point. He kept the ear of England tingling with the terrible wickedness of the slave-trade, till England's conscience could no longer bear the sound. England now makes that piracy punishable with death, on which she once bestowed her sanction. It was the radical spirit of Wilberforce that brought about this result.

So, all the reformatory movements which have marked the history of England, or that of this country, and I may add, that of the world, have sprung from the same spirit, and been conducted by the same class of men. Who are the men that have resisted the assumptions of despotic power,—curtailed the prerogatives of kings,—made the monarchies of Europe far more liberal and just than they were a century ago,—contended for the doctrine of popular rights,—sympathised with the suffering, the oppressed, and the down-trodden of our species,—contributed to the emancipation and dignity of labor,—enlarged the right of suffrage,—pleaded most earnestly for the education of the masses,—poured forth their blood like water upon the altars of freedom—; yes who are the men that have done these things? Who projected the American Revolution? Who wrote the Declaration of Independence, than which a more radical document never met the eye of earth or heaven? Who supported it with their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor? To whom are we indebted for the political and civil system, under which we have so long, and until lately, so happily lived? The plain and honest voice of history will tell you, that these achievements are mainly due to those men, who have acted on the principle of laying the axe at the root of the tree, and then cutting down every tree that did not bring forth good fruit. Sometimes called Round Heads, sometimes Puritans, sometimes disorganizers, sometimes agitators, sometimes radicals, sometimes fanatics, sometimes one thing, and sometimes another, they have nevertheless been the most prominent actors in promoting the advancement of humanity, correcting its abuses, and in all respects, improving the social and political condition of our world. For a rule they are

earnest and honest men, having strong convictions and deep feelings, not indeed always right in their ideas or prudent in their measures, yet men of vast power, men whose absence from earth would make a chasm which nothing else could fill. They have done too much for the good of the world to be branded with opprobrious epithets.

Rising now to a still higher plane of thought, and observing the *spiritual* and *religious* history of mankind, we meet the same class of facts, springing from essentially the same source. When the Man of Sin had for ages spread the pall of moral death over all Europe, corrupting the very fountains of society, and prostituting the pure religion of Jesus to the vilest purposes, who was it that lifted his voice in thunder-tones against this enormous and wide-spread iniquity? Who laid the axe at the root of the tree? Luther,—the bold, the honest, the earnest, the godly, the radical Luther, going to the bottom of things and bringing doctrines and morals to the test of God's word,—is the man who under God did this work. Who, during the long night of the dark ages refused to bow the knee to the Pope, and in their humble way maintained the pure worship of God amid their mountain-homes, persecuted, but not destroyed? The radical Albigenses and Waldenses are the men, on whom history has placed this mark of honor. Who were the martyrs in the early ages of the Church, boldly meeting the storm of Pagan persecution, and cheerfully dying in the cause of their Master? They were the men whose religious convictions neither earth nor hell could suppress or conquer. Who first planted Christianity among men, turning the world upside down, and laying the axe at the very roots of Pagan Rome, and a corrupt Judaism? Who made such a stir in Judea and in various parts of the Roman Empire, some eighteen centuries ago? This was the work of Jesus and his apostles, than whom considered in reference to the existing status of the age, greater radicalists the world never furnished. Who when he mounted the throne of Judea, cut down the idolatrous groves, and purified the temple and worship of the living God? This was the work of Josiah,—a young and pious prince who meant to make the remedy as deep and broad as the disease.

Coming nearer to our own times, who, let me ask, were the Dissenters and Puritans in England? Who fled from the old world, and came to this, for the purpose of enjoying their religious rights? Who are the men that floated in the *May Flower*, and in the depths of Winter landed at Plymouth Rock? Who planted the Church, the School-house, and the State on these Western shores? The same men, as to their spirit and temper, that in the armies of Oliver Cromwell sung psalms, and made prayers, and then fought for God and liberty as no other men ever did. They were radicalists, hated by the English aristocracy, persecuted for their faith, yet fulfilling a mission in the history of the world, which one must be blind not to see. Their power consisted in the thoroughness and depth of their principles. They belong to the class whom kings and politicians sometimes disdain, and as often fear. They are the men who have a gospel; and they believe it. Their brains are not too narrow to comprehend fundamental principles.

Who stirred up all New England, some century ago, purifying its theological atmosphere, and showing the unscriptural character of what has been styled the "Half-Way Covenant" in respect to the question of church-membership, reasoning with the people of his special charge, and reasoning with the ministry, and choosing to forfeit the good esteem of his people rather than sacrifice the truth? The man who faced opposition, and under God accomplished this task, is Jonathan Edwards,—that illustrious prince in theology, that profoundest of thinkers, as well as that most beautiful exhibition of the Christian virtues; and he did the work by laying the axe at the root of the tree. Who, by deep and earnest discussion, struck such heavy blows against the Unitarian heresy, so prevalent and so popular in New England, some half a century ago? Moses Stuart and the venerable Dr. Woods,—both of whom, I trust, are now reaping the heavenly reward of their labors,—buckled on the armor of God, and contended earnestly for the faith. They, too, laid the axe at the root of the tree.

You thus see, without farther recital, that the radical spirit in science, in the reformatory movements of earth, and the religious

developements of man, so far from being justly obnoxious to our suspicion or censure, is really worthy of all praise. It is one of the elements in human character, by which the mighty God makes his power felt on earth. It is one of the chosen instruments of Providence to bless and save this fallen world. The most effective men of our race have been actuated by this spirit. Such men do quite as much thinking as other men, and vastly more than some. Very often they win victories, over which, being won, the conservatives are ready to shout in terms of the highest laudation. Doubtless, there are many who glorify Luther to-day, who, if living in the sixteenth century, would have passed him by as a radical. Some people are very bold in killing *dead* lions; but no motive can persuade them to touch a living question, till all doubt about the issue is removed. Then their courage comes up to the mark. You can never find them when you want them; and when you do *not* want them, they are quite ready to help on the good cause. They are too conservative to peril any thing. Their consciences are too elastic to have much force.

I really wonder what those newspapers, and those orators and those office-seekers can be thinking about, who denounce the radical spirit, as if it were the quintessence of all evil. Are they playing with words? Are they trying to deceive the people? Do they understand what they so freely denounce? Are they honest? Have they read history? I take the liberty of saying to them, that the facts do not justify the opprobrium they design. The word *radical*, analytically and historically expounded, is a *royal* term. In reference to the momentuous questions of the Revolutionary age, George Washington was a radical; Thomas Jefferson, another; John Hancock, another; and John Adams, another. They lived in a radical age, and were as radical as the age. They were the men of the future, while the Tories in this country and George III in England were the conservatives, the men of the present.

I come now, my brethren, to what I had in view in the commencement of this sermon, and what the preceding remarks must have suggested,—

IN THE THIRD PLACE, TO MAKE AN APPLICATION OF THESE THOUGHTS TO THE AFFAIRS OF OUR OWN COUNTRY AT THE PRESENT MOMENT.—I am not here to preach *politics* in the low, party sense of the term. I never did this in the pulpit; and I think I never shall. Nor am I here to make any apology for my utterances. I have but one rule in preaching; and that is to speak what I think, leaving the people to judge for themselves.

The times, in my judgment, imperatively demand, that the Christian pulpit should have a distinct and clear ring. It is no hour for God's servants to hide themselves, and practice ambiguities for the sake of being unintelligible. The tremendous and appalling drama of events which Divine Providence is now enacting in this land, should bring every man to the altar of prayer, and then carry him from that altar to discharge the duties he owes to God, his country, to posterity, and the world. What is now the great *American* question, has sent its thrill over all Europe. It will, either for weal or woe, cast its shadows on the path of coming centuries. With a single exception, it is more radical and more fundamental, and involves larger interests, than any other upon which mortals or immortals ever fixed the gaze of thought. God, I believe, is in this question. "There is a divine *reason* in it. There is a divine *justice* in it"; and we may be sure that there is a divine *purpose* to be answered by it. Providence is in the crisis of the hour.

As I survey the matter, there are three *radical* principles, crowded by the God of Providence upon this nation, and demanding our solution. The first is one of *national life*; the second is one of *moral justice*; and the third is one of an enlarged and generous *Christian philanthropy*. On each of these points I wish to say a word, beginning—

*First, with the question of national life.* It would be folly either to underrate or misunderstand our foe. He means to destroy this noble Union of States. His plan if successful, is perfectly fatal. Secession is the theory; but destruction is the end. Rebellion and fighting, robbery and pillage are the means of this gigantic crime against the Constitution and peace of our common country.

What have we to do in such premises? Shall we talk about peace-measures, and compromise-measures in the presence of an armed rebellion? Shall we call those our political brethren who are our public enemies, who are traitors to the Constitution, and who are putting the knife to the very throat of our national existence? Shall we by party strife, and for party purposes, seek to foment discord in our own ranks? No—*never*—NEVER. Our duty is to put down this rebellion, to crush it absolutely, using all the means which God and nature have placed in our hands for this purpose. Our duty is to blast and brand with eternal infamy the theory of secession, and prove to the world that this Union “is a *government* in the highest sense of the term, the enforcement of whose laws, at whatever cost, is a fundamental article of its creed, just as fundamental as liberty itself.” This we must do, or die as a nation. I hence regard this war for the Union as an imperative necessity. I regard it as a *holy* war. The sword was never drawn in a more sacred cause; and should never be returned to its scabbard till the end is gained. What shall be done with the rebels when they are conquered, is an *after*-question. Let us first conquer them. Let us beat them on the battle-field, as we can do, and I believe, we will do, dispersing their armies, and bringing them to absolute submission. This, I know, is a very radical measure; the land groans under the tread of contending legions; blood flows, and families weep; yet, in the circumstances of our position, no other measure meets the case. No other measure will give the death-blow to the wicked theory of secession. No other measure will preserve the integrity, the dignity, and glory of this government. No other measure will prove, that we are what we claim to be—a NATION. No other measure will settle this controversy upon a lasting basis. We must conquer the rebels, or be conquered by them. We must lay the military axe at the root of the tree, with an earnestness and decision that leave no doubt as to our purpose.

*The second point is one of moral justice.* We have practiced a great iniquity in this land. We have continued to practice it year after year, and generation after generation. In the bosom of the freest government on which the sun ever shone, we

have the institution of human slavery. We have tolerated it, fostered it, legislated for it, bought territory for its extension, till it has grown to its present fearful and appalling dimensions. Not a few in this country have gone so far as to call it *right*. And not a few who think it *wrong*, have desired to say but little about it. The Southern people by one of the most extraordinary apostacies in morals to be found in the history of man, and contrary to the faith of their fathers, have canonized the institution of slavery.

Moreover, that slavery is the cause of this rebellion, the great root and ground of our present troubles, is as plain as the sun in the heavens. The chief watchwords of the rebellion have been the *sanctity* and *perpetuity* of slavery. The leaders have hung out the flag of slavery. They have declared it to be the chief corner-stone of a political edifice, that is to be built on the eternal wretchedness of an oppressed and subjugated race. When they discovered by the census of 1860, as well as by the last Presidential election, that the political power of this country was passing into the hands of freemen, and out of the hands of slaveholders, and that they were to be no longer the ruling power in the national government, then according to the programme of Mr. Calhoun, of more than thirty years standing, they rent the contract by which they had hitherto been bound. The whole meaning of this civil war so far as the South is concerned, is the preponderance of slavery, and of the obligarchy which is founded upon this institution. Slavery for its own dire purposes has decreed that the nation shall die. There is no use in blinking this point, or mis-understanding it. Public opinion, the common sense of men, and the philosophy of the facts, as well as the confessions of the rebels themselves, are not, and cannot be, in error on this point. Back of all other causes lies the slave power as the chief cause of this rebellion. And but for it no such diabolical scheme would have ever been conceived, or if conceived, attempted.

What then, we enquire, are the signs of the times as written upon the sky of God's providence? We have all been hoping and even predicting, that this rebellion would prove the death-

knell of slavery—just how and when, we have not been able to see. Had the rebellion been less persistent and formidable, had it been conquered with but little fighting, had the armies of the Union been far more successful, had slavery proved, as many supposed, an element of weakness, and not as the facts show, an element of very great strength—had this been the order of Providential events, to all human seeming this war would have ended without reaching the slavery-question in any very essential and radical form. Such however has not been the order of Providence. We have had serious disasters and delays. We have had time to collect our thoughts, and reflect upon what is right. We have had a severe discipline. Providence has thrown several thousands of slaves upon our hands. We have found it necessary to use them, and to make some provision for them. While we have vacillated in our policy, sometimes looking in one direction, and sometimes in another, sometimes seeming to have no policy, the government scarcely knowing what to do, Providence, by the stern force of events, has been slowly but steadily crowding the slavery-question upon public attention. The effort to ignore it has been constantly bringing it to the surface. We have not been able to get rid of it. In whatever way the President looked, this question met him. It has floated on every breeze, and drifted in every current. In the outset of the struggle, I confess myself to have been rather cautious in my thoughts: I scarcely knew what I did think: I had no desire that the President should be hasty or hurried in his final policy on this subject: I thought I saw that he needed time to think, and also that the public mind needed discipline and training by the course of events—: yet now, in the existing circumstances, looking at the past, taking into view the character of the struggle, and above all, studying the principles which govern the righteous providence of God, permit me to say very frankly, that I have reached my conclusion. I am in favor of employing the whole military strength of this nation, to carry into practical execution the purposes expressed by the President in his recent Proclamation. The measure, I know, is radical; yet there are times, and we have fallen upon them, when radical measures are the wisest.



As a *war-measure*, as the means of reaching a Constitutional end, which is the only aspect of the case presented in the President's Proclamation, I do not see how any reasonable man can doubt his right to adopt it. He has a right as "the Commander-in-Chief of the army and the navy," to do any thing justified by the usages of civilized warfare, which, in his judgment, may be necessary to the conquest of the rebellion. This is involved in the very nature of the war-power; and surely it is Constitutional to use the whole strength of this power to maintain the government of these United States. I am not able to see what there is in slavery so sacred, that it should be exempted from the ordinary incidents of war, especially a war provoked by itself. Let it take the consequences of its own acts. Slavery is giving great aid and comfort to this rebellion; the slave-population furnishes the producing force which feeds the army in the field; a portion of it accompanies the army in the character of servants, and diggers of trenches; the rebels themselves are using this power to great advantage; and surely if we may do anything to weaken and destroy them, if we may take away their property, and if necessary, bombard their cities, then in the state of war, we may strike down that institution for whose ascendancy they are fighting, and on which they rely as one element of strength. If they want to escape the blow, let them lay down their arms; and the President's Proclamation will not touch them. They are now simply warned by the Proclamation, "*that on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State, or any designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then THENCEFORWARD and FOREVER FREE, and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their ACTUAL freedom.*" Let the rebels lay down their arms before the first day of January; and this Proclamation will not disturb the institution of slavery. It becomes effective only in the event of their persistence in the war. It offers them a day of grace.

If it be objected, that this Proclamation may take effect in emancipating the slaves of those who are loyal citizens in the rebellious States, then I answer—: first, that the number of these persons must be exceedingly small, as compared with the whole people,—: secondly, that a measure demanded by a great public necessity for the suppression of the rebellion, is not to be balked in its course for the sake of this small minority of persons, who are not in active rebellion—: thirdly, that the theory of the President is, that these persons should receive compensation from the Federal Government for the loss of their slaves. I confess, that I do not see any force in the objection. The loyal people of the Free States are suffering most severely in consequence of this war; and why should not the loyal people, if any there be, in the rebellious States, be willing to accept a measure, not primarily aimed at them, but designed to crush this accursed treason, even though they may be sufferers in its practical execution by reason of their connection with traitors? Is slavery so dear to them that they cannot give it up even to save the Union? If truly loyal, they will welcome the blow, and trust to the government to do them justice afterwards.

Those who are very sensitive about the Constitution at this time, who want the war prosecuted, as they say, according to the Constitution, and doubt the constitutionality of this measure, seem to forget that this very Constitution bestows upon the Government the *war*-power, of which the President is the executive agent. In discharging the trusts committed to him, the Constitution makes it his duty to conquer the foe, and use all the means in his power for this purpose. Traitors against the Constitution have no rights under it, except to be conquered and hung. They surely are not the men to plead the Constitution in their own behalf.

Will not the measure exasperate the rebels, and make them more persistent than they otherwise would be? I think, the experience of the last eighteen months supplies an ample answer to this question. These men are not to be exasperated. They are already as determined as they can be. They are not to be conciliated by any emollient system of treatment. They mean

to fight, and to keep fighting; and fight they undoubtedly will until they are conquered, as perhaps no other people were ever conquered in the history of human warfare. It is high time to relinquish the false idea of coaxing this rebellien into good nature. We have already lost much by *playing* war; and now if we mean to win in this struggle, we must make the rebels *feel* the war in its utmost severity. This is the shortest, surest, and most merciful way to the end.

As to the question of *expediency*, the President having taken this ground, and after long delay and much consideration, issued his Proclamation, the measure becomes expedient, even if it were not so before. As I read events, the Proclamation is not ahead of Providence; nor is it in advance of a rapidly increasing drift of public sentiment; and the way now to solve the problem of expediency, is to put on the armor, and make the destruction of slavery as the *means*, and the preservation of the Union as the *end*, the grand watchwords of the struggle. Let us carry freedom and victory in the same hand. The power that can gain the latter, can also gain the former. If we *can* conquer this rebellion, we can also kill slavery while doing it. We now have the *opportunity*, as we should not have in times of peace. We can now rid the land of that which has so long been its curse and its shame. The hour for doing this work, and the only hour possible since the Revolutionary age, has come; and my prayer to God is, that we may see our opportunity. He does not mean, if I read his providence correctly, to let us off with any half-way work on this subject. We must now lay the axe at the root of the tree, and put an end to slavery. I have no denunciations for those who dissent from these opinions. They are my opinions; and I utter them in the fear of God.

In respect to the *equity* and *moral justice* of the result accruing from this measure, I have no doubt. I hold, as I ever have held, that the system of human slavery is *wrong*—a sin against God and the dearest rights of our nature. For this wrong we are now suffering as a people. God is angry with us, and punishing us for this sin, and punishing those most severely who have sinned most grievously. The best way to please God and

secure his favor, is to put away this evil from the land, to do *right*, to break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free. If with the opportunity we now have, and the discipline through which we have passed, and are still passing, we come short of this point,—if we undertake to cheat eternal justice,—then my belief is, that a night of deeper shades than this dark hour awaits us in the future. You may depend upon it, that it is safe to do right; and the American people can commit no mistake so great as in this hour to fail in executing that sentence of death against slavery, for which Providence calls, and which God's justice must approve. The ways and the methods I leave with those whose is the official task, pledging to them my support and my prayers, and beseeching Almighty God to give them alike the nerve and the wisdom to compass the end. "I frankly confess to you, gentlemen, (said a distinguished politician, addressing an assembly not long since,) I frankly confess to you, that, for myself, I take no interest in the negro; but, gentlemen, I am at a loss to conceive how any man can review the history of this rebellion without a clear conviction that *Almighty Providence* does!" Just so, my hearers. God does take an interest in some four millions of slaves; he is showing that interest at this hour; and the time has fully come for us, the creatures of his power and the ministers of his providence, to inquire for the path of duty on this subject, and then walk in it. My greatest concern about the nation lies at this very point.

*The third question growing out of the times, is one of enlarged and generous Christian philanthropy—* It is sometimes called the *negro-question* in distinction from that of slavery. If we put away slavery, as I pray God that we may, then we must not butcher the black man to get rid of him, but treat him in the sequel of his history according to the law of love. As the superior race, we have injured him quite long enough. Let us now try to do him good. As an inferior, ignorant, degraded, comparatively helpless race, subject to enormous disadvantages, he appeals to our philanthropy. We owe to him the duties of philanthropy. If he can constitute, either in part or in whole, the laboring population of the Southern States, being rewarded

for the toil of his hands, and duly protected in his rights as a man,—if this be the best arrangement for him and also for the white race—then so be it. I have no objections. For one I do not wish to drive him from this land, *nolens volens*, whether he will or not, and whether this is best or not. The idea, that, being free, he will emigrate to the North, and here make a jar in our system of labor, which is the fear of some, seems to me not well founded. The climate is against it. The proclivities and affinities of the black man are for Southern latitudes. Left to himself, he will instinctively choose the sunny South. It is now his home. Remove slavery; and the tendency of the blacks who are now at the North, will be to go to the Southern States, where they can find a people of their own race in much larger numbers than they can find them here.

If, on the other hand, the black man cannot here, in immediate contact with the white race, realize his true and proper destiny, as, I am inclined to think, will prove the fact, though in this I may be mistaken, then the dictate of philanthropy is that we should find him a *home*, and furnish him with all the facilities in our power for reaching it. He must live *somewhere*; and if it be a settled fact that he cannot live here to his own advantage or ours, then let us look about the world, and see what we can do for him. Men of our race brought him here; and we their descendants have a duty to perform in giving him a home somewhere. If we cannot send him back to Africa, as I think we cannot in sufficient numbers to solve the problem, then we must seek for him a home nearer by, at some place more convenient of access, where this government could extend over him its fostering and protecting care. It would not be wonderful, if in the sequel of Providence the State of Florida, and perhaps portions of Alabama, or the States of Central America, should finally become the resting place and residence of this outcast and unhappy race. We are in the mere dawn of this problem; we cannot see very far into it at present; and the dictate of philanthropy is that we should make ourselves attentive students of the facts as they may be developed by Providence, and then act accordingly. The President, I perceive, is strongly inclined to

the theory, that as we remove the system of slavery, the black race must be separated from the whites, and settled elsewhere. Perhaps he is right in this opinion, and perhaps the facts will show that he is not right. It is high time that the best minds in the nation should be thinking upon the subject. We have the question on hand, or judging from the indications of Providence, we soon shall have in a very practical form; and we ought to be making up our minds as to what is just, and wise, and humane, and Christian. The question as to what we shall do *with* the black man, and what we shall do *for* him, if released from the bondage of slavery, let me tell you, is one of the great questions of the age. In its solution he is for the most part dependent upon the friendship, the kind regards, and Christian philanthropy of the white race. He has no power to solve it himself. As he merges into freedom, he must receive his destiny from those at whose hands he receives that freedom. They will fix his position and his home rather than himself. He cannot conquer his own destiny. His intelligence, powers of combination, and resources of action are not equal to the task. He appeals to us to think for him; and think we must, and act we must, as wise and good men, thinking and acting in the fear of God, endeavoring to carry out towards the black man the principles of a sound, impartial, Christian philanthropy.

It is quite possible, moreover, that we are seriously underrating the capacities of the black man to help himself. Perhaps what he most wants from the white race, is that we should *let him alone*, and give him a chance to work out his own destiny. This we have not hitherto done. We have subjected him to great disadvantages in the Free States, and in the Slave States oppressed him by one of the most cruel despotisms that human nature ever felt. We have not been content to let the black man alone, and let him take his chances with other men on the field of life. If now we would practice this species of justice towards him, both North and South, perhaps the Providence of God, at least in the course of a few generations, would show that we are making more of the negro-question than really belongs to it. At any rate, a good beginning towards the end will

be to *let the black man alone* in the sense of ceasing to do him harm, in the sense of putting away slavery, and discontinuing his oppressions; and whatever remains to be done after this to assist him in the recuperative struggle for a higher life, will thereby be greatly simplified.

I have thus, my brethren, given you my thoughts upon some of the radical questions of this most radical age. I have not spoken to you as the politician or the partisan, but as the minister of Christ. I have spoken honestly and frankly, surely not wishing to offend even the most unimportant ear in this house, yet desirous of being thoroughly understood. I have practiced no ambiguity of words, and held back no utterance which I deemed germane to the subject. I have thus spoken from a sense of duty to you, to my country, and my God. You will hold me responsible for the utterance. You may do so. I am perfectly willing that you should. What I have said, is but a just expression of my sentiments, not hastily formed, or uttered in wrath. If these views are not in your opinion correct, you have as much right to think your own thoughts as I have to think mine. All that I claim is to do my own thinking, whether I stand in this place or elsewhere. I have always exercised this privilege, and I expect to do so as long as I live. If ever I felt solemn and serious, far more anxious to speak the truth than to please the hearer, this is that moment.

I cannot conclude without a word of exhortation. I exhort you,—

In the first place, to stand by the government, and that too whether you approve of all its measures or not. Remember, that the government does not consist in a piece of paper, but in living men, who in the providence of God are intrusted with the administration of our national affairs. These men are now the government. Remember, also, that unless you propose to have a revolution, this war must be conducted through the agency of our present Chief Magistrate, at least until the period when his term of office shall expire. That the President is earnestly and honestly laboring for the preservation of this Union, I think no man can doubt. He ought therefore to be supported by the

people, by the *whole* people. His mistakes, if there be any, should be regarded with great leniency. No man ever had a more difficult task to perform. This is no time for a factious opposition, or for a division in the ranks of loyalty. The South, in the commencement of this rebellion, based their hope of success on three grounds. The first is cotton, which has failed them; the second is foreign intervention, which has also failed them; and the third is a *divided* North, which has hitherto failed them, as I pray God that it may continue to do. If we divide our strength, our cause is lost. We cannot conquer this rebellion, unless we are thoroughly united in the purpose to do so; and if we are thus united, nothing can be more certain than our ultimate triumph.

I exhort you, in the second place, to give your support, moral, social, and political, to those men of whatever name or party, and to those men *only*, whose devotion to the government in its present struggle is above all question. You now want true men—*war-men*—men about whose position there is no ambiguity—men who mean to carry this nation through to final victory. No other men are fit to represent the people in such a crisis. Sympathizers with rebellion,—cold and lukewarm patriots—denagogues, more anxious for office than to save their country,—those who are eloquent in denouncing the government, while they have very little to say against the treason that now threatens the life of the nation—: these, in my judgment, are not the men, whom a loyal and honest people can safely trust with official power. If there ever was a time in the history of the world when a man's principles should be above all question, this seems to me that time. His record should be as clear as light. I make these remarks with no reference to any political organizations, whether Republican, Democratic, or mixed. With such organizations I have nothing to do in this place. My object is simply to lay down a principle, whose application must be the work of your own judgment. I extend the right hand of fellowship to any man and every man, who is entirely sincere, honest, and earnest in prosecuting this war till every vestige of treason against the federal government shall be completely sub-



jugated. I do not ask him to adopt all my reasons for this position. What I ask, is that he adopt the position itself.

I exhort you, in the third place, patiently, cheerfully, and hopefully to bear the burdens of this struggle. I know, they are great; and they may become very much greater. Some of you have given your sons and kindred to the war; and some of you mourn the loss of those who have poured their honored blood upon the altars of their country. We have all felt, and are still feeling, and shall long continue to feel, the sad consequences of this unhappy strife. And yet, unless I am utterly at fault in my apprehension of the case, the cause is worthy of the sacrifice. The character and capacities of the American people never shone more brightly than during the last eighteen months of their history. The bravery of our soldiers, their patient and long endurance, their heroic achievements on the field of deadly conflict,—the voluntary enlistment of nearly a million of men—the creation, almost in a day, of a vast navy—the ample supply of the sinews of war,—the organization of committees and associations to provide for the physical, moral, and spiritual good of the army—the services rendered by the women,—the co-operation of the Christian ministry—the voice of prayer in almost every sanctuary, and in almost every assemblage of the saints—the oft-repeated judgment of ecclesiastical bodies—: these, and the like facts, declare that the American people cherish their national government with an undying devotion, and that they are as energetic and invincible in war as they are prosperous in the arts of peace. Though not hitherto bred to fighting, they *can* fight. Fighting is their strange work; and yet when it comes to this, they have shown themselves equal to the hour. Let us then go on in just this line of action, and keep going on, patiently, cheerfully, and hopefully doing all things, daring all things, bearing all things, meeting all emergencies, yielding to no discouragement, superior to temporary disaster, swearing upon the altars of our country that we will never lay down the sword, till the last armed rebel against the Constitution and the Union is either subjugated or dead. This was our motto in the outset; and I hope, it will be to the end. I of course wish, that this

end might soon come ; yet be it distant or near, in my life-time or after I shall have gone the way of all the earth, I do not want this war to cease till the twenty millions of freemen who have embarked in it, have either gained the object, or proved its utter impossibility. Then, and not till then, I am for peace. As I read the book of God, that wisdom which is from above, is—  
“ first PURE, then peaceable.”

I exhort you, finally, to be men of prayer. Pray for the President. Pray for the members of his Cabinet. Pray for the soldier, and pray for his commanders. Pray for the sick and the wounded. Pray for those who are appointed unto death, and who will never again see their homes. Pray for the desolate families that weep in secret places. Pray for our public enemies, beseeching God to give them repentance and better minds. Pray for the poor slave, asking the God of justice and mercy to open the door of freedom from his long night of bondage. Pray for the whole country, imploring High Heaven to cut short this war, and give us a peace, that, being founded in the principles of eternal righteousness, shall be strong as the solid mountains, broad and deep as the ocean, and lasting as time. Let us now, by the good providence of God, settle the question of our national life, and settle it in harmony with justice ; then let the energies of this great and growing nation be directed towards the peaceful industries of society ; and we shall not only repair the damages accruing from the war, but far transcend all our previous history as a member in the great family of nations. In view of these objects in which you and I, and our children after us, yea, all the world, have so deep an interest, let us most fervently beseech the God of providence to accompany the national army, and make it victorious on every field.

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