

THE SALVATION OF THE COUNTRY

SECURED BY

IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION.

A DISCOURSE

BY

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# JOHN QUINCY ADAMS,

## ON EMANCIPATION UNDER THE WAR POWER.

*Extracts from his Speeches before the House of Representatives, May 5, 1836, and May 14 and 15, 1842.*

“ There are, then, Mr. Chairman, in the authority of Congress and of the Executive two classes of powers, altogether different in their nature, and often incompatible with each other — the war power and the peace power. The peace power is limited by regulations and restricted by provisions prescribed within the Constitution itself. The war power is limited only by the laws and usages of nations. This power is tremendous; it is strictly constitutional, but it breaks down every barrier so anxiously erected for the protection of liberty, of property, and of life.” . . .

“ There are, indeed, powers of peace conferred upon Congress which also come within the scope and jurisdiction of the laws of nations, such as the negotiation of treaties of amity and commerce, the interchange of public ministers and consuls, and all personal and social intercourse between the individual inhabitants of the United States and foreign nations, and the Indian tribes, which require the interposition of any law. But the powers of war are *all* regulated by the laws of nations, and subject to no other limitation. . . . It was upon this principle that I voted *against* a resolution reported by the slavery committee, ‘ that Congress possess no constitutional authority to interfere, *in any way*, with the institution of slavery in any of the States of this Confederacy.’ . . . *I do not admit that there is, even among the peace powers of Congress, no such authority; but in war, there are many ways by which Congress only have the authority, but ARE BOUND TO INTERFERE WITH THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY IN THE STATES.* . . . Suppose Congress were called to raise armies, to supply money from the whole Union to suppress a servile insurrection: . . . can it for a moment be pretended that Congress, in such a contingency, would have no authority to interfere with the institution of slavery, *in any way*, in the States? Why, it would be equivalent to saying that Congress have no constitutional authority to make peace. I suppose a more portentous case, certainly within the bounds of possibility — I would to God I could say, not within the bounds of probability — ”

. . . Then, after supposing a case, including not only a foreign war, but an Indian, a civil, and servile war, and making of the Southern States “ the battle-field upon which the last great conflict will be fought between Slavery and Emancipation ” — “ Do you imagine (he asks) that your Congress will have no constitutional authority to interfere with the institution of slavery *in any way* in the States of this confederacy? Sir, they *must and will interfere with it* — perhaps to sustain it by war, *perhaps to abolish it* by treaties of peace; and they will not only possess the constitutional power so to interfere, but they will be bound in duty to do it, by the express provisions of the Constitution itself.”

From the instant that your slaveholding States become the theater of a war, *civil, servile, or foreign*, from that instant, the war powers of Congress extend to interference with the institution of slavery, *in every way by which it can be interfered with*, from a claim of indemnity for slaves taken or destroyed, to *the cession of States burdened with slavery to a foreign power*." . . .

"When your country is actually in war, whether it be a war of invasion, or a war of insurrection, Congress has power to carry on the war, and must carry it on, according to the laws of war; and by the laws of war, an invaded country has all its laws and municipal institutions swept by the board, and martial law takes the place of them. . . . But when the laws of war are in force, what, I ask, is one of those laws? It is this: that when a country is invaded, and two hostile armies are set in martial array, *the commanders of both armies have power to emancipate all the slaves in the invaded territory*. Nor is this a mere theoretic statement. . . .

"I might furnish a thousand proofs to show that the pretensions of gentlemen to the sanctity of their municipal institutions under a state of actual invasion and of actual war, whether servile, civil, or foreign, is wholly unfounded, and that the laws of war do, in all such cases, take the precedence. I lay this down as the law of nations. I say that military authority takes, for the time, the place of all municipal institutions, *and slavery among the rest*; and that, under that state of things, so far from its being true that the States where slavery exists have the exclusive management of the subject, *not only the President of the United States, but the Commander of the Army, has power to order the universal emancipation of the slaves*. I have given here more in detail a principle which I have asserted on this floor before now, and of which I have no more doubt than that you, sir, occupy that chair. I give it in its development, in order that any gentleman from any part of the Union may, if he thinks proper, deny the truth of the position, and may maintain his denial; not by indignation, not by passion and fury, but by sound and sober reasoning from the laws of nations and the laws of war. And if my position can be answered and refuted, I shall receive the refutation with pleasure: I shall be glad to listen to reason, aside, as I say, from indignation and passion. And if, by the force of reasoning, my understanding can be convinced, I here pledge myself to recant what I have asserted.

"Let my position be answered; let me be told, let my constituents be told, the people of my State be told—a State whose soil tolerates not the foot of a slave—that they are bound by the Constitution to a long and toilsome march under burning summer suns and a deadly Southern clime for the suppression of a servile war; that they are bound to leave their bodies to rot upon the sands of Carolina, to leave their wives widows, and their children orphans; that those who can not march are bound to pour out their treasures while their sons or brothers are pouring out their blood to suppress a servile combined with a civil or a foreign war, and yet that there exists no power beyond the limits of the slave State where such war is raging to emancipate the slaves. I say let this be proved—I am open to conviction; but till that conviction comes, I put it forth, not as a dictate of feeling, but as a settled maxim of the laws of nations, *that, in such a case, the military supersedes the civil power*."

# EIN' FESTE BURG IST UNSER GOTT.

[LUTHER'S HYMN.]

By JOHN G. WHITTIER.

WE wait beneath the furnace blast  
The pangs of transformation ;  
Not painlessly does God recast  
And mold anew the nation.

Hot burns the fire  
Where wrongs expire,  
Nor spares the hand  
That from the land  
Uproots the ancient evil.

The hand-breadth cloud the sages feared  
Its bloody rain is dropping ;  
The poison-plant the fathers spared  
All else is overtopping.  
East, West, South, North,  
It curses earth ;  
All justice dies,  
And fraud and lies  
Live only in its shadow.

What gives the wheat-field blades of steel ?  
What points the rebel cannon ?  
What sets the roaring rabble's heel  
On the old star-spangled pennon ?  
What breaks the oath  
Of the men o' the South ?  
What whets the knife  
For the Union's life ?  
Hark, to the answer—**SLAVERY !**

Then waste no blows on lesser foes  
In strife unworthy freemen.  
God lifts to-day the vail and shows  
The features of the demon !  
O North and South !  
Its victims both,  
Can ye not cry,  
" Let Slavery die !"  
And Union find in freedom ?

What though the cast out spirit tear  
The nation in its going,  
We who have shared the guilt must share  
The pang of his o'erthrowing !

Whate'er the loss,  
Whate'er the cross,  
Shall they complain  
Of present pain  
Who trust in God's hereafter ?  
For who that leans on his right arm  
Was ever yet forsaken ?  
What righteous cause can suffer harm  
If he its part has taken ?  
Though wild and loud  
And dark the cloud,  
Behind its folds  
His hand upholds  
The calm sky of to-morrow !  
Above the maddening cry for blood,  
Above the wild war-drumming,  
Let Freedom's voice be heard, with  
The evil overcoming :  
Give prayer and purse  
To stay the curse  
Whose wrong we share,  
Whose shame we bear,  
Whose end shall gladden heaven !  
In vain the bells of war shall ring  
Of triumphs and revenges,  
While still is spared the evil thing  
That severs and estranges.  
But blest the ear  
That yet shall hear  
The jubilant bell  
That rings the knell  
Of slavery forever !  
Then let the selfish lip be dumb  
And hushed the breath of sighing,  
Before the joy of peace must come  
The pain of purifying.  
God give us grace,  
Each in his place,  
To bear his lot,  
And, murmuring not,  
Endure, and wait, and labor.

# IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION.

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ESTHER 4 : 14.

“FOR if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed. And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Who shall write the history of neglected national opportunities? What volumes might be gathered, and with what vast and solemn lessons for all future time, were there a writer capable of the grand and comprehensive fabric! In the life of nations, as of individuals, there are opportunities, which, taken at the flood, lead on to fortune; omitted, the whole history is of oppression, meanness, and misery. It is a sad and fearful spectacle to see nations, because of ineradicable depravities, or habits of vice and selfishness persisted in, or any other cause, casting away such opportunities of grace and glory for themselves and for mankind, or so fettered by their own folly, as to be unable to use them. Yet history is full of such warnings, and they are the lighthouses of humanity, if men would mark them; but, alas, “they only serve to illumine the path that has been passed over.”

Foremost of all instances are those in sacred writ, and most instructive of all are the blindnesses and madneses of the Jews in the wilderness and in their after history, their captivities, their desolations, their destructions of their own prosperity and life, all culminating in the last grand trial and ruin, when the Saviour came to his own, and his own received him not, but cast him out and killed him. The closing scene is that of Christ weeping over Jerusalem. “Oh! that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the day of thy merciful visitation, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”

The discipline of trial, and the seasons of merciful visitation and offering, were repeated with the Jews, and extended over great periods — centuries of crime and of forbearance. At the present, God's providence moves with greater rapidity, so that causes and their operation, experiments and their results, are concentrated in much briefer space. Every thing in the world is in the same style of progress. It used to take a week to journey from New-England to the Middle States, and a letter or an item of intelligence was nearly as long in its transmission. Now, the man himself may go almost a thousand miles a day, and his thoughts may course the continent, in intelligible syllables, in a few moments. It used to be with clumsy machinery and great preparation, that a gun was fired; now at a moment's warning, and with repetitions as fast as the ticking of a watch.

### **Application of the Text.**

The text has a great power of application to our case. Doubtless there will arise deliverance to the millions of the oppressed, though we refuse to throw ourselves on God, and act for it. But if we thus refuse, we and our father's house will be destroyed as to all true greatness and salvation as a nation. The opportunity is granted to us of God, of saving ourselves by doing a commanded work of justice, mercy, deliverance for others. The opportunity is infinitely precious, and will not be repeated. God requires our decision upon it now. This is the accepted time, this is our day of salvation. Such an opportunity, in all probability, never was granted to any nation, of arresting and turning back the causes and processes of ruin, and changing them into sources of prosperity and blessing for ourselves and for mankind.

### **Grandeur of our Opportunity.**

Divine Providence has combined for us the obligations of the word of God, and thus recognized, by the common conscience of mankind, the demands of truth, benevolence, justice, duty to the world, to the slaves, to ourselves; expediency, necessity, salvation, all these obligations utter this one word — EMANCIPATION!

What the great poet, Schiller, wrote concerning an indivi-

dual, is true of the occasion that God now offers to us as a nation. The questions of right and duty are all settled. It is as plain as the open heavens that we may of right do, and ought, by bond of benevolence and justice, to do what Divine Providence gives the opportunity of doing. We may legitimately, constitutionally, immediately, break the fetters from four millions of our fellow-creatures held in bondage; and not only our duty to them, but the necessity of protection and deliverance for ourselves, the preservation of our own national existence and privileges of freedom and independence, require us to do this. If we refuse to do it, the refusal is the signing of our own death-warrant.

If we refuse to do it for ourselves, the rebellious Confederacy may do it for themselves, and in that case the opportunity is not only gone from us forever, but turned against us by the most implacable foe that ever any nation encountered.

“The point can no more be of right and duty,  
 Only of power and of the opportunity.  
 That opportunity, lo! it comes yonder,  
 Approaching with swift steeds; then with a swing  
 Throw thyself up into the chariot-seat,  
 Seize with firm hands the reins, ere thine opponent  
 Anticipate thee, and himself make conquest  
 Of the now empty seat. The moment comes;  
 It is already here, when thou must write  
 The absolute total of thy life's vast sum.”

God has given us the opportunity in striking this blow for the freedom of the enslaved, and for our own salvation, to advance mightily the missionary enterprise, to provide for the regeneration of Africa, rendering it speedy and sure, and to set forward the cause of freedom, civilization, and good government throughout the world.

God has given us the opportunity to do for Europe, what no nation in Europe or the world will do, unless we do it, that is, to protect Europe and the world from the calamity and curse of receiving into the family of nations, as an independent and Christian nation, a community basing their claim to be so received on the intended prosecution forever of the traffic in human beings. Unless we conquer this Confederacy, and crush out this tyranny, abolishing slavery while it is in our power,

the nations of Europe will receive that community into fellowship, and thus reinaugurate the right of slavery over the world. It is evident that there is not regard enough to the rights of the enslaved, or the claims of God, to prevent this, even on the part of Great Britain, if our own country allow it.

If we enter into compromise with this Confederacy, which we must do, if we sanction and sustain the slavery that it has at heart, and has made the law of its existence, then every European nation will hasten to acknowledge it. And the guilt and shame of this national crime will fill this century of the world's history as its most damning page.

The crisis now is such, that the whole North-American Church ought to have risen in union, and constrained the government to obey God. No people, no church on earth, ever possessed such power, or bore such responsibility, in regard to the course of government; and if, now that the decision of this grand question is given to us, we decide against the claims of God and humanity, or if we even fail to agree in the verdict against slavery, and enter into a compromise by which it shall still rule, the probability is, that this course will be the final and irremediable ruin of the country.

### **Reasons for Immediate Emancipation.**

Let us consider the nation's opportunity and God's call, the duty and necessity of the emancipation of the slaves at this very juncture at which divine providence has put this measure in our power, and has overridden all objections of old time and of long habit, brought against abolition, as if it were contrary to some national engagement; having left the rebellious slaveholding States themselves to spurn and break every compact, real or pretended, and to trample under foot the Constitution of the country, and every right in it, releasing us from every obligation toward them but that of subduing them as traitors.

I. We say, then, in the first place, immediate emancipation is our duty, in the light of expediency, as well as of God's word, because it is certain that Emancipation would crush the rebellion. The very proclamation of it, as the rule in this conflict, would settle a thousand difficulties at the outset. The

announcement of it, as the settled war-policy, would put a stop to all the arguments and reasonings of men against it, and would concentrate all energies in its support. Men would say by thousands: We were doubting, but since that matter is decided, if the Government are willing, we go in for it, and will drive it like a whirlwind. It would unite the East, West, and North, and the organs of public and popular opinion that have opposed it would all forthwith approve and advocate it.

### Effect of the Proclamation.

True patriotism would dictate this course, and we do not believe that the country, which has sustained the Government so thoroughly and cordially thus far, in all its measures and through all disasters, would be divided on this grand question, or would fail to sustain a righteous governmental policy. It would be the very policy—this measure of emancipation—that above all others would unite the whole people from the heart. All would rejoice in it. It is the one measure that the country are desiring. The feeling is universal that we must dispose of this subject, this iniquity, now and forever; that we must rid the land of this burden, now that it is in our power; that we are bound to do this for the sake of our posterity, who could not, but at the cost of another war, obtain such another opportunity as this which God has now given us.

The North would be united by this measure as it never was before. The inspiration and impulse of our patriotism would be without any drawback, any doubt or demurring of the mind or heart, and there would be no longer left in any man's mind a doubt of victory, for all would be sure that God is with us.

And as to the effect of this measure upon the South, the policy would be equally decisive in discouragement and defeat. The proclamation of such a policy, as a moral pioneer for our armies, would do more than an unbroken line of artillery from Delaware to Kansas.

And in its reflex action on our forces, it would elevate the moral character of all our regiments, making every soldier what every one ought to be, a missionary of freedom. Had the teachings of the pulpit and the press for years past been what they ought, it would have been impossible to have ever found among the whole army of the North a single file of half a doz-

en men, in favor of slavery, nay, a single man that would submit to hunt a fugitive, would suffer himself to be degraded to the work of a slave-hound. Indeed, had the word of God been proclaimed as it ought, there would now have been no slavery to fight against, and no cause of conflict or of separation. And now all that is needed is a decision in God's way, at God's will. A proclamation to this effect would be better than the gaining of a great battle.

### **Necessity of Decision and Energy in a Righteous Cause.**

An instant line of decision, such that all forces in the system would hurry one side or the other, would be for us, on the right side, victory. All that we need on the right side is the same energy and determination that our adversaries show on the wrong. It is courage and resolution in behalf of God, and justice, and humanity, that we need.

It has always been supposed that the righteousness of a cause is more than half the victory. *Thrice* is he armed that hath his quarrel just. But a man who is ashamed or afraid of a righteous cause, is weaker by that shame and fear, than he that is resolute and fearless in a bad cause, by the wickedness that he practices. A man with a wicked principle, driving it fearlessly to the uttermost, will be stronger than one with a righteous principle, but afraid to mention it, and determined not to insist upon it. The goodness of a cause will never carry it, when its defenders themselves are afraid of it and betray it. In the present case, instead of trusting in God and obeying him, we are adopting the principles of our adversaries against God, adopting the principles of slavery, and trusting in the friendship and obeying the advice and counsel of leading slaveholders in the border slaveholding States. As of old, God's people take counsel at their stocks, and their slaveholding staff declareth unto them.

### **The Slaveholding Element still Governing.**

It is terrible to see, in this conflict, the weaker party strong in wickedness, by means of those on our own side in league with that wickedness, and betraying the cause of freedom. It is painful to witness the spectacle and endure the shame of two or three border States ruling the whole country by means of

the plague with which the rebellious States are infected. It is just as if four or five plague patients at large, out of quarantine, should be permitted to govern the whole healthy population of the country by a sanitary commission of their own number, going about and showing their carbuncles as the proof of health.

It is the slaveholding element in these two or three border States, that now governs the whole country. More respect and deference is paid to these few thousand slaveholders, more cringing, careful obedience, than to the condition, wants, wishes of all the nation besides. As a people and government, we are acting directly in the teeth of Washington's farewell warning and advice, constituting a partisan government, having respect only to that section of the country where slavery is enthroned as the supreme divinity, and through that worship, governing all the rest. It is easy to constitute a despotism in this way.

At the present moment the country is at the will of slavery, concentrated in a smaller and more convenient space than ever before. The border States are an engine, a steam-chest, playing all the machinery of the Government.

In the case of this war, if the power could have been given to the leaders of the rebellion of choosing their own terms, if it had been given to them to contrive a method by which they could most effectually tie our hands, palsy all our operations, neutralize our efforts, and make traitors of our very armies, they could not have adopted any more effective plan than we ourselves have provided for them, and are carrying into operation. They could not possibly have done better than to say to three or four States, Remain neutral, and let us run the reins of our slaveholding despotism through the convenient bits in your mouth, and thus keep the whole government of the country obedient to our touch.

And if the appointment of the commanders of our armies had been submitted to the leaders in theirs, they could not have availed themselves of it more skillfully than by this one rule of displacing and superseding every general that was known to hate slavery, and filling every important post with men under the thralldom of the slave oligarchy, maintaining the sacredness of slave-property.

A proclamation against slavery as a necessity of our salvation under the war-power would deliver us from all this treason,

would clear our decks for action, would inspire and encourage all hearts. But even if it winnowed down our forces like God's experiment with Gideon, it would leave us stronger with three hundred than before with thirty thousand.

## II. Grand Effect of the Policy of Emancipation Abroad.

The proclamation of freedom would renew the lost power and influence of our country, and redeem our reputation through the world. It would sweep the cobwebs of oppressive interpretation from the Constitution, and bring out its provisions of justice and liberty into perfect and irresistible action. It would say to all the world, At length the United States have done with slavery, and never can return to it, never will.

Such a position, such a declaration, would rejoice and animate the nations. Even the approximation toward it by General Fremont sent an electric impulse throughout Europe. It was a clear trumpet-tone of freedom that appealed to the hearts of millions, striking a moral chord deep down in man's being that has seldom been struck in any of the wars that have desolated our globe. If now our Government would take this stand, would utter this voice for God, humanity, and justice, it would clear away all doubts in regard to our success, all doubts in regard to the truth, genuineness, and superiority of our republicanism, all questionings and suspicions as to the tendency of a republican form of government in regard to human freedom, the problem as yet unsettled, while the world behold in a republic the support and protection of human slavery. It would cause prayer to ascend from millions of hearts that know not now on which side to cast their petitions. It would elevate our country and the conflict in which we are engaged to a position of moral grandeur that would defeat and defy all the slanders and sneers of Tories and despots and tools of despots, and all the combinations of all tyrannic powers against us.

It would render our country impregnable at every point. It would be a surer, more invincible safeguard for our coasts than if, in obedience to any Government circular, hundreds of millions should be expended in fortifying every harbor, promontory, bay, inlet, and city, from Maine to Texas. It would array the patriotism and piety of the whole civilized world in our behalf. A proclamation emanating now from our Govern-

ment against slavery would do more to advance the interests of freedom, civilization, and humanity throughout the world than our original Declaration of Independence ever yet has accomplished. Indeed, that declaration is stultified, if its promise be not now fulfilled. A proclamation against slavery would be heard in the depths of every dungeon of despotism in Europe; it would ring again in the heart of Hungary; it would inspire and prepare men like Lafayette and Kosciusko in the past, Kossuth and Garibaldi in the present, were there need of such patriots, to flock to our standard. But there would be no need. Such a proclamation, understood to emanate from the soul of the country, and to be the resolute, unalterable determination of the Government, on principle, would itself conquer, would satisfy the world of our safety; no need of foreign aid, nor any fear of foreign interference. The decision of this conflict, the end of this war, only waits for such a proclamation. It would be like the interposition of Messiah's chariot against the rebel angels, the living wheels a glare of moral lightning, withering all their strength, exhausted, spiritless, afflicted, fallen.

#### **Emancipation demanded by Religion.**

III. Such an announcement and the hearty support of it by the country are needed for the vindication of our national honor; but, more than that, as a declaration of our regard to God and our respect to some higher motive than mere selfishness.

It is impossible to contemplate, without astonishment and sadness, the debasement of moral sentiment on this subject. Instead of any sense of obligation binding us to the performance of this great work of emancipation, as the plainest duty of benevolence, and a work directly commanded of Jehovah, instead of recognizing it as a duty, men apologize to the public and to one another for going so far as to be willing that it should take place, even as a necessity. They are careful to remind their hearers or readers that they have never sanctioned the proposition of giving liberty to the enslaved, have never yielded to such fanaticism or been guilty of such benevolence, and that they would not now entertain it for a moment if they thought it could be possibly avoided; they would vote the continuance of this oppression if its discontinuance were

not a necessity of their own salvation. It is boldly assumed that if emancipation were not a necessity for our own interests, we should be perfectly justified in still holding these millions of our fellow-beings in slavery.

We earnestly desire the recovery of our beloved country from such demoralizing views. We desire the recognition and acknowledgment of our duty to God in this matter, and to those millions of our fellow-beings whom we have so cruelly oppressed. We beseech our countrymen to take this work of emancipation in hand, as being our highest honor and obligation both of justice and generosity, but above all as an immediate obligation of piety towards God, of obedience to his Word, in the fulfillment of which we shall secure his favor and redeem our national reputation from the shame of sanctioning and sustaining slavery.

#### **Objections against Emancipation.**

But it is pleaded, in excuse for not obeying God, that it is hazardous, both for the country and the slaves, that it is dangerous to give freedom at God's command to such a multitude of captives; and being assumed as not being safe, it is thence reasoned that it can not be obligatory.

We might as well argue that it is not safe suddenly to break up a system of adultery, robbery, piracy, especially if millions are engaged in it. But it is always safe to cease to do evil, to learn to do well, and to relieve the oppressed; and this God commands at once, and without any extension of the note as to the time of payment.

The objection is not well founded, not indeed founded at all in any fact or experience, but is altogether a matter of conjecture and of injurious misrepresentation and prediction.

How do you know that emancipation is not safe? Have you ever tried it? Has it ever been tried on earth, and found unsafe? On the contrary, has not every instance in which it has been tried proved both safe and prosperous? History records the glorious instances of emancipation of large numbers of slaves, immediate and gradual, conditional and unconditional, and in every instance safe and successful, without disaster and without violence. Disaster and violence have always been produced, not by the measure of emancipation, but by unwise, oppressive, and violent opposition against the measure, or injurious and wicked efforts to thwart and delay its operation.

### Example of the West-Indies.

In the example of Great Britain and the West-Indian emancipation of 800,000 slaves at once, God has provided and wrought out for our instruction and encouragement an experiment so decisive, successful, and glorious, that it leaves us without excuse if we refuse the same course of humanity and justice. Let us undertake it, not unwillingly as if scourged into it, nor driven by necessity, but from the noble impulse of obedience to God, and justice and benevolence to man.

In the case of Great Britain and the West-Indies, it was not a question of the superiority of free labor above slave labor, or a measure for the interest and profit of the whites, but it was the admitted equal claim of the blacks to freedom as well as of the whites, and the prosecution of that claim for the liberty and benefit of the enslaved, for the restitution to them of the rights of which they had been defrauded. It was a denial of any right on the part of the whites to hold any other race in slavery, it was a denial of any right of property in man and a refusal any longer to admit any such wrong. It was the undoing of such wrong because it *was* wrong, and the question of its profitableness or unprofitableness for the nation was not a question upon the decision of which the act of emancipation was based. By a religious conscience, by the power of God's word, by the grand ideas of justice and of freedom swaying the popular mind, by the sentiments, feelings, impulses of the popular heart against cruelty, against slavery, the nation was carried irresistibly in this grand movement, and triumphed in it.

As a measure of political economy, it has been successful in its results. The West-Indies are worth incalculably more to-day, under the reign of freedom, than they could have been under the continued injustice of slavery. But whether so or not, the honesty, generosity, and justice of the nation, the elevation and integrity of character, the enthronement of the right, the supremacy of the word of God as the rule of right, and of the conscience of the nation as obedient to it, were an infinite gain and glory, never to be measured by any consequences; a possession worth more than the dominion of the globe, a security of future prosperity and freedom greater

than ten thousand navies, ten thousand armies, ten thousand citadels.

Let us take the same ground. Let us make the same grand experiment on a vastly larger scale, with a true supreme regard to God, to justice, to humanity, to the claims of the enslaved.

### Now or Never.

But the experiment must be tried with us speedily, or we are lost. God has arisen to judgment. The time of decision has come, and necessity knows no law, leaves no room for hesitation. We can no longer debate, discuss, procrastinate.

While the consulting physicians dispute, the possibility of recovery is passed, and the patient dies.

You must not amputate, says one physician; it will produce fever. But you must amputate or die, says the other, and therefore you can not regard the danger of fever for a moment. But suppose that on the examination of all recorded cases, never one has been known in which fever supervened, but in every one the operation was successful, what then would be said of the madness of refusing the operation because of the pretended hazard? It would be a deliberate medical murder. And just so, now, the refusal of this measure of emancipation, under the pretense of its being dangerous, is the deliberate destruction of the country in the face of the lessons of all history.

Slavery is a fatal cancer, and God has begun the work of cutting it out with a sword. And now, to the amazement and disgust of the whole world, our Northern government and people defend the right of the cancer, and our very ministers, as well as politicians, turn against the Omnipotent Surgeon, setting the whole country again in rebellion against God. Men talk of the dangers and miseries of a servile insurrection, when they are themselves at war against the masters of the slaves. What right have we of war against the rebels, which the slaves have not, of war against their tyrants? What is a servile insurrection? A rising of slaves against their owners. What is the war of the United States against the rebellion? Nothing but a similar insurrection against the very same oligarchy, an insurrection of the United States against their slave-owners. Up to the time of this war they governed

the whole country, and assumed to own it; and they were just as consistent and right in the claim of ownership of the whole United States, as they ever have been in the claim of property in man. They might as well claim ownership in the sun, moon, and stars, in the whole visible heavens, as in one of God's intelligent, immortal creatures.

But what, after all, is the apprehended danger? Set the slaves free, and against whom would they make insurrection? Against the enemies of your country, against whom they are as much bound to array themselves, and have the same right to make war, as we ourselves have. Our war, being a civil war, a fratricidal war, is infinitely worse than any servile war could be, and if we could end it by calling to our aid a servile war, it would be our duty so to do.

But in fact the measure of emancipation would be security against a servile war, the security of order, submission, and peace. No one proposes to release the slaves from government, but to set them under the responsible government and guardianship of law, with its sufficient police, instead of leaving them under the tyranny of the whip, the brutal rage of the overseer, and all the excitements to revenge consequent on such atrocities. Emancipation, and an orderly and benevolent government, at less cost than that of whips and fetters, would secure both them and the rest of the country in prosperity and peace.

But what are you going to do with the slaves? Regenerate them, take them by the hand and lift them up to freedom and happiness; educate them, and confer upon them the mercies and privileges that God hath conferred upon us. Treat them as human beings, for whom Christ died, and no longer as brute beasts or articles of merchandise. Keep them at work in their various spheres and places of labor, and pay them their wages as reasonable free agents, as we do with those whom we employ in the house or in the field at the North. Organize a wise system of labor and of law for them, if that be necessary, and in every way bless ourselves in taking care of them and doing justly by them.

The sooner we begin this work, the better. We could not have begun it now, without the war. God has thrown this golden opportunity before us, available now. It would have taken, otherwise, fifty years to have arrived at any point where

we could set the agencies of mercy at work upon them. We may be the instruments in God's hands whereby a nation may be born in a day. The work of transfiguring these four millions from their present degradation to the dignity and happiness of freedom and piety, may be commenced now.

But still, if you ask what are you going to do with the slaves? Perhaps you had better answer another question first; what are you going to do *without* them? What are you going to do *with them at command of your enemies*? What are you going to do *without* them, supposing you conquer the country?

You will need every one of them as laborers, just where they are, and as they are, except that you will pay them their wages and treat them as human beings, and not as beasts. What are you going to do *without* them as free laborers?

On the other hand, what are you going to do *with* them *as slaves*? Can you keep them as slaves any easier than you can as freemen? If you undertake to keep them as slaves, *whose* slaves?

Will they be yours? will they be the slaves of the Government, or the army, or the Cabinet, or of Congress, or are you fighting to keep them for the slaveholders, who are the heart and head of this rebellion, and against whom you profess to be fighting? Is this fighting *sham* fighting, or is it real? If slave property is to be held sacred in this war, and you are to keep the slaves slaves, for whom are you keeping them, and how, and to whom, will you dispose of them when the war is over?

Will you call together the slaveholders and restore to them their property, which you have been keeping sacred for them at so fearful a cost? Will you thus reward the slaveholders for all the savage barbarity and treason with which they have created this rebellion and pursued it to the intended ruin of the country? This is the very object for which they have rebelled, and they will thank you for its accomplishment, thank you that while the property of all other classes, both North and South, has been sacrificed, you have protected theirs, and restored it to them unimpaired, with new guarantees of its perpetual security.

And this would be right if the slaves are property, and if slave property is so sacred above all other property, as to be superior to the law confiscating the property of rebels, and

protected from the operation of that law. And this seems to be the practical arrangement. If slaves are hunted, they are treated as property and returned as property; but if it is proposed to confiscate them and turn them into freemen, then they are not property, in order that they may be withdrawn from the operation of the law of confiscation. They are property whenever by considering them as property they may be returned and kept as slaves; but they are not property whenever, in that category, they would be liable to confiscation, and consequently freedom. Such is the intense iniquity and cruelty of this procedure.

But if the slaves are to be regarded by us as property, and so sacred that even rebellion and treason can not break the title, then, certainly, they are the property of the present slave-owners, and can belong to none else; and if we are keeping this property *as property*, we are either ourselves the owners, or we must be keeping it for the owners.

### Dilemma of the Government.

If we assume to be ourselves the owners, if government take possession of the slaves and keep them as slave property, then the government becomes a slave-owning, slave-trading government, and if the government conquer, with these slaves on their hands, what are they going to do with them? On the other hand, if the government assume them to belong to their present owners, and hold them for those owners, the government are then and thus in a treasonous league with rebels against the country.

The government are therefore in this dilemma, and can not escape out of it but by obeying God, by hearkening to his Word, and the voice of justice and humanity, and the conscience of the people, and declaring the poor slaves free. The government are in this dilemma. They are at war against a rebellion conducted by slaveholders for the perpetuity of slavery, for the supremacy and security of their own property in the slaves, and the continuance of their power by means of that property. The government now, unless we emancipate by the war-power, must do one of two things; must either keep the slaves in slavery, *as slaves*, for their *present owners*, or must take possession of them *as slaves*,

and hold them as such, and dispose of them as such, for the government and the country, taking them from the slaveholders. If they do this, they do it by virtue of martial law, by the war-power, and they are thus seen in the horrible attitude of converting the Northern government and country into a slaveholding government and country, and seizing and holding millions of human beings as slaves, making slaves of them, when they refused, by the same power, to give them freedom, rejected and reviled the idea of *emancipating* them by the war-power, but by the same power have converted them anew into chattels, and themselves into their owners, a government of slaveholders! To do God's will by the war-power, to do justly, to perform an act of benevolence and mercy, was not within the compass of possibility; but to do the will of Satan, to execute the greatest act of cruelty, to assume the responsibility of slavery as a governmental transaction and right—this enormous wickedness by the war-power was perfectly legitimate! For this our government and people were competent and disposed, and this was a suitable work to be accomplished in the war of the rebellion!

Now this is what the government must do in this war, unless they treat the slaves as human beings, and set them free from their masters, unless they deliver them from the ownership of their present pretended owners, the slaveholders, who are the rebels, and in this rebellion are making war against us, for the very purpose of a greater eternal security for their slave property. They must set the slaves free from their masters, or take possession of them for their masters, or claim ownership in them as the property of the United States.

Are the people of the United States prepared for this cruelty, this wicked revolution, this plunge of government and people into such atrocious barbarism? It would be an act of impiety against God, and despotism against man, such as no government on earth ever yet transacted. It would outdo the slave-trading Confederacy itself, and leave its members far behind in villainy. For they were already, by their own government, the constitutional owners and holders of these millions of slave property; but we enter upon this vast tyranny and robbery anew, and by a *coup d'état* of crime unheard of in the annals of the world, transfer upon ourselves the authority, the infernal

claims, the cruelty, the power, the despotism, at the progress of which the world have stood aghast, even in its gradual growth and establishment of a century.

### **Emancipation would Settle the Question of Property in Man.**

IV. Emancipation now, by our government and people, would settle at once and forever the question of property in man, and forbid the claim. It was thought to have been settled by the people of England in their emancipation of 800,000 slaves, at the call of benevolence and God. But the success of this Confederacy, and our admission of their independence, or our compromising with them rather than sacrifice slavery, would not only unsettle all that has been done, but would enthrone again that impious claim. There are not a few in Great Britain who would yield up every principle at stake, and declare slavery to be right in the abstract by the word of God, and every thing to be property, any where, which the law makes property. This is the tergiversation and abandonment of principle, of which the individual who used to be foremost as the champion of human rights in the case of the enslaved, has set the example, moved by fear, and trembling as to the consequences in the kingdom of Cotton, from thus setting up the kingdom of God and of human freedom.

It is time there were a settlement for the whole world as to this piratical claim. We are in the infancy of our education, even in the first principles of civilization, if this is not settled. Four thousand years the great declaration of God condemning the claim of property in man as a crime worthy of death has been shining in the cloudless heaven of our divine revelation. It is as old then as the moral law, and it holds a place as commanding in relation to our duties of humanity, our obligations to society, as the law, Thou shalt do no murder. After four thousand years of this light, and near two thousand of them under the light of the cross, we find ourselves in the midst of the most dreadful convulsion and war the world has known, produced directly by our long-continued disregard and violation of this central provision of justice and benevolence for the government of our world, this fiat of the Almighty against man-stealing, this canon from the throne of God against property in man; and still we propose the defense and sanction of

this very crime, propose carefully to avoid striking at this iniquity, even in the very war into which the iniquity has plunged us, and which is God's own judgment against us and it together!

A proposition has already been made for the government to take the slaves of the present slaveholders in rebellion, and bestow them upon the non-holding classes as a bribe for loyalty to the Union; making perhaps a million of slaveholders instead of three hundred thousand, and thus binding the South and the North in a closer pro-slavery embrace and union than ever. That such a measure could deliberately be proposed, and provoke no expression of indignation, shows that it might without much difficulty be carried. Indeed, there is such an appalling hardness of heart toward the slaves, such indifference, such a contemptuous ignoring of their rights, that the people would not take much notice of any usurpation of power on the part of the government against them. We may perhaps yet see the government acting the part of brokers for the South, holding their slaves for them as so much stock, kept for security, to be restored to them after the war. Indeed, are we not now on the verge of just such an infamous transaction? Are we not in the midst of it, and is not this brokerage transaction in human stock one of the elements in the intended compromise, one of the inducements by which it is to be brought about?

In the present case there is painful want of any evident intention of absolutely crushing the rebellion. Even the property of the rebels is not confiscated; they are not treated as rebels. It begins to be evident that the treating of them as rebels, the proceeding to extremities against them as such, inevitably involves the destruction of slavery, and to put slavery out of the way would be to sacrifice the means of compromise. It is intended to reconstruct the Union with slavery as its uniting and cementing power, and therefore any conquest of the rebellious States, such as would reduce them to the condition of a subjugated province, and destroy their political rights of slavery, is to be carefully avoided, is in fact abjured, and no invasion of the country by our armies, *for the purpose of such a conquest*, will be undertaken or permitted, it being inconsistent with the maintenance of slavery. The rebellion will be treated as a family quarrel, just as it is proposed by some clergymen to treat slavery tenderly, as a family weakness, a providential and

historical inheritance; and the rebellious States will be invited back, with new privileges. It is to be feared that nothing can save us from such a compromise, except the success of the Confederate armies, or such a degree of success as will enable the Confederacy to enter into treaty with European powers. Having once accomplished their independence, the rebellious States will spurn the offer of a compromise, and we shall be left in the most pitiably shameful condition of a rejected partner ignominiously thrust out from a co-partnership in villainy which we had labored to continue, but were too heartily despised by our superiors in crime to admit of such fellowship.

The salvation of God, which we are invited to stand still and see by those who denounce every proposition to carry the war against slavery, every demand for emancipation, is a compromise with the slave States, having the security of slavery as its central and vital condition. That is the salvation for which these Simeons are devoutly waiting, and after the peace has re-inaugurated slavery, they propose to enter upon measures for its gradual and voluntary removal, a *euthanasia*, a gradual dying out in the course of fifty or a hundred years.

The proofs of an intended compromise are being constantly developed. An incidental light is thrown on this subject by recent events in Virginia among the contrabands. Mr. Lockwood's school for the teaching of the children of the slaves was visited by two naval officers. "One of them spoke approvingly of the undertaking of such instruction, and *thought it would be good for the children on their return to slavery, to which he thought they were inevitably doomed. He thought the war would soon terminate, and that then the slaveholders would have a just claim to their property.* And this officer a New-Englander!" But as an officer he was doubtless somewhat acquainted with the purposes and intended policy of the government.

Now, with all this, it is said, by devout men, that we must not press emancipation, but stand still and see the salvation of God. It is easy to see what kind of salvation this policy of silence and inaction would inaugurate, when God commands us to bestir ourselves. Suppose that Mordecai had counseled Esther to stand still and see the salvation of God, instead of pressing on the king with immediate energy for the Jews' deliverance. What kind of salvation would such standing still have wrought out for themselves and their countrymen?

Yet now we are commanded to be silent; the Christianity of the country is invited to paralyze itself, and to wait in ignominious silence on the movements of the war. We are required to lay aside the truth of God, and to cease proclaiming our duty to the oppressed, and to avoid all effort in regard to emancipation and every demand for that measure; every appeal, profession, and design of benevolence and freedom, or of justice to the enslaved, until the war is over, trusting to a vague, indolent impression that at any rate, some way or other, on whatever principles it be waged, the war will abolish slavery. We are required to abandon every righteous effort and appeal that alone can render the war sacred and noble, and to defer any decision in regard to slavery, any attempt at emancipation, till after a peace; and when we become peaceable, then we shall be at leisure to be pure.

These counselors seem not even to have arrived at the conception that the abolition of slavery is, in itself, a grand and glorious work, worthy of the nation, or that there is any obligation resting on us to prosecute that work, unless it be proved to be a necessity for our own prosperous existence; and they treat the benevolent and able pioneers in this sacred cause, and those who have borne it to its present vantage-ground, with undisguised contempt, commanding them to be silent, and now to relinquish the whole movement to the zeal of raw recruits, the effort of whose whole life, till within the period of the breaking out of this war, so far as they have ever thought or said or done any thing about slavery, has been to oppose its abolition, ignorant of all its details, ignorant of its history, ignorant of the workings of emancipation, vaporizing with bugbears of prejudice and terror, yet assuming to be the only capable speakers and agents for the Government and country. Political and ecclesiastical Rip Van Winkles, that, like seaweed, have lived at the bottom of the ocean, as insensible as seaweed in regard to the claims of the oppressed, and the working of the great tide of humanity in this direction, but whom this storm has torn from their moorings, and brought to the surface, where they ride upon the waves and imagine themselves the only wise and ruling spirits of the tempest. All veteran abolitionists must retire modestly from the conflict in their presence, and leave the salvation of the country to them, and to the masterly inactivity with which they float and dance upon the current!

It is said by these casuists that things are drifting toward the freedom of the slaves, and that, if we will but abjure and abnegate our own rights and duties as freemen, and unconditionally leave every thing to the government as they please, we shall at length drift right, and come to salvation. Suppose a ship, with a hundred men on board, on the brink of the rapids above Niagara, whirling about at the mercy of the current, and that, on its being proposed to get out the boats, and employ the sweeps, and by means of a rope on shore, and the strength of the spectators, to save her from the rapids and draw her out of danger, it should be seriously argued that she was very evidently drifting toward the shore, and if let alone would be quite sure to ground on Goat Island. Suppose that all hands should agree to abstain from working for her deliverance, and should call a prayer-meeting on deck, and resolve to let her drift, and to stand still and see the salvation of God in that drifting! This would be quite as wise and pious a course as the proposed policy of silence and inactivity in the case of our country. Every measure adopted thus far, and every current of influence and power, drifts us nearer to destruction, by a fatal compromise against God, unless we strike against slavery.

We do not intend to be chargeable with the guilt of silence, at this juncture, in regard to God's claims. We desire that the measure of emancipation be adopted, and the work of emancipation pursued, as a work of justice and benevolence commanded of God and due to our fellow-beings. This work and its claims we would press now, more urgently and incessantly than ever before, because God now in his good providence has given us the opportunity of performing it. The advocates of immediate emancipation are no longer theorists. Their work is before them, a work for a nation, the grandest work ever performed by any nation, a work possible now, and only now. It is a work of emancipation not only for the poor slaves from their tyrants, but of the people of the South from the tyranny and ruin of their sins.

God has given us the opportunity to save the whole South from destruction, by destroying for them the idols they have worshiped, and bringing them to the worship of the true God. There is no way of salvation for *them*, or of safety and peace for us, but only by striking the rebellion to the heart in its slavery, and giving to the rebellious States, as conquered terri-

tory, the beneficent, protecting, and regenerating ordinance against involuntary servitude, under which the whole North-west has been transfigured from a wilderness to prosperous States filled with thriving villages, and a free and teeming population, rejoicing in the government of God.

In this discussion, we have aimed throughout at principles, the principles in the Word of God, and have endeavored to fling the light of that Word, the judgment of those principles, at every step, upon our career of sin and path of duty. Our endeavor has been to awaken the conscience to show wherein we have gone contrary to God's Word, and to ascertain what God would have us to do. In opposition to the policy of silence, in condemnation of it, we maintain that in the midst of this war, and because of it, it is our special duty and wisdom to speak out.

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, and now in the midst of the din of war, the confusion of morals, the debauchery of conscience, and the demoralization of the country, we are bound to proclaim the truth. What protection for us would be left, when the laws themselves are silent or suspended, (*inter arma silent leges*,) if we dare not speak divine truth? What can we do for our country, if a guilty expediency shall compel us to throw aside the weapons that God commissions us to use, and to wait upon the evolutions of armed men, admiring their reviews, hardly daring to express our shame and anguish at defeat, and only echoing the thunder of the cannon? We are no where commanded in God's Word to wait upon war as God's providence. It is God's judgment, and it calls us to repentance. It calls us to do works meet for repentance; and the work of giving freedom and salvation to four millions of human beings held as slaves, is a work of immediate benevolence, the opportunity of which, if we avail ourselves of it, converts the war itself into the greatest of our blessings, drawing from it indeed the salvation of our country, as well as the redemption of the enslaved. And this may God mercifully grant for his dear Son's sake! Amen.