

A  
LECTURE

ON

Christianity and the Civil Laws,

BY

REV. JAMES A. LYON, D. D.,

OF COLUMBUS, MISSISSIPPI.

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COLUMBUS, MISS., APRIL 26TH, 1859.

REV. JAMES A. LYON:

*Dear Sir:*—Representing, as we believe, the sentiments of a very large number of those who heard your able and instructive Lecture on “*Christianity and the Civil Laws*,” delivered on the 24th inst., we request a copy, at your earliest convenience, for publication.

JOHN GILMER,  
JAMES WHITFIELD,  
JAMES HAMILTON,  
THOMAS G. BLEWETT, SR.,  
ALEX. F. YOUNG.

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COLUMBUS, MISS., APRIL 27TH, 1859.

TO COL. JOHN GILMER, GOV. JAMES WHITFIELD,  
AND OTHERS:

*Gentlemen:*—In obedience to your kind request, I herewith furnish you with a copy of my Lecture for publication—with the hope that due allowance will be made for its many errors and defects.

Yours, &c., very respectfully,

JAMES A. LYON.

# Christianity and the Civil Laws.

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## INTRODUCTION.

About the 20th of March last, some half dozen of the supposed pirated Africans, that had been smuggled into the country by the "Wanderer," were brought within the hearing of the church bells of Columbus and offered for sale. This excited the disgust and indignation of many of our citizens. The author of this Lecture, fearing that some of his friends, being uninformed of the true moral character of the act, might be tempted to become a party in the crime of those who offered them for sale, by purchase, thereby involving themselves in difficulty and disgrace, availed himself of the first opportunity that offered of putting his fellow-citizens, and especially young men for whom he feels the deepest interest, on their guard against such temptation. This opportunity was soon afforded at a public and promiscuous meeting of the citizens, assembled to hear a lecture on morals and manners in

general—at the close of which, there being ample time, the people were requested, by one of our most distinguished and wealthy planters, to remain seated and the author, being invited to speak, gave utterance to the indignation the people felt at being thus insulted by the aforesaid violators of law who presumed that the high-toned, moral and intelligent people of Columbus could be tempted to become a party with them in their high crime. These sentiments, however accordant with the views of the great majority of the citizens, as evinced by the significant and creditable fact that the aforesaid bold violator of law made no sale of his smuggled property in this place, were nevertheless not entirely without opposition sufficient to create a little excitement. This led the author to give notice in his pulpit that he would, on the following Sabbath afternoon, deliver a lecture on “Christianity in its relation to the civil laws.” This announcement brought the excitement to its acme on the part of the few that we shall term the Opposition—“some,” as the ancient Ephesians in Paul’s day, “crying one thing, and some another,” amongst which “confusion”—it was said—that the author had transcended his duty<sup>as</sup> in warning his friends against becoming parties in the aforesaid high crimes!—that it was intermeddling with things that did not belong to his calling! Others admitted that the thing itself, that is, the warning of men against the commission

of crime and great sins, was not so very much out of the line of a clergyman's duty, but that the *time* and *place* of doing it was exceptionable—that the Minister of the Gospel should not speak against sin and vice in the *streets* and *markets*, but should remain silent until, invested with gown and bands, he gets into the pulpit! These and similar criticisms, gave occasion to the author to preface his Lecture with the following preliminary remarks—viz:

I have been amused at the discussions that have taken place on the streets and elsewhere, by a certain class, as to the *prerogative of the pulpit!* Individuals who make no pretension to religion—who know nothing, scarcely, of the Bible—who can not tell the difference between the “Apochrypha” and “Apocalypse”—or distinguish between “John the Baptist” and “John the Evangelist,” and “Judas Iscariot” and “Judas the author of the Epistle,” with all the self-confidence of a church dignitary, will gravely pronounce on the prerogative of a Minister of the Gospel—and confidently decide as to what the Lord Jesus Christ *has* and *has not* commissioned his “ambassadors” to proclaim!—what is *proper*, and what is *not proper* for the Minister of the Gospel, in trying humbly and conscientiously to discharge his duty, to *say* and to *do!!* I scarcely know which the more to admire, the supercilious *self-confidence* or the *ignorance* of such self-constituted arbiters of the pulpit's pre-

rogative! I know not but that it would be well for the information and comfort of such to deliver a special lecture on the proper prerogative of the pulpit, in which I should soon show that from the beginning to the end of the Bible—both by precept and example, by declaration and implication, it is made the solemn duty of the “Watchmen on the walls of Zion” to “cry aloud and spare not” against—what?—*all unrighteousness*—and to inculcate—what?—*all virtue!*—which will extend to and embrace *all* the actions of *all* men, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, in church and *state*. He who takes the ground that the Minister of the Gospel transcends his holy commission in preaching against corruption in the state—or wickedness in rulers, shows thereby that he does not understand the first principle of Bible teaching on this subject: that he is pitifully ignorant of God’s word, and the practice and precept of Bible characters! Such, doubtless, would pronounce Moses to have been an intermeddler in matters that did not belong to him in daring to confront Pharaoh, the great monarch of Egypt! Such would adjudge Samuel, Elijah, Jeremiah, and the prophets to have transcended their prerogative because they reprov’d kings for their wickedness!—and John the Baptist to have acted indiscreetly and rashly in boldly telling Herod of his violation of law.

Nothing can be more absurd than the notion that the “Ambassadors” of the “King of Kings and Lord



of Lords" should ask sinners—consult the world, as to *what* they should preach, or *how, when or where!!* Paul, in the discharge of his duty as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, did "not consult with flesh and blood"—but in "the castle"—before kings—in "the market place"—by the "river side," and on "Mar's Hill," the great court house of Athens, he lifted his voice fearlessly against all unrighteousness! So in like manner ought the successors of Paul to do the same, in the same manner, and in the same spirit. The strange fancy that a Minister of the Gospel must not open his mouth in proclaiming the truths of the Gospel in warning men against sin and iniquity, and in inculcating virtue, except in the pulpit, is simply ridiculous! Who ever imagined that Elijah waited for a pulpit before he delivered his terrible messages against wicked rulers! or that Jesus Christ carried a pulpit about with him through the hills and valleys of Palestine! or that Paul, when "his spirit was stirred in him," called for a pulpit before he gave utterance to truths that made kings tremble on their thrones!

I have recently requested my people, in the language of Paul, (Eph: vi. 19, 20,) to pray "for me that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an Ambassador \* \* \* that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak"—and I trust their prayer has been graciously answered.

With these preliminary remarks, I shall now proceed to discuss the main subject, which is *Christianity in its relations to the civil laws of the country.*



# LECTURE.

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MARK XII: 17.

“AND JESUS ANSWERING SAID UNTO THEM—RENDER UNTO CÆSAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CÆSAR’S, AND TO GOD THE THINGS THAT ARE GOD’S.”

I propose, at this time, to discuss a great moral question of fearful importance—fearful, because of its direct and powerful bearings upon the weal or the woe of society, not only in its social relations, but also in its organic and governmental aspects:—a question, too, because of its moral and religious bearings, that comes entirely within the province of the pulpit.

I do not propose to discuss *politics*. This I leave to politicians, except when politics cross the line into the domains of Christian morals, and invade the territories of religion: then I will discuss so called politics, since it thereby becomes a question of morals, and a legitimate subject for the pulpit.

I do not propose, at this time, to discuss the question of “Slavery,” although strictly a pulpit theme, as it is a Bible doctrine, and one that I have already treated, in years gone by, in this pulpit—the theme of my first discourse being, “Slavery in the light of the Bible,”—and of my second, “Slavery in the light of God’s providence,”—besides, I have delivered elsewhere, and circulated in print in this community, still another discourse on the “Missionary Aspect of African Slavery.”

Neither is it my intention to discourse on the subject of the "Slave Trade" between this country and Africa: nor to enquire whether it would redound to the best interests of our country in any sense or aspect whatsoever, religious, moral, economical, or political to repeal existing laws on that subject—although I have very decided opinions on that question, and should deem it perfectly proper, nay, a binding duty, on account of its great moral and religious bearing, to express them if occasion required. But the present occasion does not require it.

In short, I do not intend to investigate the intrinsic propriety or impropriety of any existing law. But the great theme of my present Lecture is the Bible command—the christian duty of every citizen to "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's,"—or, in other words, to reverence and obey Civil Law, which, in this country, to which the eyes of all nations are turned, is our only King!

My right, privilege and duty to discuss this subject, will hardly be called in question by any one, except such as are wholly ignorant of the duties pertaining to the office of the Christian ministry, and of the moral questions that come within the domains of the Christian pulpit. It is my right, my privilege, my duty to discuss the great doctrine of my text, because:

FIRST. I am a CITIZEN, not only with equal rights and immunities with others, a part of the body politic, and a constituent of the commonwealth, with common interests at stake, with a common future, and with the same patriotic hopes and aims, but I am bound, as such, to contribute my due proportion of influence

towards the prosperity of the body politic of which I am a member, and from which I receive protection.

SECOND. I am not only a citizen, but I am more: I am the HEAD OF A FAMILY, the FATHER of little children, who are now receiving an education, which no vigilance can guard against—no caution can ward off, from their surroundings—from what they see and hear in the every day walks of life—from the common sentiment in the midst of which they live and move and breathe: and an education, too, that is to shape their destiny for life, and be as lasting as eternity! and hence, influenced by the feelings and the affections, the hopes and the fears of a father, I don't want my child to imbibe, from the moral atmosphere in which he breathes, sentiments adverse to the word of God, injurious to the well-being of society, and destructive to his future hopes and prosperity as a successful and good citizen. It is a duty that I owe my own offspring to try to throw the salt of health, and morality, and virtue into that society and public sentiment, that is to stamp their characters with moral lineaments lasting as ceaseless ages!

THIRD. It is my DUTY, not only as a private citizen but as a Minister of the Gospel, to aid in establishing civil law and public order. The truth is, the pulpits of the land are the pillars of civil power, and must of necessity be so in all really free governments. This is almost a truism. It is eminently verified in the past history of our country. Ministers of the Gospel led the "Pilgrims" that brought Liberty and Protestant Christianity to New England. The name of an eminent Minister of the Gospel is signed to the immortal "Declaration of Independence." Ministers

of the Gospel commingled with the revolutionary armies, aiding them with their counsel, with their prayers, and with their blood! Washington, and the leading politicians of that day, when the constitution of the United States was promulgated, and was of doubtful success, invoked the aid of the Ministers of the Gospel in carrying it into successful effect. General Jackson, during "the late war," was assisted by Ministers of the Gospel in sounding the tocsin, raising the clans for freedom, and descending like an avalanche upon the invaders of our shores, and driving them from our borders! Nay, how long, think you, the free government of these United States, or any State government would last, were there no pulpits in the land? Pull down these pulpits, close these church doors, muffle these church bells, and banish the Ministers of the Gospel from the land, and where would your boasted Freedom be in less than a lustrum of years? The question needs no answer. How perfectly absurd, then, is it, and how indicative of ignorance, for any one to imagine that it is not my DUTY, as well as my *privilege*, to enforce the doctrine of my text, and aid in establishing civil law and public order!

FOURTH. But still further, it is not optional with me whether I will remain silent, through a shrinking and carnal policy, dictated by unmanly fears, unworthy of an "Ambassador" of the Lord Jesus Christ—for he who is not willing, if need be, to sacrifice his life for the truth that he preaches, is not fit to hold that highest office among men; I say it is not optional with me whether I will or will not preach obedience to Civil Laws, since it is a Bible doctrine clearly, repeatedly, abundantly set forth in

the Word of God, and therefore, as a Minister of the Word, I dare not hesitate to do it.

The doctrine of the text is most explicit and exactly to the point:—"And they" (the Jews) "sent unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians to catch him in his words;" and, after a good deal of artful flattery, they said unto him, "Master, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? shall we give? or shall we not give?" You will bear in mind that the government of the country was a usurped one, won by the sword—not republican, not christian, but despotic and pagan. Obedience to Cæsar (by which was meant the Roman government) was believed by the Pharisees to be a violation of the Theocracy in which no other king was recognized but God. Powerful, therefore, was the inducement, in the estimation of the Jews, to take ground against obedience to civil law. Indeed, if it were possible to find a valid argument against obedience to civil law, whilst at the same time we recognize our obligation to the law-making power, it certainly would be found here, since "to pay tribute to Cæsar" might be construed into a virtual support of usurpation, and of a pagan government in supposed contravention of the Theocracy of the Jewish Constitution! But what was the answer of him in whom dwelt all the fulness of the God-head bodily, and who spake as never man spake? It was—"Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's:"—which teaches not only the duty of obedience to civil law, as all commentators agree, but, according to Doctor Joseph A. Alexander, "the two duties are in perfect harmony, and rest upon one



and the same principle." "By rendering to Cæsar what is his, you render unto God what is his."

In view of such teaching, therefore, on the part of the great Founder of Christianity, well might we expect to find his Apostles and Disciples every where inculcating the same doctrine. Take the following as a specimen: Paul says—"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." Peter says—"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme: or the governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

The Old Testament is equally explicit in its teaching on this subject: "Thou shalt not revile the gods," (the civil authorities) "nor curse the Ruler of thy people"—"Fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change"—"Curse not the King, no not in thy thought." Peter speaks of those whom the Lord will reserve to the day of judgment to be punished, "But chiefly them that despise Government, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." Paul again exhorts: "Be subject not only for wrath, but for conscience sake"—"For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are also God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."—"Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers to obey magistrates"—"Whoever resisteth, resisteth the Ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive damnation."

How is it possible for the honest and fearless Ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ to keep his lips sealed on the great doctrine of the text in view of the abundant, the overflowing, the tremendous utterances of Holy Writ, clearly and explicitly pointing out and enjoining his duty on that subject?

FIFTH. But once more, it is *my* duty peculiarly as a Presbyterian Minister to inculcate the duty of obedience to civil laws, because it is made so by a separate and distinct article in the creed—the “Confession of Faith” of the great church of which I am an humble Minister. Chapter XXIII. of the Confession of Faith treats “OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE,” and Section IV. of that Chapter reads as follows, viz:

“It is the duty of the people to pray for Magistrates, to honor their persons, to pay them tribute and other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion doth not make void the Magistrate’s just and legal authority, nor free the people from due obedience to him.”

But it is needless, my hearers, for me to dwell on this part of my subject. That it is my right, my privilege, my duty—as a citizen with common rights and immunities, and interests in the present and future of our country—as a father of children that are growing up and imbibing an ineffaceable moral character from the social atmosphere in which they live—as a friend and supporter of the free and republican institutions of this great country, where I expect to live and die, and my posterity after me—as an Ambassador of Jesus Christ, “King of Kings and Lord of Lords,” who has commissioned me, and commanded me to preach obedience to civil laws as a christian duty—and an humble Minister of the wide-extended, conservative, and powerful Presbyterian



Church in these United States, whose creed enjoins it as a part of my faith and practice—I repeat, as such, it is needless any longer to advocate my high privilege—my solemn duty, to enforce the doctrine of my text, the duty of reverential respect and obedience to civil laws. Nor would I have dwelt so long, nor half so long, on this part of my subject, had it not embodied the very gist and marrow of the great theme which I am discussing. Indeed, were I to stop here and say no more, I consider that I have said enough to satisfy every Bible-reader and Bible-believer, that it is the binding duty of every Christian, and every good citizen, to render by act, and by word, and by every other lawful influence, respect and obedience to the constitutional laws of the land, so long as the laws remain unrepealed, and we recognize our allegiance to the Government that ordains them.

But there are other aspects of this interesting subject, to which I desire now respectfully to call your attention. It cannot have escaped the serious and reflecting observer of the signs of the times, that the tendency of things for the last few years has been calculated to awaken the well grounded fears, and to excite the painful apprehensions of every patriotic citizen. It would seem that mobocracy and lawlessness are becoming the order of the day throughout the entire length and breadth of our country! As illustrations of this fearful and rapid tendency, I would instance the frequency with which the laws of the United States have been openly trampled under foot in New England, the honored cradle of American liberty:—the rebellion in Kansas, so destructive of

life, property, and good morals :—the numerous vigilant-mobs, fearful and terrible in their lawless tendencies, that have disgraced many of our large cities and towns :—the fillibustering expeditions along our southern and western borders :—and the general disposition to trample upon law, and set its officers at defiance every where :—and most alarming of all is the cowardly disposition of many of the law-abiding, and order-loving part of the community, which constitute for the most part a large majority, if they did but know it, to wink at, or to shrink from opposing and boldly denouncing such fearful and destructive tendencies to inevitable ruin ! I have lived long enough, and my experience has been such, as to convince me that two or three dozen of reckless, wicked men, can make the impression in a community of as many thousand that *their* opinion is *public opinion* ! The sober, quiet, substantial part of any community are for the most part modest and shrinking—*too* shrinking for the public good. They have a great aversion to coming into collision with any railing opposition. They are quiet, and silent ; and their voice is not heard nor their arm raised in antagonism. And hence they are erroneously thought to acquiesce with the noisy !—Indeed they themselves do not know their own strength. Whereas on the contrary the lawless and reckless few make a great out-cry, from the fact that wickedness is a very active virus in the bosom of man, and nerves him with unwanted energy. Moreover such for the most part loosen their tongues, and add to their garrulous propensities by artificial stimulants, so that they are bold, fearless, and brazen in uttering their lawless sentiments, and most vocifer-

~~are~~ in their unseemly screams and yells at the hustings  
~~in~~ applauding vicious opinions—and if the world  
~~were~~ to judge by the hideous noise made on such  
~~occasions~~—and alas! too many do—they would  
~~conclude~~, as Elijah did of old, that all Israel had  
~~gone~~ after Baal! Whereas, if they were to rise up  
~~as~~ one man—speak out and declare their sentiments,  
~~they~~ would find to their joy and astonishment, that  
~~they~~ were the *people*—and the lawless and reckless  
~~were~~ as yet but the *faction*! I can assure you my  
~~fellow-citizens~~ that if our glorious country is ever  
~~driven~~ to destruction, as portended by the present  
~~lawless~~ tendencies throughout the land, it will be  
~~done~~ by the young, self-willed, ambitious Phaëstions  
~~on~~ both sides of “the line,” who will grasp the  
~~reins~~, and lash the flame-breathing steeds into madness,  
~~whilst~~ the sober, quiet, modest, order-loving, great  
~~majority~~ will be culpable lookers on!! We do not  
~~know~~ our strength—and the reason we do not know  
~~it~~, is that we do *not speak out*, and let our voices be  
~~heard~~. The righteous should be “bold as a lion”—  
~~and~~ feel and act as Isaiah did when he said—“for the  
~~Lord~~ God will help me; therefore shall I not be  
~~confounded~~; therefore have I set my face like a flint,  
~~and~~ I know that I shall not be ashamed.” I repeat,  
~~that~~ nothing is more alarming in the present tendency  
~~of~~ things, than the shrinking quiescence of good  
~~men~~. This may be accounted for in part, in addition  
~~to~~ explanations already given, by an inadequate  
~~apprehension~~ of our real danger. *We* who are grown  
~~up~~ men, and have long since had our principles of  
~~faith~~ and practice firmly established, do not feel that  
~~we ourselves~~ are in any danger of being carried away

by such disorderly tendencies. True, but we forget how short a time it requires for our children to grow up and become actors, zealous, self-willed, head-strong actors on the great theatre of political affairs! Please bear in mind that it requires only twenty-one years to travel from the cradle to the ballot-box—and less time than that in this dynasty of “young America,” to shoulder a musket, gird on a bowie-knife, and pocket a revolver, and set parental and all other authority at defiance! *Here* lies the dreaded danger: not that *we*, the fully grown up and mature, are liable to be much influenced by the tendencies alluded to, but the danger is that the *Rising Generation*, who in a short time, long before your head and mine are laid under the sod, if we live out the ordinary term of human life, will have the reins of Government, the law-making power in their own hands; this generation will and must of necessity receive an education, a bent, a bias from this disorderly state of things, deeply ingraven as in rock, and ineffaceable as the laws of mind and of nature, which will inevitably shape their destiny and the destiny of our country! Now in view of these facts and considerations which are indisputable, I appeal to you, fathers and heads of families, and patriotic citizens, young and old, whether it be not the bounden duty of every one of us to set our faces like a flint against this lawless tendency, and to use our utmost endeavors to stay the immoral influence that is so rapidly, and so inevitably moulding the minds and hearts of our *children* who will so soon mould and control the country, which in time is destined, for good or for evil, for the weal or woe of our species, to influence the world!!

The position is now taken by some good men, and advocated with great learning and ability that America, protestant America, is the "Restored Israel of God," promised in such glowing terms by the ancient prophets. And if it be so, if America is indeed to become the "Promised Land" to the down trodden people of God, the "great high way" of the nations, and the moral Light-House whose effulgent radiance high and lifted up is to penetrate with benign rays all lands, and is it not a grand thought well calculated to ennoble every American bosom! will it not furnish a most powerful stimulus to every christian, to every philanthropist, to every good man, to use his utmost endeavors, to heal, purify, and preserve in its integrity this great Nation, that, united and harmonious, is so soon to give laws to the whole earth?

We feel proud of our Government, and justly. It is called by the Nations of the world "THE GREAT REPUBLIC!" But I can assure you, my hearers, that its glory consists in being *Christian*. And whenever Christian principles cease to have their influence in our Legislative bodies, that moment we enter a current that sweeps us into the maelstrom of political destruction, resulting in anarchy first, and despotism next! "The edifice of human liberty," says Professor M. B. Hope, "can stand secure only when it rests upon the Bible; for this conclusive reason, that the intelligence, and still more the moral principles, which we have seen to be essential, cannot in the nature of the case exist, and in point of fact never have existed permanently, except under the illuminating, renovating and commanding influence of



the Christian revelation." "It is the spiritual life and power of Christianity moulding our institutions, actuating our rulers and law-makers, and controlling the moral principles of our people, in virtue of their personal subjection to its sway, and nothing else, that can successfully counteract the evils which are ever rising up to threaten the life of our national freedom."

The great Washington in his Address to the people of the United States declining being considered a candidate for re-election to the Presidency, makes use of the following language: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who would labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure; reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

"The framers of our Constitution," says the celebrated Wadsworth, "recognized their obligations to act as in the everlasting presence of a higher than human authority. And they did act as in such presence. Protestant Christianity is positively part of our common law, and part of our Constitution. The civil law of this land lifts a Protestant Bible in every



official inauguration, and proclaims the Sabbath as consecrated to God, alike in the halls of our higher national council, and in the rudest hut of the borderer."

"Christianity," says the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, "general Christianity is and always has been a part of the common law of Pennsylvania \* \* Christianity with liberty of conscience to all men." "From the time of Bracton not to go farther back," says the same authority, "Christianity has been received as part of the common law of England." "No free Government exists in the word," continues the same high authority, "unless where Christianity is acknowledged and is the religion of the country. So far from Christianity, as the counsel contends, being part of the machinery necessary to despotism, the reverse is the fact. Christianity is part of the common law of this State. It is not proclaimed by the commanding voice of any human superior, but expressed in the calm and mild accents of customary law. Its foundations are broad and strong and deep; they are laid in the authority, the interests, the affections of the people."

Daniel Webster, one of the greatest, if not the very greatest, exponent of the law our country has ever produced, says:

"Christianity is part of the law of the land. This was the case among the Puritans of New England—the Episcopalians of the Southern States—the Pennsylvania Quakers, the mass of the followers of Whitefield and Wesley, and the Presbyterians; all brought, and all adopted this great truth, and all have sustained it. And where there is any religious sentiment amongst men at all, this sentiment incorporates itself with the law. *Every thing declares it.* The massive cathedral of the Catholic; the Episcopalian church, with its lofty spire pointing heavenward; the plain temple of the Quaker; the log church of the hardy pioneer of the wilderness; the

mementoes and memorials around and about us; the consecrated graveyards, their tombstones and epitaphs; their silent vaults, their mouldering contents; all attest it. *The dead prove it as well as the living.* The generations that have gone before speak to it and pronounce it from the tomb. We feel it. All, all proclaim that christianity, general, tolerant christianity, independent of sects and parties, is the law of the land."

Now, my hearers, what is the inevitable inference—the grand conclusion that is forced upon us by this conjoint, harmonious, and eloquent testimony of philosophers, sages, law-makers, and supreme judges, all agreeing and all declaring as with one voice and with one tongue, that christianity is—not only an indispensable element of our moral well being—not only an essential pillar to the permanency and stability of our free government—but more, that it is itself "A PART OF THE COMMON LAW OF THE LAND?" The inference, the grand conclusion is, that *disobedience to civil law* is—alike in the judgment of Biblical commentators, and legal expounders of the highest authority—REBELLION AGAINST GOD!

In this country, LAW is our only KING; and *we*, each individual member of society, are the pillars of his sublime throne. It is our only protection and safe-guard. It is the exponent of public sentiment constitutionally expressed—and is strong, not on account of its pains and penalties in the *letter*, nor of the brute force, as in despotic countries, that may attend its administration, but on account of its hold on the *affections* of the people. Therefore to violate law—to set it at defiance, or to defeat its design and intention, by any other than the constitutional means—that is, by repeal at the ballot-box, or by the decision of the Supreme Court, is virtual *treason*, and real, unvarnished *wickedness*: it is a crime against God, and against man!

Men may, on sudden emergencies, sometimes act, not in violation of law, but without the forms of law—that is, do in the absence of law, what the law would do if it could be brought to bear. But this is a very different thing from acting contrary to and in violation of the laws of a Government which we still recognize, and to which we still profess to owe allegiance. Such irreverence for constituted authorities, such disobedience to civil law, is not *innocent*—nay, it is a *crime*, that will admit or no justification, nor even of *palliation*, in this republican country, where the opinion of a majority, constitutionally expressed, makes law; and which law, if wrong, unwise or defective, may be declared inoperative and set aside by the Supreme Court—I say, resistance to such Government—a Government to which you still profess allegiance—wilful disobedience to such law, and the advocacy of such sentiments is not innocent, it is pernicious, because it leads directly to wrong, to violence, to mobocracy, to anarchy, to blood-shed and to destruction. Let us test this assertion: Suppose one hundred men, or one hundred thousand, it matters not, any number less than the law-making majority—determine to violate a law, I care not on what plea, I ask whether, on the same principle, *ten* men may not do the same? And if ten may, will not the same logic justify *one*? What is the difference? Where will this doctrine lead to? A child can answer that it will lead to the destruction of all law, and all organized Government! Might will make right. This will result, first, in the formation of numerous small marauding bands—then of larger and fewer—and last, of an iron despotism! Now I ask can a

principle ever, or in any instance, be right, that logically and inevitably leads to such appalling results? Can “a good tree bring forth evil fruit?”

But again, if a minority, I care not how large and respectable it may be, has a right to violate civil law, and to resist *acknowledged* authority, (for I am not discussing a *casus belli*, nor the justifiable grounds of a revolution,) if they may *resist* the law of the majority, has not the majority the very same right, to say the least, to *enforce* their law? and what is this but to advocate civil war and bloodshed? the most horrid of all evils, the legitimate fruits of the most pernicious of all sentiments!!

The advocacy of such lawless sentiments, is wrong in theory and ruinous in practice, because it moulds, with powerful and fearful rapidity, the minds and hearts of the young and rising generation, who are so soon to control the destinies of this great and constantly expanding nation. The impression that it makes upon my little son, and upon yours, is not favorable to their growing up to be law-abiding citizens. It is this laxness of speech, and want of reverence for constituted law and authority—law made by sworn legislators, supposed to be the wisest and best amongst the people, that is the true cause of so much lawless conduct in different parts of the land, our own streets not excepted. How my heart sickens, to hear law-makers, and grave senators in our legislative halls, and men in high places—whose irreverent and reckless flippancy is echoed by a thousand lesser but self-constituted arbiters of public weal—speak with as much indifference of severing this glorious Union, the admiration of the whole

world, erected upon the fortunes, the lives and sacred honors of our fathers, and baptized with their tears, their prayers and their blood, as though it were a thing of nought—a mere child's bauble—a foot-ball to be kicked out of the way!!

And here I cannot refrain from transcribing the prayer of the immortal Washington, contained in his "Circular Letter," addressed to the Governor of the several States, from the head-quarters of the United States army. It is in these solemn words:

"I now make it my earnest prayer that God would have you, and the State over which you preside, in his holy protection; that he would incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to Government; to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow-citizens of the United States at large—and particularly for their brethren who have served in the field—and finally that He would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the divine Author of our blessed religion; without an humble imitation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy nation."

With the least particle of such a spirit as dictated that patriotic prayer, it would be impossible to indulge in those dreadful imprecations against the Government and the Union with which our halls and hustings so frequently resound. Such reckless speech is not innocent, as it will not be without deleterious effect. Let some one, whom the people honor, denounce and vilify, from day to day and from year to year, *you*, the father, in the hearing of your *little boy*, your own child, and think you it will not be without evil effect—that your child will not grow up with diminished love and respect—nay, positively wanting in reverence and affection for you? It would be a miracle if he did not. Would you risk it? Would you suffer it?



No, not for a moment! And will not the very same effect be produced upon all our children, who will soon reach man's estate, and upon all the weak, silly and unthinking of the land, by hearing unrebuked and unceasingly this flippant ribaldry about severing the Union!—splitting the Union!—pulling down the pillars of our great republican throne, as though it were another Dagon's Temple!—and sending an arrow, dipped in the poison of ignorance and fanaticism, to the heart of the American Eagle, whose wings now overshadow the entire continent! No, no, my hearers, I can assure you that such daring language, such irreverent speech, which, if sincere, is wicked, if not sincere, is both silly and wicked, is not pleasing to the sober, thinking and modest part of the community; nay, it is positively painful, as it is certainly dangerous, in that it educates our children: it is therefore not good policy, is bad taste and worse morals—let us therefore not encourage it.

How the despots of the Old World would chuckle with unsuppressed glee and exultation, to see this glorious, but to them terrible, Union severed into fragments! And how they would, with destructive art, play upon the different parts, as did Philip of Macedon upon the factions of Greece, until we were all consumed! And oh! what a sad prospect in the eyes of the zealous Christian, who regards this united, homogeneous, christian Government as the great Evangelizer which is to give, not only law, but the Gospel to the world! How can we regard the enemies of the Union in any other light than as the enemies of God, the enemies of a pure church, and the enemies of the human race!



I am a firm believer in “Manifest Destiny.” I have not a doubt but that in due time—which will be God’s time—a time not forced, not brought about by the violation of law and justice, but in due time, that all these Southern Islands, and all these Southern Anarchies, for they deserve no better name, will fall into our hands as a ripe apple falls to the ground. But that “Manifest Destiny” that attempts to go in advance of law and God’s providence, is manifest outrage and wickedness which will not prosper! It is a remarkable fact, not generally recollected, that we have an account of a filibustering party recorded in the Bible, which I will read. It was a party in the “camp of Israel,” that determined, contrary to the command of Moses, to take the “promised land” before God’s time! The record, which you will find in the XIV. chapter of the Book of Numbers, and which I will now read, will inform you as to the upshot of that filibustering expedition:

“And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, lo, we be here, and will go up into the place which the *Lord hath promised*, (here is their faith in “*manifest destiny*,”) for we have sinned. And Moses said, wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? But it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you: that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalakites, and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you. But they presumed to go up to the Hill Top, nevertheless the Ark of the Lord and Moses departed not out of

the camp. Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites, which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them even unto Hormah." And so it will be with every other filibustering expedition which, in violation of the laws of God and the laws of man, attempts to anticipate God's providence.

But there is one other evil resulting from this tendency to encroach upon law and order, from this laxness of speech, and want of reverence for law made by sworn legislators, that is looming up fearfully in all parts of our great country; it is this: Irreverence for law begets irreverence for law-makers and administrators of law, which, in turn, will soon result in our best men not consenting to become legislators and government officers! The evil of this state of things will be perfectly astounding! Who can depict the future of our country when good men, out of sheer self-respect, refuse to condescend to take part in our legislative councils and the affairs of the government; when the sword, the purse, the army, and the navy of the country fall into the hands of ambitious, bad men! I can assure you, my hearers, that, according to my judgment and observation, the current of popular ebullition and utterance, nay more, of overt action, is fearfully tending in that direction!

Let me say, in conclusion, that in this "Great Republic," this "Free Country," where public sentiment, constitutionally expressed, is law, every good citizen should reverence law, and feel individually and morally responsible for its faithful execution. What can the officers of the law do in this free country, where military force would be a stigma upon our

boasted freedom, unless they are sustained by the people? Let it be a maxim written upon the mind, the heart, the conscience of every American citizen, that each and every member of the community is responsible for the welfare of the whole! Consequently each one is bound to *think*—is bound to *have an opinion*—is bound to *give utterance* to his sentiments—and is bound to *use his influence*, much or little, in support of virtue and the suppression of vice! Timidity in expressing our opinions in relation to moral conduct is very *reprehensible*. To be silent in this land where public sentiment is law, and the only law, is to be virtually a party in the transgression. We are all watchmen upon the walls of public welfare—and are all bound to “cry aloud and spare not” when we see the danger. Ambrose, an eminent father of the ancient church, was accustomed to say, “As we must give an account for our idle words, so likewise must we for our idle silence.”

May the Lord add his blessing, for Christ's sake,

AMEN.









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