

Civil Government of God: Obedience a Duty.

A DISCOURSE
UPON THE
DUTIES
OF THE
CHRISTIAN CITIZEN,
UNDER WHAT IS TERMED
THE PRESENT NATIONAL CRISIS:

Preached on Sabbath Morning, Dec. 3, 1860.

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"The Constitution and its Laws are the basis of the public tranquility, the firmest support of the public authority, and the pledge of the liberty of the citizens. But this Constitution is a vain phantom, and the best Laws are useless, if they are not religiously observed."

VATTEL on the Law of Nations.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

CHILLICOTHE, DEC. 4, 1860.

REV. DR. STANTON:

Dear Sir:—Being much pleased with your Sermon of yesterday morning, and believing that its publication and distribution among the people of this and other communities, will be of lasting benefit in these times of trouble, we would respectfully request a copy of it for that purpose.

Respectfully, your obedient servants,

WM. B. FRANKLIN,
NOAH L. WILSON,
D. H. SCOTT,
WILLIAM CARSON,

DAVID WILLS,
J. McLANDBURGH,
F. CAMPBELL,
T. S. GOODMAN, JR.

T. WOODROW, JR.
THOMAS MILLER,
DANIEL DUSTMAN,
JOS. H. VANMETER,
A. L. FULLERTON.

CHILLICOTHE, DEC. 7, 1860.

MESSESS. WM. B. FRANKLIN, NOAH L. WILSON, AND OTHERS:

Gentlemen:—Your note requesting for publication a copy of my discourse, preached on Sabbath morning last, has been received. Although it was not prepared for publication, I cheerfully place it at your disposal, deferring to your judgment as to its merits.

With sentiments of high regard,

I remain

Yours, respectfully,

R. L. STANTON.

EXPLANATORY.

This discourse is not a political discussion. It was preached to my own congregation, in the ordinary course of ministerial duty, without any reference to its publication, and it aims at but one thing—to set forth Civil Government as an Ordinance of God, and the consequent Christian duty of acknowledging the supremacy of Law. It is scarcely to be expected that every person in a large, promiscuous assembly, will cordially assent to every thing which may be advanced in a discourse upon such a theme. But it may possibly be found, by those who take the Bible for their guide, somewhat more easy to dissent from the positions here taken, than to disprove them.

Had I preached on Thanksgiving Day, I should probably have taken this topic; but yet, my views of the worship of God are such, that I should not feel at liberty to introduce any subject into the pulpit as a part of Divine service, on a secular day, that I could not with propriety present on the Sabbath.

While I have spoken of a just ground of complaint by the South against the North, which has had its influence more or less, in bringing on the present crisis, I do not ignore the fact that there may be other grounds of complaint which cannot be justified, and perhaps certain reasons, also, with some men, as yet unavowed, for the attitude of disunion which is taken; but, from the very nature of the case, I said nothing on these points, as that would have led me into the domain of politics. I only aimed to view the one cause of complaint noticed, with reference to our obligations to law, and that only in its religious bearings; and as I was preaching to a Northern audience, I did not deem it suitable to dwell upon the duties of Southern citizens.

As this discourse has been requested for publication, I have thought it best to sustain some of its positions by a further citation of authorities, and have therefore supplied them in Notes. These, while valuable in themselves, may perhaps appear with greater propriety here than they would have done in the pulpit; at least, their introduction there would have swelled the discourse to an intolerable length.

With these words explanatory, I give the discourse to the public, and shall be in no manner troubled, whatever may be its judgment.

CHILLICOTHE, OHIO, December, 1860.

DISCOURSE, &C.

Mark 12: 17.

“Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.”

I PROPOSE this morning to preach upon the Duties of the Christian Citizen, the topic being suggested by what has been termed the present Crisis in our National Affairs.

I shall aim to avoid politics, and as far as possible all reference to mere political considerations. If I touch upon these matters incidentally, it will be because it is demanded in order to do full justice to the subject. There are certain responsibilities under which Christians as citizens are placed, and certain duties which devolve upon them, which bear more or less directly upon political questions. But I wish to view them at the present moment, and wish you to view them, from a religious rather than from a political standpoint. The present condition of our common country makes it eminently proper that the subject should be examined. And it is just as clearly the duty of the minister of the gospel, if he would declare to men “all the counsel of God,” to present this, as any other topic, to their consideration. Let me bespeak for it your earnest and prayerful attention.

You may remember the circumstances under which our Saviour announced the sentiment of the text. The Pharisees and the Herodians sent men to him “to catch him in his words.” They propounded to him this, as they supposed, puzzling question: “Master, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?” He saw their design, he charged them with “hypocrisy,” but he answered their question: “Bring me a penny, that I may see it. Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar’s. And Jesus an-

swering, said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Among other things here taught, I now refer to but two, as bearing upon the immediate subject in hand. They are general principles.

1. The recognition by the Saviour that man's obligations to the civil authority, within its proper sphere, are as clear and as binding as they are to the authority of God.

"Cæsar," then the head of the Roman Empire, of which Judea was a province, may be understood, in the Saviour's answer, as designating the civil authority in any and in every nation. Tiberius Cæsar was then the reigning Emperor. The Jews owed him, or rather the authority of the State, which he represented, due obedience; as the subjects or citizens of any other government owe proper subjection to its authority. And these obligations are here placed upon the same footing as are the duties which all men owe to God: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

But the Saviour's answer plainly teaches that there is a limitation to the civil authority. "Render to Cæsar *the things that are Cæsar's*." This shows that our obedience is due to rightful authority only; to that which is exerted within its proper sphere, with reference to its just ends, and upon its proper objects. Cæsar may require obedience to demands which contravene the will of God. We may then take the position of the Apostles, and say: "We ought to obey God, rather than men." Or, a despotic ruler may promulge such laws, or administer them in such a manner, as to set at naught the most vital interests of society of a temporal nature. Then, disobedience *may* become a duty; possibly to the extent of revolution, for the purpose of subverting the existing government and establishing one which shall secure to the people the rights and immunities for which civil government has been instituted. Plainly, then, this authority of the civil magistrate, though here placed upon the same footing as that of God, has its limitations. The Saviour's language authorizes them. This must necessarily be so, for man, who wields this authority, is both fallible and corrupt.

2. The other principle here taught by the Saviour, is this: that

there is due to God an obedience entirely distinct from that due to the civil authority, and with which the civil magistrate may not meddle.

“Render to God *the things that are God’s.*” This has reference more especially to the demands which God makes upon the religious homage of men. With these, Cæsar may not interfere. He may not prescribe our creed, nor our worship; nor may he enforce that which God has prescribed. God claims to act alone in this sphere; declaring to men, individually as men or collectively as communities, what he would have them believe and do, and he rewards and punishes according to his sovereign pleasure, as they obey or disregard his will.

While, therefore, both classes of these obligations—as well our civil as our religious duties—are equally clear and rest upon the same basis of primary authority, they are entirely distinct. God claims sole and supreme dominion over the one, while the civil ruler may challenge obedience to the other.

And this, while it is sufficient to show the bearing of the text, brings me to notice another principle—the first main proposition I lay down—which indeed underlies both those already stated, and which is therefore fully warranted by the text itself, while it is sustained by many other most explicit teachings of the word of God. It is this, that

I. CIVIL GOVERNMENT IS AN ORDINANCE OF GOD.

This proposition is as plainly declared in the Epistle to the Romans, as any proposition can be in human language. It is universally conceded that the Apostle is speaking in reference to civil government, when he says: “The powers that be are ordained of God.” This is so clear that it scarcely admits of corroboration, though other proofs are abundant, in the instructions of Christ and in his example, and elsewhere throughout the word of God.

The Apostle fortifies the position he takes, by the specifications, substantially, (1.) That obedience to the civil authority is obedience to God; and (2.) That disobedience to it is disobedience to him. “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.”

"The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."

But he goes even further, in fortifying the principle that civil government is an ordinance of God, by declaring that the civil magistrate wields *no just* authority but that which is derived from God. His language is: "There is *no power* but of God." This being so, then, clearly, governments have no authority whatever to make laws which contravene the will of God. All such enactments are a nullity, in the presence at least of the Divine Source of all "power."

If, then, "there is no power but of God," if all proper civil authority is derived from him only, that immortal state paper, the Declaration of Independence, may possibly be somewhat at fault, in saying that "Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." Scripture being our guide, they derive all "their just powers" primarily from God. If that sentiment means any thing more than that the "consent of the governed" is the subordinate source of authority, it must be taken with some qualification, or be set down in Mr. Rufus Choate's category of "glittering generalities."

Civil government being then an ordinance of God, the true and higher authority on which the obligation of obedience rests which a Christian should recognize, is the authority of God; and this duty is as sacred as any duty can be in reference to any other divine ordinance. Such obedience to the civil power thus becomes obedience to God. Hence the injunction: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."

My second main proposition is, that

II. OUR DUTIES UNDER CIVIL GOVERNMENT ARE MADE KNOWN THROUGH THE PRESCRIPTIONS OF LAW.

Laws duly enacted and published, thus become our rules of action. This is the principle which measures our obligations as regards both human and divine law.

The Apostle states this very clearly with respect to the dominion of God over men. He says: "Sin is the transgression of the law." And again: "Where no law is, there is no transgres-

sion." If, then, there can be no transgression where there is no law prescribed, there, of course, can be no obedience demanded beyond the specific prescriptions of law.

The same principle must, from the nature of the case, apply to human governments. Our obligations to the civil authority are limited to its laws, duly enacted, and brought within the means of our knowledge. There can be no penalty incurred where no statute has been violated; nor can any duty be required where the law does not definitely declare it. These are but truisms. They obtain our consent on being announced. They are sustained by the common sense of men, are recognized as axioms in law, and have the full authority of Scripture.

These principles hold true, without qualification, whatever may be the source of law, or the manner in which it is made known; and they apply to matters both civil and religious.

In religious concerns, God's will is our law. It may be his revealed will, as in the Scriptures; or special revelations, as to the patriarchs; or his will as made known through his works of creation and providence, which declare "his eternal power and Godhead," so clearly, that even the heathen "are without excuse." In whatever way God may choose to make known his will to the individual or to the race, his law is thereby forthwith declared, and obedience thereupon becomes a duty, and disobedience a sin.

It is the same with regard to civil government. Its expressed will is the law. It matters not how its laws may be promulgated, or what form they may take, provided their intent be clear, and they be duly made known. Its will may be expressed through written constitutions, and by enactments of the representatives of the people, as with us; or it may stand in the form of immemorial usage and the prescriptions of custom, as to a degree obtains under the British constitution; or it may emanate from an absolute monarch, or be embodied in the rule of a supreme dictator, whose individual will is law. The form and manner are nothing, so far as authority is concerned on the one hand, and the obligation of obedience on the other. Provided it be the duly expressed will of the government, its authority is clear, and due subordination an injunction of God.

Another principle which follows from or is closely allied to the preceding, and which may form the basis of a third proposition, is, that, although civil government is an ordinance of God, and its authority is to be expressed in some mode through the prescriptions of law, yet

III. NO PARTICULAR FORM OF GOVERNMENT, IN PREFERENCE TO ANY AND ALL OTHERS, IS ENJOINED OR SANCTIONED BY THE WILL OF GOD.

There have been those who have held to the "divine right of Kings," exclusively, and have pretended to found that right upon the word of God; if not in the letter of the word, yet in some way they have regarded it as fastened upon the teachings of the Bible. But the mass of the Christian world repudiate the idea that any such doctrine is found therein. The Christian religion is designed to accomplish its mission under all forms of civil government. It is adapted to ameliorate the rigors of despotism, and to impress its free and benevolent spirit upon rulers and the ruled alike, no matter what may be the form in which the civil authority is embodied.

Says Dr. Paley, in his *Moral Philosophy*, a standard authority with many: "Amongst the peculiar qualities of our holy religion, is to be reckoned its complete abstraction from all views of civil policy. Christianity, while it declines every question relating to particular forms of government, is alike friendly to them all, by tending to make men virtuous, and therefore easier to be governed; by stating obedience to government, in ordinary cases, to be not merely a submission to force, but a duty of conscience; by inducing dispositions favorable to public tranquility; and by recommending prayers for communities and governors, of every description, with a solicitude and fervency proportioned to the influence they possess upon human happiness."

Mere forms of government are entirely overlooked in the injunctions of Scripture to render obedience to the civil power. Governments may therefore be democratical, aristocratical, an oligarchy or a monarchy, limited or absolute, elective or hereditary, and still their authority is recognized of God. Their form may also be modified or radically changed at pleasure, they may

be subverted and reconstructed, and yet their authority is the same. The true principle here seems to be this, as gathered from the whole current of the word of God, and fully illustrated in specific acts and the routine of every day duties of Christ and his Apostles, under the governments where they lived—that the government *de facto* is that which God's authority recognizes. Thus, to all practical intents and purposes, as a general rule, as embodying the principle at bottom, the government *de facto* is the government *de jure*; or, in other words, the existing government for the time being, is that to which the people are to render obedience as to an ordinance of God.

This position is fully confirmed by the important historical fact, that, for many years before and during the public ministry of Christ, and also when a few years later Paul wrote his Epistle to the Church in the city of Rome, in which he so clearly enjoins obedience to the civil power, the Roman Empire was torn by continual internal dissensions. Usurpation, bloodshed, anarchy, ruled the hour. The throne often had several claimants, and was seized and held by violence. Of what befell three of the reigning Emperors, in the order of their rule, this is the historic picture: Caligula was murdered by a band of conspirators, headed by two tribunes of the Pretorian cohorts, in the fourth year of his reign; Claudius, "found by the body guard when ransacking the palace secreted in a corner," was dragged out and proclaimed Emperor, only to fall, after a short reign, by poison; and Nero, whose name has become a synonym for tyranny and cruelty, was, at the very moment Paul wrote, the reigning Emperor, and only escaped "the just vengeance which awaited him, by committing suicide." The Christian Church at Rome continued under these different changing, hostile, dynasties. The question among its members was, apparently, whether they should obey these heathen magistrates; and if so, who was to be regarded as the lawful ruler. Paul's epistle to that church, and thus to all Christian churches and people in every land, settled the question. His object was to teach, that, whoever might be in power for the time being, and however frequently changes might occur, the Christians of Rome should obey the reigning Emperor, as the representative of the civil government whose authority was enjoined of God. He cuts

the knot for them, and for all Christians, by the concise and unmistakable announcement: "The powers THAT BE are ordained of God."

Dr. Hodge, of Princeton Seminary, pertinently remarks upon this point: "Those who are in authority are to be obeyed within their sphere, no matter how or by whom appointed. The extent of this obedience is to be determined from the nature of the case. They are to be obeyed, as magistrates, in the exercise of their lawful authority." Theodore de Beza, the celebrated Reformer of the sixteenth century, remarks: "Christians must obey their magistrates, although they be wicked and extortioners; but so that the authority of God may remain safe to Him, and his honor be not diminished." A great many similar authorities might be adduced, but the position will probably not be disputed.

We are now brought to one of the most important points in the discussion, and to the most delicate. The inquiry forces itself upon us: If the principles here laid down are correct—if civil government is an ordinance of God, and obedience to it a Christian duty; if all forms of government are allowable; if the government in fact, is the government of right; and if laws emanating from the civil authority are our rules of conduct, and disobedience to them is disobedience to God—then is there any limitation to our obligation to obey, any qualification to this obedience in fact or form, or must it be implicit, without reserve, cheerfully rendered, whatever may be the character, tendency, or object, of the laws prescribed?

This is a vital question, and forms the basis for the proposition, that

IV. THE CIVIL AUTHORITY HAS ITS NECESSARY LIMITATIONS, AS INTIMATED BY THE TEXT, AND BRIEFLY EXPLAINED IN THE INTRODUCTION.

Where these limitations are disregarded by the ruling power, and its just authority is transcended, so as to invade the rights of the governed, and thus greatly pervert, or wholly destroy, the end for which God has ordained civil government, our obligations to obedience are modified, or they may be completely cancelled, according to the circumstances of the case.

To endeavor to find the truth here, the first inquiry which presents itself, is,

1. *What is the object for which Civil Government has been ordained by the authority of God?*

It is not for the aggrandizement of rulers, and the perpetuation of dynasties, as all absolutists maintain, nor for the benefit of any class of society to the disregard of others; but it is for the common benefit of all classes, the rulers and the ruled alike, for the highest practicable welfare of each individual and of the whole body.

The principle which runs through the word of God on this point, is, that whatever may be the form of the government, those in authority, while they are the agents of God, are also agents and servants of the people at large; and this, whether the rulers have been chosen by the people, or derive their authority by hereditary descent, or hold a commission directly from God, as did Moses; and, therefore, as a corollary from this, that rulers are to make such laws, and administer them in such a manner, as shall promote and secure, as far as in them lies, the great end for which civil government is ordained, namely, the general welfare of the people, and thus as an ultimate end in the designs of God, the glory of His Great Name.

That civil government has been ordained for these ends, we need only cite in proof, what Paul further says in immediate connection with what has already been given: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." Among other reasons for this injunction, is this: "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou, then, not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for, *he is the minister of God to thee for good*"—that is, to secure or promote the welfare of the people.

Dr. Hodge, in commenting on this verse, says: "Magistrates or rulers are not appointed for their own honor or advantage, but for the benefit of society; and, therefore, while those in subjection are on this account to obey them, they themselves are taught, what those in power are so apt to forget, that they are the servants of the people as well as the servants of God, and

that the welfare of society is the only legitimate object which they, as rulers, are at liberty to pursue."

This is sufficient as to the object for which civil government has been instituted. It is for the common benefit of the whole people.

2. *When Civil Government fails to accomplish its legitimate and ordained end, as thus mentioned, the duty of obedience may be modified, or entirely cancelled, according to the nature of the case.*

This failure may exist in different degrees, and may arise in any one or more of several ways.

It may occur from the structure and legitimate operations of the government itself, as under an absolute despotism. Such a government may be but working out its true nature and spirit, and yet may be utterly at war with every interest of the people. Obedience, then, may be cancelled in every subject, and revolution may be a duty. The right of revolution is generally conceded by writers upon political science and moral philosophy, as an inherent natural right of the people; and Scripture, in recognizing all governments *de facto*, tacitly, yet fully, sustains it.

The point where forbearance by a people ceases to be a virtue, or where at least, open resistance in revolution against a grinding despotism may be justified, may not be so easy to define. This, however, may be regarded as approximating it: (1.) Where all legitimate means have been used to remedy the evils complained of, peacefully, and where all reasonable hope of success has vanished. (2.) Where the oppressions endured are such as clearly to overbalance the good enjoyed on the one hand, and the evils to be encountered in an attempt to overturn and reconstruct the government on the other. (3.) Where these views of an existing state of things are sufficiently prevalent among a people, to give a reasonable and decided prospect of success in an effort at revolution.

Says Dr. Wayland, in his Moral Philosophy, in reference to this last point: "Resistance to civil authority by a single individual would be absurd. It can succeed only by the combination of all the aggrieved against the aggressors, terminating in an appeal to physical force; that is, by civil war." And even then, he might

have added, "it can succeed only" when the "aggrieved" are *so numerous* as to be able to overpower "the aggressors;" for, even "*all* the aggrieved," in a given case, might be but a meagre minority, and utterly powerless, in the comparison.

The case here presented is an extreme one, where civil government may have utterly, or to a large degree, failed of fulfilling its ordained design, and where there is, in the government itself, no hope of amendment. The remedy, then, is revolution.

Another case presents itself. The form of the government may be unobjectionable to the people, but its administration is corrupt and oppressive. If in such case the rulers are elective, the people have the remedy in their own hands, in a change of administration; and wisdom would seem to dictate, that they should patiently endure what they suffer, until a change can be peacefully effected. If, however, the rulers are hereditary, and no influence can induce a change of policy, then we are brought back to the remedy of revolution, under the limitations stated.

But other cases arise, in reference to particular laws. The government may be approved in form and spirit. It may be a representative government, the people through their representatives, as with us, enacting their own laws. But certain laws, under a particular administration, though passed through all the required forms of enactment, are odious to a majority of the people. What, then, is the remedy? Certainly not in revolution. This would peril the great good to get rid of an incidental evil. Certainly not in open resistance, looking to any thing short of revolution. This is anarchy, the rule of a mob, a reign of terror, and the worst form of despotism. The advent of a supreme dictator, with sword in hand, would be a relief to any people from a result to which such a course inevitably tends. Common sense, all the interests of society, and the will of God, unite in saying, in such a case: Obey the laws, endure the evil for the time being, and as the people have the remedy in their own hands, wait until they can apply it in a legitimate way, by electing representatives who will repeal or modify oppressive laws. If, in the case under consideration, a clear majority of the people are opposed to them, the remedy is at hand, and it is infinitely better to submit to the evil for a brief time, than to run into the

infinitely greater evil of open defiance to legitimate authority, thus sanctioning mob violence and Lynch law in principle, and tending to countenance the evil-minded in their opposition to all law.

But we advance to another case of great practical importance, touching obedience to particular laws. The majority of a people, we will suppose, decidedly approve an existing law. It has been passed in a legal manner, and has been pronounced constitutional by the highest recognized authority. Still, such are its demands, in letter, or spirit, or both, that individuals, perhaps a large minority, are in conscience opposed to it. What, in such a case, is their relief? Not in revolution. That is hopeless, with the vast majority against them. Not in open resistance short of revolution. That is madness, for they would be crushed, or anarchy would reign.

It is quite possible that such persons might deem their rights of conscience vindicated by open resistance, even if subdued and punished, and might even feel some satisfaction in that kind of martyrdom. There have been those who have so reasoned, acted, and suffered. Nor do they all belong to a past age.

But as this course is clearly against the word of God, the question still returns: What is the relief for such a case, where the rights of conscience are in question? There is a solution, sanctioned by the word of God, and which ought to commend itself to every mind.

(1.) Individual conscience is not the criterion by which either the character or the administration of civil authority is to be regulated, nor by which the obligation of obedience is to be determined.

Indeed, conscience is not given to man as his *rule* of action in any thing; not even in matters purely religious. The word of God never so represents it. The rule of action, in all cases, is something external to the human soul. In religion, this rule is the will of God, given in his word, or in his providence, or in his works, or in some other way. Conscience is that principle of the soul whose design is to prompt man to recognize and obey this rule of conduct, thus prescribed, as external to the soul.

That conscience can not be a rule of action for any one, in re-

ligion, is palpable for the plainest reasons. The Bible declares that conscience, as well as every other faculty, physical, intellectual and moral, is under the blight of sin, has suffered from the universal apostacy; and, therefore, it can with no more propriety be our reliable guide, than our intellect, our affections, or our passions. Hence it is that while man is sometimes said to have a "good conscience," (always, however, the result of divine grace,) he is also said to have an "evil conscience," a "defiled conscience," and a "seared conscience." And hence arises the necessity, from this natural state of the conscience, that man should have a rule of religious action other than and independent of this faculty. And even in order that conscience may fulfill the inferior and yet its sole office, in prompting its possessor to recognize and obey this external rule, the word of God, says it needs renovating, as truly as do the affections, that they may properly fulfill their appointed office. It is thus palpable that conscience can not be a proper rule of action in matters strictly religious.

And besides all this, another practical difficulty which would result from regarding it as a rule, arises from the fact that men's conscientious convictions, even in religious matters—owing to different degrees of enlightenment, to the strength of prejudice, to the biasses of education, and to other causes—differ as widely as the features of their faces, or their physical stature. If individual conscience then is a rule for determining truth and duty, there may be as many varying standards for these as there are persons; and then the result is, that nothing is settled, that there is no absolute truth, and no common duties for all men.

The same principle here stated in regard to religion, holds true in respect to a rule, determining the province of civil government over men. Individual conscience cannot be that rule. All the objections which lie against its being so regarded in religion, are of equal force as touching its office under civil government. The *rule* of action is *the law*. There can be no other. The office of conscience is to prompt to a recognition of and obedience to the rule.

Says Dr. Wayland upon this point: "It is our duty to obey

all laws made in accordance with the constituted powers of society. Hence, we are in no manner released from this obligation by the conviction that the law is unwise or inexpedient. We have confided the decision of this question to society, and we must abide by that decision. To do otherwise, would be to constitute every man the judge in his own case. * * * * He must obey until he can persuade society to think as he does."

(2.) But am I, then, to smother all my moral instincts, or consign them over to the keeping of society, and yield them to a rule of action framed and administered, it may be, by a corrupt magistracy, and thus merge my individuality, in which alone I shall stand before God, into the common mass of humanity? Am I not fully, and in every sense, a man, and a free man?

These are pertinent questions, and the answer is clear. You may nurse and develop your powers as you choose, all of them, moral, intellectual, and physical, being accountable to God alone, just so long as you keep them embodied within your own individuality; but if you see fit to give them scope in the active concerns of social and political life, you then come under rules of conduct of which you are not to be the sole judge. The moment you come to put your individual principles, or feelings, or instincts, any or all of them—conscientious to the last degree though you may be in holding them—*into action among men*, you are constrained to make large concessions to society. He who does not admit this, has not learned the alphabet of his social or political duties. He who is not willing to act upon it, should immediately retire from the abodes of men. God has provided no place for him on earth, but the cave of the hermit.

(3.) But now, to make the application of these principles directly to human law: Am I, then, utterly to sink my manhood in not being allowed to judge of law, and to violate my conscience by obeying a particular statute which to all my moral feelings is odious and abominable?

By no means. You are to judge of human law. This is your "inalienable right." Nor are you required to violate your conscience, under the preceptive demands of civil government, however blinded, or perverted, or weak, your conscience may be;

although it is manifestly the duty of all persons to seek to have an enlightened conscience.

How then? If the law is the sole rule of action, and binding upon every citizen, and yet I am not required to violate my conscience by obeying a statute which appears to me morally wrong, what is the path which conducts out of this apparent dilemma? It is a very plain one, as an elucidation of the following proposition will show, to every considerate mind.

3. *Civil Government may maintain its authority over every citizen, through the Supremacy of Law, without requiring a violation of conscience, in obedience to odious acts.*

There are two ways for meeting the demands of human law; or rather, two ways in which the majesty and honor of law may be vindicated, and the rights of conscience preserved, in the case of every person. Where a man deems a law to be wrong, oppressive, unjust, he must elect in which of these ways the law shall be vindicated in himself.

Law is composed of two constituent elements, a *precept* and a *penalty*. If a man approve a law, he will obey its precept, and its demands upon him are thereby cancelled. But if a man deem a law to infringe his moral rights—if his conscience revolt at it—he can not, as a conscientious man, obey its precept. He is then bound, in good conscience, to endure its penalty, and the demands of the law are thus vindicated in him. This is of the very genius of law, and no alternative proposition is admissible.

The principle here involved is that which enlightened and conscientious men have ever maintained; it is sanctioned by the word of God; and it has many apt illustrations both in and out of sacred history, in those whose character, example, and piety, stand approved before all the world.

Paul, to the Romans, says: "Wherefore"—that is, because the civil magistrate is the "minister of God"—"ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also *for conscience' sake*;" that is, ye must "be subject" to the civil ruler, not merely through fear of his authority to punish disobedience, but "for conscience' sake," or as a religious duty enjoined of God. If, then, conscience will not allow of obedience to the precept of a particular

law, it should prompt a man, and especially if he claim to be a Christian, cheerfully to receive and endure the penalty. This is the will of God.

When carried into real life, this is the principle which must apply *to every case*—if government is to exist, and society is to be preserved—to *the good and to the evil*: If, in regard to “him that doeth evil,” the precept of law be not honored by obedience, its penalty must be honored by its infliction; and if the good and conscientious can not obey its precept, they should, without murmuring, submit to its penalty. There is no alternative, without coming directly into conflict with the authority of God who has ordained civil government, and put into the hand of the civil magistrate “the sword,” as the symbol both of authority and of his right to punish the disobedient, even with death. “For,” says Paul, “he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Therefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.”

Let me illustrate this principle by real cases, not of the wilfully disobedient, who of course should be punished, but cases respecting good citizens, some of which relate to temporal affairs, and others to spiritual, while all involve the question of the rights of conscience.

All governments have laws regulating military service, in times of peace and war. They often prescribe specific duties, under penalties of fine, or imprisonment, or both. That most respectable body, called Quakers, or Friends, are conscientiously opposed to war, and all its adjuncts. They can not, therefore, enter the army or navy, join in a parade or drill, or perform any military duty. And yet, they are proverbially a law-abiding people. They render no open resistance to the laws. Their principles restrain them from even defensive warfare. They are strict non-resistants. What, then, do they do? Where they can not obey the law's precept, they submit to its penalty. In regard to military duty, they pay their fine, or suffer imprisonment, or furnish a substitute for the service. The honor of the law is vindicated, and their consciences are preserved inviolate.

Take another case. There have existed certain religionists, and there may be some still, who do not believe in civil government at all, who deem the authority of God to be against it, and who can not, therefore, conscientiously recognize it. Most assuredly, conscience, under such hallucination as this, cannot be a just rule of conduct. Obedience to its dictates would overturn all society. But these persons enjoy, necessarily, the benefits of civil government, while repudiating its authority. It is but right, therefore, that they should contribute to its support. When they pay taxes, however, it is under protest of conscience; or declining to obey other demands of law, they are obliged to submit to its penal exactions. While pretending to a high reverence for the authority of God, they seem to forget, that, to support the government under which we live, is as clearly a religious as a civil duty. Says Paul: "For, for this cause pay ye tribute, also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing."

There are cases in sacred history which illustrate the principle. Darius, an idolatrous king, made a decree which prohibited all persons within his dominions from asking "a petition of any god or man for thirty days," save of the king himself, under penalty of being "cast into the den of lions." Daniel, a worshipper of the true and living God, was a captive in the king's dominions. The decree was intended expressly to interfere with his worship and with his rights of conscience. His enemies sought his destruction, and this was their method to compass it. What should he do? He could not restrain prayer to Jehovah, for this was his religious duty. What, then? He did not raise a mob, nor attempt a revolution. He could not obey the precept, but with undaunted spirit and true religious courage he stood ready to endure the penalty, and committed his case to God. The result showed the approval of God, and he was preserved from harm in the very jaws of death.

At another time, Nebuchadnezzar, also a worshipper of idols, "made an image of gold," which "he set up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon," and commanded, that, "whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace." Three Hebrews, in car-

tivity in the kingdom, could not in conscience obey. They were worshippers only of Jehovah. They suffered the penalty, and "fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, heated over seven times more than it was wont to be heated." Suffering for conscience' sake, they were sustained by the presence, in bodily form, of one "like the son of God."

In the early times of the Christian era, there were many unrighteous edicts which bore hard upon Christians. Their rights of conscience and of worship were invaded, and bitter persecutions raged. And yet, it was during the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero, whose official vengeance toward the unoffending followers of Christ, and whose brutal tyranny and licentiousness, stand out in such bold relief and lurid glare upon the historic canvass of even those dark times, that an inspired Apostle wrote to the Christians of Rome: "LET EVERY SOUL be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."

The Christians of Rome could not obey the precept of human laws which set at nought the plain laws of God, demanding the worship of idols. In that, they would have sinned against conscience and against God. But they cheerfully, and often joyfully, endured their penalty; and that penalty was fine, imprisonment, confiscation of goods, or cruel torture ending only in martyrdom. In this course, they were sustained by God's presence and favor, and an unsullied conscience.*

* I introduce here as a further illustration, a case which occurred in the State of Georgia, in the year 1831. Its final decision was in the Supreme Court of the United States, January term, 1832. It is the case of *WORCESTER versus THE STATE OF GEORGIA*. and occupies more than eighty pages in the sixth volume of Peters' Reports. The material facts bearing upon the subject in hand are as follows:

A portion of the Cherokee Indians resided within the territorial limits of Georgia. Their rich lands were a sort of Naboth's vineyard to the Georgians, and the State attempted to assert her sovereignty over them. In 1830, the Legislature passed an act making all "white persons guilty of a high misdemeanor" who should reside among the Cherokees under any pretence whatever, "without a license or permit from his Excellency the Governor," and declaring that "upon conviction thereof" they should be "punished by confinement in the penitentiary at hard labor for a term of not less than four years." Rev. Samuel A. Worces-

These cases illustrate the true and only principle for the guidance of law-abiding citizens, for the maintenance of the civil authority, and for the protection of the rights of conscience. The LAW is the sole RULE of action. It must be maintained over all. "Every soul" must "be subject" to its authority in some way, or civil government is a farce. The wilfully disobedient must be punished. Those who respect law, and yet can not conscientiously obey the precept of a given statute, must submit to its

ter was a minister of the gospel who had been living a considerable time among the Cherokees as a missionary, sent there by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. He was indicted in the Superior Court of Gwinnett county for a violation of the above named act. This law seemed to infringe his rights as a citizen of the United States, and his rights of conscience in preaching the gospel to these half civilized people; and he might have said, as did the Apostles of old, when ordered to desist from preaching: "We ought to obey God, rather than men." To the indictment, however, he pleaded, among other things: that he was "residing in the Cherokee Nation, out of the jurisdiction of the court; that he was a citizen of Vermont, and entered the Cherokee nation as a missionary, under the authority of the President of the United States, and had not been required by him to leave it; that he was, at the time of his arrest, engaged in preaching the gospel to the Cherokee Indians, and in translating the sacred Scriptures into their language, with the permission and approval of the said Cherokee nation, and in accordance with the humane policy of the government of the United States, for the civilization and improvement of the Indians; and that his residence there, for this purpose, is the residence charged in the aforesaid indictment," &c. This was a pretty strong defence we should say, and so the higher court thought, as will be seen in the sequel. But the Superior Court of Gwinnett county overruled the plea, and he "was tried, convicted, and sentenced to hard labor in the penitentiary for four years." It should be stated here that there were six other missionaries indicted, tried, convicted, and sentenced to endure the same penalty for the same "offence," at the same term of the court, although the case of Mr. Worcester only was the one examined in detail by the higher court, that the validity of the law of Georgia might be tested. The final judgment covered the cases of the whole seven.

The decision of the Supreme Court of the United States was delivered by Chief Justice Marshall, and he arrives at these conclusions: "The act of the State of Georgia, under which the plaintiff in error was prosecuted, is consequently void, and the judgment a nullity." "The forcible seizure and abduction of the plaintiff in error, who was residing in the nation with its permission, and by authority of the President of the United States, is also a violation of the acts which authorize the Chief Magistrate to exercise this authority." "He was seized, and forcibly carried away, while under guardianship of treaties guaranteeing the country in which he resided, and taking it under the protection of the United States. He was seized while performing, under the sanction of the Chief Magistrate of the

penalty. This is the will of God. There is no alternative without revolution, or admitting a principle which essentially involves the prostration of all authority in a reign of anarchy and terror.

Now, let me apply the foregoing principles to a specific case of almost every day occurrence in some part of our country. The value of principles is seen in their application to the living issues of every day life. Without this, they are the merest abstractions.

Union, those duties which the humane policy adopted by Congress had recommended. He was apprehended, tried, and condemned, under color of a law which has been shown to be repugnant to the constitution, laws, and treaties of the United States. Had a judgment, liable to the same objections, been rendered for property, none would question the jurisdiction of this Court. It can not be less clear when the judgment affects personal liberty, and inflicts disgraceful punishment, if punishment could disgrace when inflicted on innocence. The plaintiff in error is not less interested in the operation of this unconstitutional law, than if it affected his property. He is not less entitled to the protection of the constitution, laws, and treaties of his country." "It is the opinion of the Court that the judgment of the Superior Court for the county of Gwinnett, in the State of Georgia, condemning Samuel A. Worcester to hard labor in the penitentiary of the State of Georgia, for four years, was pronounced by that Court under color of a law which is void, as being repugnant to the constitution, treaties, and laws of the United States, and ought, therefore, to be reversed and annulled." Mr. Worcester and his fellow prisoners were ordered to be set at liberty, by a "special mandate" from the Supreme Court of the United States, "to the said Superior Court, to carry this judgment into execution."

The point which this case illustrates is plain. These missionaries, thus engaged in preaching the gospel, under full authority, could not in conscience desist even under the demands of law, and a law, too, utterly null and void. But they did not violently attempt to defeat the law's execution, even upon themselves. They quietly submitted to its unrighteous penalty, and awaited a day when their deliverance could be effected peacefully, and under due process of law. To have raised a valiant army at the North, at that time, to march to the rescue of these New England missionaries, would probably not have been difficult, could the influence of certain sensational preachers and stump orators of the present day have been brought into requisition, and especially under the manifest unrighteousness of this case, long foreshadowed, and ultimately determined by the Supreme Court of the United States; and it probably would have been very easy to plunge the whole country into a civil war through such measures. But the missionaries acted commendably—just as christian men, in like circumstances, should always act—and so did the whole people, with few exceptions, allowing the law to be tested in a constitutional manner, while these men were willing, in the mean time, to suffer for their Master's sake, the penalty of oppressive legislation, null and void *ab initio*.

V. THESE PRINCIPLES APPLY TO THAT ENACTMENT OF THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES, CALLED THE FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW.

The character and workings of this law, and the views and acts of the people under it, constitute at least one of the causes now threatening this nation with civil war. It is also one of those cases which may be illustrated in our streets to-morrow. It is therefore no side question, but presents a vital issue which concerns us all.

What, then, under the principles laid down, is Christian duty in relation to this subject? The following points will probably be admitted by all, as giving the facts of the case.

1. The Constitution of the United States, which is acknowledged to be supreme over the whole land, authorizes the enactment by Congress of some sort of law for the recovery of slaves "escaping" from the slave into the free States, or in other words, a Fugitive Slave Law.

2. The present law called by that name, concerning which so much complaint is made at the North, passed through all the proper forms of enactment.

3. This law has been pronounced by the highest authority—by the Attorney General representing the Executive, and by the Federal Supreme Court representing the Judicial—as in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

It follows, then, as an inevitable deduction from the premises made up of the facts and principles set forth in this discourse, that this law, being thus clothed with all the authority with which any human law can be invested, is binding in good faith upon every citizen. There is no possible escape from this conclusion.

But it is said, this law has odious features, which might be removed without lessening its efficiency. Be it so. But while it remains in its present form it is the law, and every citizen is bound by it. If the Congress of the United States can be persuaded to amend it and remove these features, or totally to repeal it, let it be done. But until this is done, every law-abiding man, *every Christian*, will honor it as the law, if he performs his duty to his country and to his God. He may elect whether he will

obey its precept or not. If the proper officer summon him to his *posse* to aid in the capture of a fugitive, as the law provides, and if to obey would violate his conscience, then let him, for this failure, meekly bear the penalty which the law prescribes, whatever it may be, fine or imprisonment. There is no alternative, short of open resistance in mob violence, which all the interests of society and the word of God would condemn as criminal, or open resistance looking to revolution, which, under our government, would be the climax of folly and madness.

But it will be said by some, in reply to all this—and as, in fact, taking us back of all this—that this law strikes at human liberty, one of the dearest, and as pronounced in the Declaration of Independence, one of the “inalienable,” rights of man. It aims to restore, and is enacted for the very purpose of sending, a human being back to bondage after he has escaped from slavery. Can any Christian so far regard *such* a law, either as to its precept or penalty, as justly calling him to obey the one or endure the other? Can he give it any countenance whatever, even for an hour?

These might be very pertinent questions, if we were now, as a people, deliberating in Convention assembled, as to what kind of government we would form. But that is not our position. That is not the present issue. We have got past all that. Our fathers considered these questions, and whether they determined them wisely or not, is not now the point. They did settle them, and we now live under the compact which they formed. That the obligation in question is found in the Constitution, that it enters into the vital structure of our national government, that the present Union could not have been formed without it, nobody doubts who is acquainted with the history of the country.*

* ARTICLE IV, *Sec 2, last clause* of the Constitution of the United States, reads as follows: “No person held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law, or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due.”

Referring to this provision of the Constitution, the Supreme Court of the United States, in the decision in the case of *PRIGG versus THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA*, delivered by Judge STORY, use this language: “Historically, it is

The only pertinent questions, then, here and now, are : Shall we as good citizens perform our covenant obligations, or in the failure to do so, shall we peril the existence of the government? Shall we meet the demands of this particular law, or, in order to get rid of its obligations, shall we wipe all things out, and form a government which shall not impose such burdens? *There is no middle ground.* If any persons regard this law, or any other evils of the present system, so burdensome as to deem revolution and all the horrors of civil war preferable, they are entitled to their opinion. For one, I am free to say, that in my judgment, our Union as it is, with all these obligations, is to be preferred to any such experiment. We have, under the present government, grown to a rank among the greatest and most prosperous nations of the earth; and recognizing the Providence of the Supreme Ruler of Nations in the bestowment of our varied blessings, we may say as did the Psalmist of Israel of old : "He hath not dealt so with any nation."

Just here I may add, in regard to certain views of what is

well known that the object of this clause was to secure to the citizens of the slaveholding States the complete right and title of ownership in their slaves, as property, in every State in the Union into which they might escape from the State where they were held in servitude. The full recognition of this right and title was indispensable to the security of this species of property in all the slaveholding States; and, indeed, was so vital to the preservation of their domestic interests and institutions, *that it can not be doubted that it constituted a fundamental article, without the adoption of which the Union could not have been formed.* Its true design was to guard against the doctrines and principles prevalent in the nonslaveholding States, by preventing them from intermeddling with, or obstructing, or abolishing, the rights of the owners of slaves." Further along, in this same case, the Court say : "The clause was, therefore, of the last importance to the safety and security of the Southern States, and could not have been surrendered by them without endangering their whole property in slaves. The clause was accordingly adopted into the Constitution **BY THE UNANIMOUS CONSENT** of the framers of it; a proof at once of its intrinsic and practical necessity." Judge McLEAN, of Cincinnati, while dissenting from the decision of the Court on some points in this case, speaks of the clause of the Constitution here referred to, as follows : "Under the Confederation, the master had no legal means of enforcing his rights in a State opposed to slavery. A disregard of rights thus asserted, was deeply felt in the South. It produced great excitement, and would have led to results destructive of the Union. *To avoid this, the Constitutional guarantee was essential.*" *Peters' Reports*, vol. 16, Term 1842.

deemed the intrinsic nature of this obligation, which enters into the vital structure of our present system, that I can admire at least the consistency of the extreme abolitionists, represented by Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, and others. With all their fanaticism and infidelity, there is method in their madness, and a logical and consistent connexion between the premises with which they set out, and the horrid conclusion which they aim to reach. They deny the moral obligation of the compromises of the Constitution, and to remedy and remove the burdens they impose, they make open war upon the Constitution itself. They villify and declaim against it, and the statesmen who framed it, just as they denounce the Christian ministry (except those who sympathize with them,) and denounce the Sabbath, the Bible, and all its institutions. They seek nothing less, they openly proclaim this as their aim, to break up the present government, that they may be relieved in form as they feel themselves to be in fact, from the manifest duties which it imposes. They go for pulling down the pillars of the Republic, like Sampson among the Philistines, even though themselves and the entire people with them shall be buried beneath the ruins! And yet, I respect their perfectly logical consistency, for there is in fact no middle ground between obedience to the laws as they are, while they remain as they are, and open war upon the government itself.

Persons of this class, who are not satisfied with the government under which they live, and who directly preach and aim at revolution, with no more prospect of success than a thirty years' experience has shown them, would perhaps consult their own interests, and certainly the welfare of society at large, should they leave the country and the government they denounce, and seek an abode in some other land.

Now, if the principles here laid down are correct as to the obligation of *the people* to obey the Fugitive Slave Law, then these principles admit of a further application.

VI. THIS OBLIGATION BINDS THE SEVERAL STATES OF THIS CONFEDERACY, IN THEIR SOVEREIGN CAPACITY, AS TRULY AS THE INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS WHO COMPOSE THEM.

As this proposition has a bearing upon matters political, I

shall aim, as far as possible, to avoid them. Without entering into the merely political question, whether the Federal Government is a compact formed by the several States in their sovereign capacity, or by the people of the States, or the people at large, this as a moral principle is clear—that if the people of any State as individuals, or the people of a State as a whole, in their elementary capacity as members of the body politic, can not with propriety obstruct the operations of a law of the Federal Government, then the Legislatures of the States, which are but the representatives of the people, have no authority to do this. This is manifestly a true principle in morals, and clearly a sound principle in political philosophy. Says Dr. Wayland: “In all cases, government is merely the instrument by which society accomplishes its purposes. Government is the *agent*. Society is the *principal*.”

There are many things which sovereign States may do, which the individual citizens who compose them may not do; but the thing now under consideration is not one of them.

But leaving these principles, what is the state of the facts involved in the actual structure of the Federal Government, and in the legislation of some of the States under it, touching the present question?

1. The Federal Constitution is supreme in all parts of the country. All freely admit this. No State, therefore, can form a constitution or enact any laws, which conflict with the Federal Constitution.

2. The same is true of laws enacted by Congress. They are supreme, in so far that no State law can set them aside, or in any manner impede their operation, or defeat their true and full intent.

3. These are principles settled by the Federal Constitution itself.* Every State, on coming into the Union, whether of the

*ARTICLE VI, of the Constitution of the United States, says: “This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States, which shall be made in pursuance thereof, and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding.”

original thirteen, or at any time subsequently, came in under a pledge of obedience to this Constitution in all its provisions, and to all laws enacted under it. And besides this, every State officer, executive, legislative, and judicial, takes an oath to support the Federal Constitution.*

4. It is then unquestionable, touching the point now in hand, that the same principles which exhibit the obligations of individual citizens, show the obligations of the several States of which the citizens are constituent elements.

5. Now, to apply this to the Fugitive Slave Law, certain States have enacted laws, which, whatever may be their ostensible or real intent, do obstruct the operation of this law and render it well nigh or entirely nugatory. If a citizen may not do this, a State may not.

I am quite well aware of what is said in extenuation of this, and know something, by actual inspection, of these "Personal Liberty Laws," as they are called. And after all the misapprehension which exists at the South concerning them, it is an incontrovertible fact, that some States have so legislated, as, to all practical intents and purposes, to override both this law of Congress, and, so far forth, the United States Constitution which authorizes it. However eloquently this may be defended upon the stump, or in legislative halls, or in the forum, or by the press, for political or partizan ends, it cannot as a moral question be defended in the pulpit, but deserves the severest reprobation, as tending to results which would, if carried out, overturn the government itself, just as such results might follow an organized resistance to law in a body of the citizens. And if, as a moral question, there is any difference in principle here, between such a course by individual citizens and by a State, it is more objectionable, if possible, in the latter; for there is redress in the punishment of the citizen according to law, while there is perhaps no redress against a State, short of the arbitrament of the

*ARTICLE VI, further says: "The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several State Legislatures, and all Executive and Judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support this Constitution."

sword. Even retaliatory legislation, by other States in the same Union, embodies the principle which sooner or later would break out into open war, as this would lead to counter retaliation, and so on back and forth, until at length the country would resound with the clash of arms of warring States, and the power of the Federal Government would be invoked to interpose.

Now, the violent opposition to this law which is frequently offered by individual citizens, and especially this legislation of some of the Northern States, is at least one of the grievances of which the Southern States complain. Who can say, in so far as the fact of such resistance and legislation exists, that the complaint is not just? And then, what is our position? Covenant-breaking is regarded in Scripture, whether in individuals or nations, as among the most heinous offences, and the degree of the criminality is in proportion to the interest imperiled. What, then, if this be a crime, must be its magnitude, if it shall contribute largely to bring thirty millions of people, enjoying the freest government on earth, having all the appliances of a high civilization which places it in the front rank among the nations, having an expansion of prosperity, industrial, commercial, educational, and religious, such as the sun has never elsewhere shone upon—what, I say, shall be the magnitude of that crime which shall bring such a people to the very brink of civil war? Let him estimate the gigantic proportions of this iniquity, and answer this question who feels competent to the task.

I am by no means ignorant of the fact, that there are other grievances of which the South complain—and besides these, perhaps also mere pretexts for complaint, with ulterior ends in view—but upon these I can not enter, for they lie more strictly within the domain of politics. But this we all know, that the particular grievance which I have named, is one which in some of its multifarious shapes, enters largely into all their complaints, and is closely interwoven with them all; and no man can say, who has correct moral sentiments, that, so far as the facts upon which it is based are well founded, the complaint is not just.

I have aimed to look at the issue in which our present national difficulties are involved, *simply in the light of our obligations to*

civil government as an ordinance of God, and of our consequent duty to obey the laws of the land.

THE SUPREMACY OF LAW is the pole-star of our safety for the present and of our hope for the future. If it shall become totally obscured by the murky clouds of prejudice and passion, we may be left of God to a tempest of anarchy and strife which has had no parallel in the annals of mankind.

I am not preaching to a Southern audience to-day. If I were, I should lay down this proposition, though it would need no elaboration: that the principles of this discourse, in regard to our duty to obey the laws, both as individuals and as States, are governed by no lines of latitude or longitude. They apply to all parts of the Union. The Constitution and Laws of the Federal Government are everywhere supreme, North, South, East, and West. And I would urge, too, *the preservation of the Union*, amid all the grievances suffered, believing that the evils which a disruption, peaceable or violent, would entail, would be infinitely greater than any now suffered, exaggerated as the latter may be. But I am not preaching to the people of the South, and need not dwell, therefore, upon their duties.

We of the North need no exhortation about preserving the Union. *We are all for Union*, except the miserably small company of fanatical men, who have, indeed, but a very limited power for evil. But then, in order that it *may* be preserved, we must fulfil our covenant obligations, as we expect other parties to the national compact to meet theirs. If we do not, our dismemberment will soon be written in history, and it may be written in fratricidal blood!

I close with announcing several points, very briefly, which may exhibit a summing up of the whole. Our duties as Christian Citizens are plain. They are,

1. To reverence and obey the laws—all laws, Federal, State, and Municipal.

It is our duty, our interest, our religion, so to do. Obedience to the civil magistrate is obedience to God. Disobedience to him, is a crime against the authority of God. Elect your mode, conscientiously; but reverence the law. It is that alone, under

God, which protects the firesides of home, the altars of religion, and secures the general welfare of the country.

2. It is our duty not only to be obedient and reverential to the laws ourselves, but to make this obligation felt upon all, as far as our influence may extend.

The respectable and high-minded in any community can frown down lawlessness and violence if they will. This class, from their position in society, may be, at times, more culpable, if possible, than those of which mobs are made. Rarely, if ever, is there any open, organized resistance to law in our country, which is not countenanced or led by some who occupy positions of respectability, and therefore of great responsibility. This should not be. It is our reproach before the world, and in the sight of Heaven.

3. We should maintain calmness and moderation of temper and action in the present juncture of our national affairs.

Crimination and recrimination between the States or the people of the Union, may inflame men's passions into open strife, until brother's hands shall be imbrued in brother's blood. If patience and forbearance are Christian virtues, and if there is a time when their exhibition is peculiarly demanded, that time is upon us now. In seasons of personal trial and conflict, we need eminently to cultivate them. This is our duty as individuals. In times of national peril, this duty becomes us as a people. Pre-eminently is it the duty of the Church as a body, and of each of her members, to feel their responsibilities to God and our country, when the ship of state is so fearfully rocked upon the billows of strife, and to preserve that calmness of spirit which shows confidence in that Providence which ruleth over all. It is no time for the passions to assert their sway, or for mere feeling of any kind to reign. Reason, judgment, prudence, reflection, and moderation in all things, are the characteristics which become us in the present fearful crisis.

4. To pray for our rulers, and to pray for our country, is our most important duty as Christians.

There may be hope in God when hope from man shall utterly fail. God has been our Guide and Helper thus far, and through

the prayers of his people he may be our refuge still. It is not, at such a time as this, in the sagacity of statesmanship, or in the wisdom of our national councils, that we can hope. Vain is the help of man! How often, when a nation is in peril, does man's wisdom appear but folly and his power weakness! But in God there is always hope, if his people will betake themselves to prayer. If it is a standing duty for all times to pray for our rulers and for our country, it is a most imperious duty now. Our God is the God of the Nations. He will answer prayer for a people, as truly as for a single soul. Not only in his sanctuary, but in every place where prayer is offered, should it now ascend to him, with fervency, that he would save our country; that he would save it from the violence and rashness and madness of men; that he would preserve it for his Church's sake, and for the glory of his Great Name!

5. And finally, as individuals, and as a people, we ought to humble ourselves for our sins.

I am no prophet, but I have hope for the Union. It may prove a vain hope. None of us can look into the future. One thing, however, is clear. If God permit, or order, disunion, the evils which will result, even if civil war brake out in all its fury, will be richly merited by us. This no one can well deny. Whatever punishment nations as such receive, they will receive in this present state. And that we deserve punishment who can doubt? Pride, boasting, arrogance, even as a people, are among our characteristics. "Fullness of bread," an "exuberance of liberty," have made us haughty, well nigh defying Jehovah! Prosperity has made us giddy. The sun has never before shone on a people enjoying such blessings as we enjoy. They are all from God. And yet, we are an ungrateful people. Should he dash us in pieces as a potter's vessel, who could complain? Yet, if we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, we may be preserved. To Him, then, as our only resort, let us offer up fervent prayer for our distracted country, that he may arrest his threatened judgments, and that in the midst of deserved wrath he may remember mercy!

THE END.

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