

## A PACIFIC APPEAL TO CHRISTIANS.<sup>1</sup>

AN ADDRESS TO THE CLERGY AND LAITY OF THE CHRISTIAN  
CHURCHES OF THE COUNTRY.

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**D**EAR BRETHREN: When evils so great impend over our beloved country every citizen should do his utmost to avert them; and especially should Christians seek the good of their native land, because of the house of the Lord their God which is in it. We have, therefore, presumed, humbly, but earnestly, to beseech your favorable attention to the following views touching the duties appropriate to the people of God in this day of rebuke:

The great sectional questions which divide the opinions of the North and the South seem at length to have reached their crisis. One State has formally retracted its allegiance to the Union, others are preparing to follow, and a tempest of excitement shakes the nation. "We are in the midst of a revolution, only bloodless as yet." But every day the complications assume a more angry aspect; a fatal current seems drifting all parties with frightful rapidity towards the bloody arbitrament of the sword. Daily the public heart stands still, expecting lest the next breeze which sweeps from the South come freighted with the resounding crash of civil war, which may soon be echoed from all other quarters. The counsels of our rulers seem to be turned into disappointment, and the lover of his country knows not whither to look for refuge, except to God. But in this extremity a cheering voice reaches us from the great city of New York in the form of a Christian appeal to the people of God in the South, and signed by twenty-six of the most beloved and venerable names among the clergy of various Christian denominations. A similar appeal is also issued by most revered and influential Christians from Chicago, in the great Northwest. The object of both is to summon God's people to

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the rescue of their country, and to the blessed work of peace-makers ; to hold out to us the right hand of love and sympathy across the chasm which threatens to divide our country ; to give us their solemn assurances that sectionalism and fanaticism are not dominant at the North, and to pledge themselves to the noble work of breaking the rising power, and restoring to us our rights in the Union. Stating the solemn conviction that the victory of truth and right over error can yet be secured if time and favorable auspices are allowed for the discussion there, they implore the South not to precipitate the rupture of the confederation before they are allowed to go behind the heated or interested partisans who have misdirected public opinion, and make the appeal to the honest and patriotic people. Every Christian at the South will concur in meeting these fraternal and generous advances in the spirit in which they are made. We know that we may bid our Northern brethren God-speed in their work in behalf of Southern Christians. We joyfully reciprocate their affectionate greeting, and pray God that they may be successful in moderating animosities, in removing misconceptions, in dispelling fanaticism ; and we entreat them to lose no time in a work so urgently needed to allay the just apprehensions of our people. But now, does it not become us, Christian brethren of the South, to cooperate in our sphere in the same peaceful work ? Have we no animosities to moderate, no misapprehensions to repudiate, no exaggerations of feeling and language to confess, and no advances to make towards a renewed fraternity ?

All Southern Christians would deplore an unnecessary rupture of the Federal Union bequeathed to us by our heroic sires, as marring their glorious work, and showing ourselves unworthy of their inheritance ; as bringing the gorgeous promise of the "Empire Republic" to an early and ignominious close ; as plunging the country into the inevitable evils of financial distress, and but too probably into the horrors of frequent wars ; as inaugurating on this hitherto peaceful continent the jealous political system of Europe, with its balance of power, its enormous standing armies, its crushing taxation, and ultimately, its despotic governments ; as covering the claims of American Christianity and republicanism with failure and disgrace before the world ; as destroying our national weight and glory, and thus our per-

sonal security abroad ; as disappointing the hopes of self-government throughout the nations, and justifying the claims of tyranny ; as bringing innumerable confusions, disruptions, and disaster upon the churches of Christ, and as arresting the beneficent labors of one-third of the missionaries and teachers, and drying up a similar portion of the charities which now carry life to the perishing souls of the heathen. Surely he who would risk even the possibility of a result so dire, unless impelled to do it by causes absolute and inexorable, hath not the heart of a Christian, nor even of a man. Do those causes, then, exist ? We would distinctly say, to avoid creating a mischievous mistake, that if the Southern States of the Union are persistently refused their full rights in the confederation and its common territories and the protection granted by the constitution to their peculiar property, then, in our opinion, the Southern people must conclude that these causes do exist, and that the catastrophe, however lamentable, must be met, sorrowfully indeed, and yet with the resolution of freemen. But, on the other hand, we cordially appreciate the honorable sincerity of the revered brethren of the North, who assure us that, in their opinion, the necessity for this ultimate resort does not yet exist ; and assuredly every motive should prompt us to hope till hope becomes impossible, that they judge correctly. We rejoice to see grounds for such a hope in the large and patriotic minority, approaching so nearly to half the Northern community, who, in the late presidential election, cast their suffrages with so much manliness in favor of our rights ; in the extensive reaction which has since appeared in public sentiment there ; in the persevering hopes and efforts of our wisest and most patriotic legislators to conciliate, and in the force of truth and right when fairly presented. Nor can we permit this hope to be extinguished by the pertinacity of the leaders of that misguided party which assails our rights ; when their conduct may be so fully explained by the personal exasperations of former political collisions, by their confident expectation that the imprudent haste of some part of the Southern people would compromise the justice of their cause before the nation, and by their full consciousness that the peaceful triumph of constitutional right would be the final downfall of their selfish ambition.

We can easily believe that these considerations may prompt

them to deny us justice; and yet that their constituents would be more just to us than these leaders who misrepresent them. Moreover, if sectional differences, so long and so keenly contested, had not produced many misconceptions on both sides, we should have been more or less than human, and our party history would be different from that of all other free nations. May not patience and serious discussion, in the presence of interests so solemn and tremendous, dissipate those misconceptions? Is there not still ground to hope that, if the Southern people would carefully avoid complicating their righteous cause by any undue haste, or by impinging upon existing laws, or even prejudices, more than the absolute necessities of self-defence require; if the great issue were carried back from embittered party leaders to the body of the citizens, disencumbered of all other questions of a change of administration and of public wealth which were recently mixed with it; if the North were asked whether she would yield to us a generous and fair construction of our equal rights and in the future punctually observe it, or whether she would force us to an unwilling but necessary self-defence outside the Union, the answer would be one which would restore peace to an anxious country?

Now, we would humbly urge upon you, dear brethren of the South, whether it is not due to our country, to our race, to our God, and due especially to the noble men who are entreating us to give them one more opportunity to achieve our rights and our peace for us by the weapons of argument, that we should withhold the irreparable step as long as there is a spark of hope? And to our brethren of the North and South alike, we would say, when that final step is so solemn and may be so awful, should not every honorable means for avoiding its necessity be exhausted by the good man before he takes it? Yea, even though we were uncertain whether the glimmer of hope were a true living spark, or only an illusion, would it not be better to wait till that uncertainty is decided than to incur the calamities of the extreme remedy, and afterwards be haunted perhaps by the remorseful discovery that we had precipitated them without actual necessity? We do not advise that any of the measures truly necessary for self-defence be delayed a single day; but we would respectfully plead that it would be eminently worthy of you as Christian citizens to seek the suspension of all

such measures as would cut off or embarrass the appeal from the rulers to the people of the North, as would causelessly embitter or complicate the existing differences; and, above all, such measures as would set on fire the destroying passions of civil war. It becomes us, even while we prepare for the worst, to look diligently on all sides for some mediating umpire, by whose impartial hand "the dogs of war" may be held in leash till the final verdict of the people is given. Surely God has not so given us over to madness, but the issue might still be that they should then be chained up forever, instead of being now let loose to rend our common mother. And further, we would humbly appeal to all Christians of the North and the South to exert everywhere the moderating influences appropriate to the followers of the Prince of Peace. It cannot but appear to the reasonable mind most unsuitable that Christian men and Christian ministers should be in the extreme front of party movements, when all history tells us that such movements never become heated without becoming extreme. In tempering the body-politic together, God has given to the Christian members a function like that of the conscience in the natural man, which regulates and moderates the whole. The movement of the common body is the resultant of many concurring forces, of which, if some are liable to be too sluggish, many are always too impetuous. The Christian may therefore safely conclude that his duty will be best performed by acting with the moderate, instead of the vehement. God's people are the regulators of the social machine. Shall they forget this most necessary and wholesome function and throw their whole momentum to hurry that motion which they should regulate?

Then nothing can be expected but that the machine will wreck itself with its own mad velocity. Let us then all study moderation of political sentiment, of resentments and of language. Let us keep a watch before the door of our lips, lest some needless word issue forth to exasperate what is already too angry. Let us see to it that we do not initiate the sin, nor share the guilt of those who have perverted the sacred influences of Christianity to sanctify their malignant feelings. Let the Sabbath, with its sacred calm, be reserved more jealously than ever for topics truly divine, in order that its recurring sanctities may aid in tempering the excitement of the people. For this is the wise

ordinance of him who "made the Sabbath for man," that this weekly breach in the current of our secular cares, and the sobering and elevating contrast of heavenly contemplations, might prevent the flow of earthly passions from becoming morbid and chafing the soul into phrenzy. It is usually found, that wherever the excitements of our weekly debates are allowed to intrude into the sanctuary, the pulpit and the Sabbath, a feverish exasperation of popular feeling results.

The urgency of our country's danger will be our apology for again beseeching you, dear brethren, to remember your Christian responsibilities to God and his church. Every man, whose heart is not harder than the nether mill-stone, will surely count the cost at such a time as this, and view deliberately the terrible results which may possibly or probably come from error now committed. Is disunion, is civil war before us, a civil war whose rigor and atrocities may appall the world? The wisest hearts admit the fear. Let each man then place himself now, before it is too late, in the midst of the possible horrors of that fratricidal war; let him bring before his mind a country ravaged; its fields, late smiling with plenty, stained by battle, and the carnage of fellow-citizens and brethren of a common Christianity; its cities sacked or deserted; its peaceful homes desolated, and its order displaced by fierce anarchy; and let him ask himself whether, as he stands amidst the ruin, he will be able to take heaven to witness that none of its guilt is in his skirts. Let each man remember that he must answer at the judgment seat of Christ for his conduct as a citizen, and see to it that when he meets there the ghost of all that shall be slain, of all the wives that shall be widowed, of all the children that shall be consigned to orphanage and destitution, of all the hoary parents that shall be bereaved of their sons in this quarrel, and of all the ignorant damned through our neglect, while we were waging the work of mutual destruction, he shall be able to appeal to the searcher of hearts that none of it was his doing; that every whit of this mountainous aggregate of guilt belongs to his adversaries, and not to himself; that he had exhausted every righteous expedient and exerted every lawful power to avoid it. If, brethren, you can do this, it will be well with you, however ill it may be with our miserable country. But if not, who can estimate that guilt! But, blessed be God, all is not yet

lost. And if only his church shall have grace given to her equal to her duty; if she can only rise above the vulgar mists of prejudice, false pride and mutual recriminations; if she shall steadily lift up the calm, loving and potential voice of God's law, speaking peace to the tumults of the people, and even to the incipient din of war; if the hands of Christian love are now made strong to knit again the bands which angry and selfish men have rent, how glorious will be this achievement of Christianity to her Lord, and how blessed to his creatures. Fellow Christians, let us arise as one man, and accomplish it.

And, finally, that this peaceful victory may be won, we would repeat the call to prayer. 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.' Let us continue daily before the throne of the heavenly grace, those humiliations and entreaties to which we were called by our venerable Chief Magistrate, until God have mercy upon us, and the sword which is stretched out over the land is withdrawn. And we will be your servants, for Christ's sake.

To the foregoing appeal were appended the following signatures :

SAMUEL B. WILSON, D. D., Professor and President, Union Theological Seminary, Va.

JOHN M. P. ATKINSON, D. D., President Hampden-Sidney College.

B. M. SMITH, D. D., Professor Union Theological Seminary, Va.

ROBERT L. DABNEY, D. D., Professor Union Theological Seminary, Va.

REV. T. E. PECK, D. D., Professor Union Theological Seminary, Va.

REV. HENRY SNYDER, Professor Hampden-Sidney College.

REV. WM. BROWN, D. D., Editor of *Central Presbyterian*.

REV. GEORGE D. ARMSTRONG, D. D., Presbyterian Church, Norfolk, Va.

REV. JACOB D. MITCHELL, D. D., Second Presbyterian Church, Lynchburg, Va.

REV. JAMES C. CLOPTON, Pastor of the African Church, Lynchburg, Va.

REV. JOSIAH CLIFT, Methodist Protestant Church, Lynchburg, Va.

JAMES B. RAMSEY, D. D., First Presbyterian Church, Lynchburg, Va.

DRURY LACY, D. D., late President Davidson College, North Carolina.

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.

W. H. MCGUFFEY, Professor of Moral Philosophy.

JOHN B. MINOR, Professor of Common and Statute Law.

H. HOWARD, M. D., Professor of Medicine.

S. MAUPIN, M. D., Professor of Chemistry.

M. SCHELE DE VERE, Professor of Modern Languages.

LEXINGTON, VA., January 14, 1861.

We the undersigned cordially concur in the general tone of sentiment and feeling expressed in the foregoing paper :

REV. WM. N. PENDLETON, D. D., Rector of Grace Church, Episcopal.

REV. F. C. TEBBS, Methodist Episcopal Church.

REV. WM. S. WHITE, D. D. Presbyterian Church.

REV. GEO. JUNKIN, D. D.,	}	<i>Faculty of Washington College, Va,</i>
PROF. J. L. CAMPBELL,		
PROF. A. L. NELSON,		
PROF. C. J. HARRIS,		
PROF. JAMES J. WHITE,		
JOHN T. L. PRESTON, Virginia Military Institute.		
T. J. JACKSON, Professor, Virginia Military Institute.		

RANDOLPH MACON COLLEGE, VA.

While we love the Union, and deplore the calamities which so seriously threaten our country, and while we highly appreciate the truly Christian forbearance and sentiments of justice embodied in the foregoing address, we must be allowed to say that we believe that nothing short of the decisive measures now before the people of the Southern States will cause many of our intelligent and calculating, but tardy, yet doubtless true friends at the North to *realize the fact* that we are in earnest in asserting our rights under the constitution and our beliefs on the moral aspects of the questions involved. And if these remedies fail to save the Union, we are still willing to take them as the least of impending evils, with a firm persuasion that we are not responsible for the ultimate results.

WM. A. SMITH, D. D., President of Randolph Macon College.

PH. W. ARCHER, Presiding Elder of Randolph Macon College.

GEORGE H. RAY, Chaplain of Randolph Macon College.