

“CHRISTIANS, PRAY FOR YOUR COUNTRY.”¹

OUR common country is in danger of *disunion*. It is almost with trembling that we note it, lest its very publication may tend somehow to familiarize our minds with the dread fact, and thus to precipitate it. We would fain hope that the danger is not inevitable, but only imminent; and *it is therefore* we now invoke the attention of Christians to it. If it is less urgent than some may fear, then there is more encouragement to labor now for its removal; for after its presence is confessed by all, it will be too late.

Remember, then, that this anti-slavery agitation has been growing from its ominous birth, for twenty-five years. What has been its career? It has constantly acquired more and more power; has overleaped every bar interposed by political sagacity to its extension, has very nigh swallowed up every other political question and party, has ruptured the ties of most of the Christian sects in the land, and has now nearly consummated the division of the people into two great parties of that *sectional* distinction of which the first symptom startled the sagacious Jefferson “like a fire-bell in the night.” Its course has been, thus far, ever onward. It is no longer the narrow and comparatively impotent principle of *Abolition*, the war cry of a frantic fragment; but the grave, pervading, national question of *Free-soil*. On the one side stands the majority, saying, “The national domain belongs to the Federal government, of which we hold the effective control; and while we claim no right to dictate in your domestic concerns, we resolve that this common domain shall not be polluted by the encroachments of slavery.” On the other side, the large and determined minority retorts: “This common domain was purchased by the money, toil, and blood, of us and our fathers, as well as by yours; and we will have our share in its enjoyment.” Here are principles con-

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fronting each other of irreconcilable opposition. Meantime the strife is fanned by reckless faction-mongers, and by more guilty fanatics invoking the holy name of Christianity; and who that knows man's history does not know, that when national passions once clothe themselves in the garb of religion, they are as ungovernable as a storm and as implacable as death? We are fast tending to this, that the whole North will be arrayed against the whole South, on a question which each supposes essential to its honor, its religion and its existence.

And meantime, men are debating on both sides the miserable and guilty question, which section will be most prepared for a separate existence and for the strife it will have to endure; thus goading with insult on the one hand, and inflating on the other the arrogance which would precipitate the conflict; as though it were not sadly evident, that whichever side may be the weakest, it will yet have strength enough to inflict and endure miseries which might make angels weep. Already do the low mutterings of the rising cloud of civil war come from our Western border. Let that cloud break forth into the thunder of battle, and before the winds have swept its roar to the Atlantic, the angry passions now smouldering in magazine will be lit into universal blaze as if by the touch of lightning. Let those weapons, now pointed against each other in angry array be once lifted up to the nation reeking with fratricidal slaughter, and they will muster the foeman from North and South to the battle, like the fiery, red cross of Clan-Alpine.

And yet, the many wise and good, whose voices would otherwise be firmly raised for forbearance, are not aroused; because they see that the original agitators of the mischief are moved by principles so hollow and worthless, that they cannot think a great nation will be deluded by them; and because, seeing that all parties have so much to lose, and so little to gain by the strife, they will not believe that men can be so insane as to push on the suicidal contest to an issue. Alas! they forget that the power of bad men for mischief is out of all proportion to their own importance; and that when they play successfully on national passions, their own insignificance is lost amidst the might of the influences they arouse. Alas! they forget how often parties and nations have been seen to sacrifice self-interest, safety, existence, to the indulgence of inveterate sentiments. Did not

Girondists and Mountain-men wear out each other in France, in deadly strife, while the nation was reeling under the blows of combined Europe? Did not theological hatred cause Saxony to stand coolly by, while her sister Bohemia was beaten, disarmed, and trampled down, in the beginning of the thirty years' war, by Popish Austria, the common foe of them both? Did not the Jewish factions in Jerusalem strew the streets daily with the slaughter of civil battle, while Titus was thundering at the last defences of their last strongholds? Passion does not reason. Popular phrenzy does not count the cost.

Consider, then, we pray you, how portentous are all things of danger. Here are men urging on aggression with arrogant recklessness; there are others regarding their grievances, real or supposed, with the grim and gloomy determination to resist; here self-seeking demagogues, either blindly or treasonably, tamper with national passions whose awakened might they will be impotent to allay; and there men calling themselves ministers of the Prince of Peace invoke his sacred name to sanctify the guilty elements of strife and murder.

Second, if disunion comes, it must be accompanied or followed by war. Let no one fancy that such a rupture can be peacefully effected, and that two republics can quietly arise in place of one, to pursue their course with no rivalry but that of prosperous increase. If all the ties which now bind us together are insufficient to unite our hearts; if, in spite of them, such hostility has arisen as threatens to break the strong and beneficent bands of law and custom, to what heat will not that hatred grow when all these ties are broken? There will then be no genial meeting and mixing in our common seat of government, at our great watering places, and on the great thoroughfares, in ecclesiastical assemblies, and at our great commercial marts. It will be far easier for two foreign and rival powers to rupture a mere treaty of peace than it had been for sister commonwealths to cast off the dear and time-honored ties of family. Will the passions which break the latter respect the former; and that, too, when exasperated by a thousand new causes? And, upon a division, there must immediately arise a host of questions so grave, so essential to the very existence of each party, so without precedent or guide for their settlement, that it is only too certain the impatient temper of the times will at once hurry them to the bloody

arbitrament of the sword. Whose shall be the common seat of government, treasures and archives? Which confederacy shall inherit our ships of war, our armies and munitions? Where shall be the boundary line which is to separate into two the parts once intimately welded? Who shall control the lower course of the Father of rivers, the necessary and common thoroughfare of so many commonwealths? Will the North relinquish its navigation, and thus condemn themselves to commercial insulation and ruin? Will the South permit a stream which bisects its bosom to be the highway of rival and unfriendly foreigners? Who shall divide that vacant domain, the common property of both, which even now threatens to become the fatal subject of strife?

And above all, the seduction of fugitive slaves and their recapture, that festering sore of the body politic, will inevitably break out into fatal mischief just as soon as the constitution and the Union are removed. What are its difficulties? What the anger, bitterness, and agitation which it causes now? Every one can see to what these things must grow when all restraints of law are removed, when injured masters seek to redress their losses by the strong hand, and these attempts are resisted as invasion. All along our extended frontier, where the very intimacy of the previous union and neighborhood will aggravate the evil, there will be spread the flame of a border warfare. And the strife will extend to every creek, river, and bay of our sea coasts to which our coasting commerce penetrates.

And what a war will that be? Civil feud has ever been known as the most bitter of all. "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." The very tenderness of brothers' love makes them more tender to the injury. The strength of the mutual obligations which should have bound them to offices of kindness enhances the hot indignation of mutual outrage. When the twin lands which now lie so intimately side by side, parted by a line so long, so faint, so invisible, that it does not separate, begin to strike each other, the very nearness and intimacy make each more naked to the other's blow. How dire, then, will be the conflagration of battle which will rage along this narrow line across the whole breadth of a continent! How fatal the blows, when the republican hardihood and chivalry, the giant strength and

the teeming wealth, which begin to make the mightiest despots respectful, are turned against each other! Some among us seem fond of placing the relative prowess and courage of North and South in odious comparison. Brothers! should we not rather weep tears of blood at the wretched and wicked thought, that the common prowess, which hath so often made North and South side by side carry dismay and rout into the ranks of common enemies, that terrible prowess, which, in North and South alike, withstood all the force of the British lion while we were yet in the gristle of our youth, and which, ever since, has overthrown and broken and pierced every enemy with the lion's force and the swiftness of the king of birds combined, should hereafter expend its might in fratricidal blows? And then this vast frontier must be fortified and guarded. This hostile neighborhood, so dangerous, because so intimate, must be watched on either hand by armies. This giant strength and enterprise, which were covering broad lands and broader seas with the blessings and fruitfulness of industry, must be diverted to the barren, devouring waste of warlike preparation and labor. These teeming fields, whose crops bless the granaries of the famishing nations, and cause their owners' bosoms to run over with wealth, must be sown with dragon's teeth, and rear crops of armed men! Farewell to the benign career of imperial *Peace*, by which we hoped the Empire Republic would teach the angry nations nobler triumphs than those of war. A long farewell to that dream we had indulged; dream not unworthy, surely, to have been inspired by the spirit of the Prince of Peace; that here a nation was to grow up, on this soil which God had kept till "the fulness of time was come," wrapped up in the mysteries of pathless seas, and untainted by the step of civilized despot or organized crime; a nation composed of the strong, the free, the bold, the oppressed of all other peoples, and like the Corinthian brass, more precious than any that composed it, which should come by the righteous arts of peace to a greatness such as at last to shame and frighten war away from the family of kingdoms, which should work out the great experiment of equal laws and a free conscience for the first time for the imitation of the world, and from whose bosom a free church, unstained by the guilt of persecution, and unburdened with the leaden protection of the state, should send forth her light and sal-

vation to the ends of the earth to bring the millennial morning. Our future growth will be swallowed by the devouring maw of strife. This cunning machine of law which now regulates our rights will be wrecked amidst the jars of revolution. The stern exigencies of danger will compel both the rivals, perhaps, to substitute the strong but harsh will of the soldier for the mild protection of constitutions. Christianity will sicken and droop amidst the crimes of national convulsion and the license of camps. Despots will sing their scornful pæans over the realizing of all their envious prophecies that our liberty would run into license, and our freedom be used for self-destruction. The world will be remanded to the guardianship of bondage, and the clock of time may be put back again for ages as long as those during which Europe before languished under the night of popery. And meantime the redemption of the race is by so many ages postponed; and sin and hell pray upon so many more of the teeming generations!

Christians of America, will ye suffer this? If such a crime against God and man be wrought in this land of thirty thousand evangelical ministers and four millions of Christians, how burning the sarcasm which it will contain against your Christianity! What, was there not enough of the oil of love in all these four millions of the servants of the God of love to soothe the surging billows of party strife? Was there not enough of the majesty of moral weight in these four millions of Christians to say to the angry waters, "Peace, be still?" Were not all these strong enough to throw the arms of their love around their fellow-citizens, keep down the hands that sought each others' throats, and constrain them by a sweet compulsion to be brethren? Did this mighty church stand idly by and see phrenzy immolate so many of the dearest hopes of man and so much of the glory of God on her hellish altar, and not rather rush between and receive the sword in its own breast? And this church knew, too, that the fiend had borrowed the torch of discord from the altar of Christianity, and that therefore Christians were doubly bound to arrest her murderous hand before the precious sacrifice was lost in the conflagration! If this be suffered, then shame on the boasted Christianity of America, and of the nineteenth century! With all its parade of light

and evangelism, wherein will it be less impotent and spurious than the false Christianity which permitted and sanctioned the butcheries of the Crusades, the torture of the Inquisition, or any other great iniquity of the dark ages?

For, brethren, you are able to control this nation, if you please, and will do your duty. Here are four millions of men and women, chiefly adults, among a people of twenty-six millions of men, women, children, and slaves; four millions who profess to be supremely ruled by principles of righteousness, peace and love, and to be united to each other in the brotherhood of a heavenly birth. If even the *voters* among these would go together to the polls to uphold the cause of peace, they would turn the scales of every election. Where is the community, in all our land, where the male citizens who are professors of Christianity would not give the victory to that party to which they gave their united support? But alas! how often do we go on Monday to the hustings, after having appeared on the Sabbath as servants of the Prince of Peace and brethren of all his servants, and in our political action forget that we are Christians? Here, then, is our first need, if we would save our country: that we shall carry our citizenship in the kingdom of heaven everywhere, and make it dominate over every public act. And next, the Christians of this country must sternly claim, that wicked men shall no longer hold the helm of state; that party fidelity shall no longer atone for that worst crime against citizenship, a wicked life. But why do we speak of the mere numerical weight of Christians? Let them, embracing so much as they do of moral weight and influence, but speak to public opinion with the calm voice of patriotism and moderation, and their words will be potential. Let every one of our thirty thousand pulpits echo the accents of that charity which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," and let every one of these four million tongues speak to its neighbor the language of forbearance and long-suffering, and lo! there will be a great calm. Are we not brethren? What more does any one of us wish to exact of his brother, than that which is just and righteous? And what one of us desires to withhold this? But since we all know that human frailty is ever apt to over-estimate its rights, and to exaggerate its wrongs, let us each one resolve that, for our coun-

try's sake and our Saviour's, we will forego much of what seems to us our due, and endure much of what seems to us injury. Let us all resolve thus, and soon our only strife will be which side shall go farthest to meet the other in the magnanimous reparation of wrongs and the generous concession of rights. And, above all, should the guilty churches of all our land humble themselves before a holy God, for our Christian backslidings and our national sins. "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and those that suck the breast; let the bridegroom go forth out of his chamber and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach."