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BEFORE THE

SALEM FEMALE ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY,

AT ITS

ANNUAL MEETING,

DECEMBER 7, 1851.

BY THOMAS T. STONE.

Published by Request

SALEM:

WILLIAM IVES AND CO., PRINTERS....OBSERVER OFFICE.

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WOMEN OF THE ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY :

You will pardon some personal references, such as I have not been accustomed to make at other times. You have done a noble work. Early you enlisted in the organized action for freedom; when your doctrines were disowned and perverted, your measures denounced and ridiculed, and your friends, if not yourselves, assailed even to the extent of violence. Some of you, perhaps, have met that deepest of sorrows, not the sneer of the world, not the coldness or hostility of friends, but the interruption of religious communion. Within the church, from which you had drawn a faith dearer than the blood of your own hearts; from the pulpit, to which that faith had trained you to look with reverence, and out of which you were accustomed to wait for words of holiest cheer and mightiest energies; among religious associates, with whom your fresh and youthful zeal expected sympathy, and, if wise and careful counsel, yet not the less encouragement and benediction; you found—I will say merely, something else. How many were unable to surmount the resistance!—True to your earliest pledges, you have stood. God bless you, my sisters! On this, the last evening I may meet you here, I cannot decline the privilege of a farewell prayer:—God bless your persons and your deeds!

For myself, I owe you thanks. You have thought me worthy to speak to you several times before; and to my words you have always been indulgent. I have never known you withhold your kindness and your sympathy. Your invitation has been to sincerity and faithfulness. I have tried to answer it. This is probably the last endeavor I shall be able to make. I should have hoped otherwise once. I had hoped to remain with you years; and when I grew old, to be here at home; and when I left you, to give my body to the same spot where those dearest to me sleep already. But this may not be. Therefore to you, sisters, I wish now to pronounce my farewell; and, moreover, as to others with whom my relations are intimate and sacred, I am soon to speak my last word, so to this more promiscuous assembly, I would offer some thoughts not unfit, I trust, either to your purposes or to my condition. Permit me then at such an hour to begin with some Confession of the Faith which, as I have understood it, calls me to services like this.

Of that Faith, the first principle is simply the reality of God. God does really exist! Not only did he of old create the heavens and the earth; he dwells in those heavens, he penetrates and fills that earth, now and forever. Not only did he create man in his image some thousand years ago; he renews that image through each generation, and is still life and inspiration to mankind. Not only did he speak to man through Hebrew prophets and apostles; his word is still near us, in the heart which receives it, in the kingdom of God within us. Not only did he give it

living form and expression in the Christ of Judea ; he renews the utterance for every ear which is open to hear ; and amidst the diverging paths stretching out before us beyond our sight, the voice still sounds from behind us, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.— Days come and go ; nights recede and return ; seasons revolve in perpetual cycles ; the leaves fall not more surely than men, generations, nations, epochs ; all things which touch the senses, grow, change, expire ; there is One, in all, through all, around all, without shade, without decay ; his life, eternity ; his light, everlasting and unclouded sun ; the word, unchanging amidst mutability ; concentrating all elements of perfection, so removed infinitely from the realm of death, entering it only to quicken ; and at once teaching and strengthening men by the spirit which lives at the centre of the whole and of each soul and thing. The Word of God ! It is indeed contained, as we have been taught, in the Scriptures ; but it is not confined to them ; it existed before they were written ; it exists where they remain unknown ; it is present beyond the range of their possible circulation. By it, the heavens and the earth were made. By it, the processes of the ages move onward in their silent and majestic courses. By it, the soul in every man is quickened and enlightened. God's Word is fountain of man's thought and love. The Word of God is no other than God himself, that is, infinite and unchangeable Love, communicating his fulness through the creations of its own power. So real is God to us !

Of this same Faith the second principle is the capacity of man to perceive and obey the Present God.

Nature obeys without consciously perceiving him ; bad men may perceive him, and yet disobey ; but each man is able to obey not less than perceive ; and the truly good man does. The wisdom of the universe shines, sunlike, upon the soul ; he rejoices in the vision. The spirit of the universe breathes, a vital air, over and into the heart ; he takes it in, and gives it forth as life and power. This is the grand distinction of man. And always the truest man is he who most completely receives and fulfils the wonderful idea. His is an infinite humility ; not only when he speaks words of prayer does he say that God is all, himself as nothing ; but his whole life is free self-abandonment to the absorbing presence. All the time, out in the streets, there in the shop, in the midst of his family, every-where, he is living in and from that secret and closed recess, where the spirit of man is reached and renewed by the spirit of God ; and so the universe is radiant with truth, nay, grows up around him as larger temple of which he is shrine. Such is man, not in the apostacy and sin which deform his existence, but in the genuine nature which images the Eternal.

From these two principles we advance to certain practical ideas :—The worth of our nature—The sympathy and cooperation which we owe one to another.

The worth of our nature ! The phrase may sound like cant to some, like falsehood to others. Let theological questions go for the present ; dismiss all theories of our primitive or our present state, of its depravity or its innocence ; still it stands out the same in either view. Man, as such,—man in virtue of the elements

which constitute his being,—is of unspeakable worth. The very depth of his fall, suppose it ever so great, does but assure us of the height at which he stands, when indeed he stands. A nature capable of that terrible consciousness, remorse, sorrow for sin, repentance, is a nature which the Infinite alone can fill;—its powers and its wants; its aspirations and its despondences; its struggles and defeats and victories; its visions of God, and Heaven, and Hell; its Alpine ascents and its cavernous descents; its eastern paradise, which interprets the grandest prophecies of the New Jerusalem; and its sunless depths, which interpret the horrors its darker thought has assigned to an infernal doom;—all in their several ways indicate the essential greatness, the divine destiny, of human nature. These are real states of men; not the prerogatives of the few, not the consciousness only of some select souls, but the common experience, in different degrees of development, of all mankind. To the eye lighted by divine faith, they make all outward distinctions among men little and worthless. That eye seeth man in God; it seeth not king or subject, chieftain or vassal, priest or laic, noble or vulgar, male or female, statesman or citizen, rich or poor, master or servant;—these are floating cloud-fringes, fading dew-tints, any the smallest and briefest shows which things take on and put off in their hourly changes. But man in God, rather God in man,—the Highest dwelling in each and all;—before this majestic presence the spirit bends in reverence—the finite person widens and rises into immeasurable grandeur; man is full of worth, because God alone is great. There are persons

who can scarce go into a house devoted to religious services, without uncovering the head and treading softly and speaking in the lowest tones, so reverend the ideal forms which the place summons about them ; greatest of all, the Being whose name has been so often uttered there ; then, it may be, the venerable and the young, the parents and the children, the cheerful and the sorrowful, who have been there so often for solace or excitement, but are there no more forever ; with the numberless private memories of holiest things, seeming here to live anew. If we saw things aright, we should see men, all men, with a kindred, but deeper reverence ; the Infinite is there enshrined ; the germs of immortal worship, the capacities, larger than thought, expanded into powers greater than those of the outward world, a whole nature revealing the promise of its everlasting destinies. Such the latent worth of each human being !

Herein the ground of a religious sympathy. There are several relations generated of the outward distinctions among men ; family kindred, neighborhood, country, peculiarities of race, affinities of manners or pursuits, diversities of station, artificial classifications of society, and, in a word, whatever separates some and attracts others. A religious sympathy has its life in the godlike elements deposited in the centre of every soul. Conscious of these elements in itself, it recognizes them in others. Its family comprehends whatever is divine in heaven or on earth. Its neighborhood lies in neither east nor west, neither north nor south, neither ancient continent nor modern, nor in isles of sea or ocean ; it is no other than the one

realm which unites earth and heaven. So, regarding all other sources and conditions of sympathy, they are of the celestial fountain; they spread out into the celestial ocean. Private relations and the sympathies connected with them, furnish the objects and the materials of its exercise; but they do not exhaust its elements or impair its quality; they are the forms and robes in which it walks, but it takes them all up into its own elevation, and brightens them with the rays of its transfigured splendor. So wherever men rejoice, it rejoices with them; wherever men suffer, it suffers with them. There have been men, dearly loving, dearly loved of, their own wives and children and friends, ready to any sacrifice for their comfort, or to save them from distress, who yet could exult over the details of a battle gained by their own country, perhaps in the most unrighteous strife; forgetting altogether the wives and children and friends to whom each death has brought as it were another death, in the sorrows, the wants, the untold sufferings, which the slain have escaped, to which survivors are doomed. Just so we might speak of other things. Who could tell of the youthful loves, promising to themselves lifelong happiness, which were blighted forever, while at the very instant, the same affections were glowing in the heart of John Newton, as he freighted his ship with the human cargo, consigned to everlasting bereavement and sorrow? As the divine sympathy grew within his consciousness, he learned through it what he was doing; his nearer duties were none the less faithfully performed, but his heart entered into the whole living heart of humanity; he

execrated his former pursuit, and made himself one with the outcast and despised, whose number he had in his blindness helped to swell. The very spirit of the Lord, in which we become all of us members one of another !

Sympathy does not finish the service which devout fraternity excites. It developes itself in cooperation ; it makes us work not only for each other, but with each other. The personal experience of want teaches us what are the wants of others ; the same experience foretels the sublime destinies of humanity ; and the love which sanctifies it, determines the man to live, not for himself, but for his race. The methods of his action may be numberless ; he may sow and reap the fields ; he may go forth over the sea ; he may be mechanic, in any of the multiform employments which the name suggests ; he may be scholar, reading and thinking obscurely in his closet ; he may be preacher of a divine message ; he may pursue the course, whatever it be, to which nature and circumstances open the way ; let him only hold himself as hallowed of God and loving to men ; he is working for them, and working with them every where and at all times. The type of this vast cooperation is given us in nature : Sun and stars and moon are up there in the heavens ; the earth rolls here alone and silent ; here are vast oceans, numberless seas and bays, indenting all lands : here are lakes and rivers, amidst deep forests or cultivated soils ; trees, flowers, grasses, plants, growing everywhere ; a transparent atmosphere spreads over the whole ; light flows undimmed through it, or shaded by clouds or vapors ; and

indefinite hosts of animals, from the verge of unconscious vegetation up to the sublimest forms of human thought and love; all united from within by mystic attractions and concords. Not the trite, antique notion of a golden chain let down from the supreme throne to go round and bind together the severed masses and forms of earth and sky; the power is more inward and sacred. The plastic spirit living throughout the whole draws them to harmony, and joins remotest things in sympathetic cooperation. As the moon moves in her changing beauty, the water flows and reflows over ocean and land. As the earth turns its zones toward the sun, grass grows, flowers blow, trees are green, fruits swell, harvests ripen, birds sing and build their nests, animals all welcome the spring and summer, and the heart of man rejoices in the joy welling up from the deep heart of nature. There is nothing which can be spared:—nothing, from the grandest sun in the vast expanse to the least fibre in the most fragile form or the minutest grain of sand which the wind takes up in street or field: each has its service, each is in intimate relations with the whole, and the whole again is forever concentrating itself upon the parts,—upon every part. Highest in this universal cooperation, are the reciprocal and perpetual activities of love in the human heart. How have the lives of patriarchs, of heroes, of prophets, of apostles, of saints and martyrs, passed through the works they wrought, even through the sufferings they endured, and not only within the consciousness of men, but far beyond all suspicion, into the great current of human existence! Who can tell how unlike this New England of ours,

to what it would have been if Socrates had not lived and died more than two thousand years ago in a Grecian City ; still more, if a Moses had not far earlier yet been taken up from the banks of the Nile ! I need scarcely add such later name as Paul of Tarsus ; and there is One, whose toils and tears not only consecrate Palestine for all ages, but signify to those ages a life identified with the blessedness of mankind. Whatever in fact through the universe proceeds from God, is element and portion of the activity, which strives for the utmost good ; which lightens heavy burdens, and soothes sad hearts, and inspires life and joy ; which obeys the mighty influence, drawing soul to soul, and, falling at the right hour and in the right place into the divine currents, swells them to wider compass and urges them onward with grander force to the issues of the Love from which they flow. Such the majestic and benignant cooperation, into which the Lord combines all the powers of human sympathy.

If it were in my power so to present these declarations of the Faith which this occasion suggests, as to make them clear to each heart, I should feel little doubt that one spontaneous outburst of your feelings would reveal to you how great and dear they are. They need no proofs. They stand above the realm of question and argument. They transcend logic ; they seek not discussion, but hearty acceptance. Let these sentiments inspire and control me ; you would have no further doubt what must be the quality of my life. They cannot be excessive ; they cannot reach too far ; they cannot draw me too closely to any thing that lives in the universe. The more full and perfect they become in any soul, the more godlike and humane that soul is. The announcement is pledge of the response.

Now the great idea which the evening invites us to contemplate, is not a deduction from these principles, is not a remote and logical sequence from such premises; it is simply the direct application of them to a particular portion of mankind, and to a particular class of our human relations. That portion of mankind is the enslaved; that class of relations is the whole compass of our connexions and duties to the enslaved; immediately, those on the American soil; indirectly, those on the whole face of the earth. Every American slave it recognizes as all which the name of man involves; every slave it recognizes as one among the myriads whom the Divine Image ennobles and destines to immortality; every slave it approaches with reverence as child of the common Father, and so connected with the human race by divine and universal sympathies. Of every slave it says no more, but it can say no less, than of every other human being;—just so much; and therefore demands that every slave be treated, not as slave, which human tyranny has made him, but as man whom Divine Love made him. To put my thought into other language:—The Anti-Slavery movement proposes merely the Divine Law of Justice and Love, as the principle by which all our intercourse with those now held in slavery shall be regulated. The slaveholder appears with his claim and his profession:—"My slaves are rightfully mine; my money and that of my ancestors purchased them; the laws of my State and my country recognize and protect them as mine. Moreover, I feed them, I clothe them, I give them habitations, home, care and discipline. And I am careful that my provisions for them be sufficient and permanent; that they neither suffer while able to labor, nor decline unattended when age comes over them. Such a relation, so

regulated, and really blessing the servant no less than benefitting the master, has in its behalf more than public sentiment or political enactments; it has the very letter of both Old Testament and New." Is there any thing to say against so plausible a justification? Bring into comparison with it the simple declarations of the Faith which has been now confessed. Let the Abolitionist stand forth, and speak his word:—"I have nothing now to say concerning the treatment which the slave receives, beyond that single feature of it which makes him slave. Grant that he is well fed, well clothed, well housed. Grant that he escapes the lash and the branding-iron, and all the tortures which irresponsible power lodged in men's hands is so apt to inflict. Grant all this; but he is slave at least. He is held as property, he is bought as property; he is sold as property. The husband and the wife, the parent and the child, each is held as separate article of property, subject to all the fluctuations of property; kept together, not by the sacredness of the relationship, but by the will of the proprietor; and separated, not by the processes of nature, but by caprice or interest as the one or the other may demand. Marriage, according to the true idea and order, is necessarily precluded by this one vitiating element,—this conversion of man into commodity. Man—Property! The two conceptions are irreconcilable. If man, then not property; if property, then not man. Tell me never of man, image and son of the present God, the being of such immeasurable worth, connected with his brethren by deepest and ineradicable sympathies, and together with them and God workers of an immortal destiny; tell me never of man, so divinely framed, so largely endowed, as, on the one side, rightful holder of his own race for property and merchan-

dise; as, on the other, legitimate matter of possession and traffic. The monstrous outrage must sooner or later show to all eyes as a barbarism at which humanity is abashed. That it exists, suggests almost the fear that the grand Faith contains some latent illusion. Only with the confidence that it is temporary, and while existing wrought mysteriously into some thread of a mightier destiny, does the fear pass away, and the faith prove itself just and glorious. And then the statutes and political constitutions which sustain the monstrous claim! Tell me not of them. Sin is no better, because it has been enacted by King or Congress. Nay, the enactment contains in itself the principle which annuls and makes it void. I reverence Law; just for this reason do I hate lawless tyranny. The decrees of the Czar, by which Poland is rent and enthralled, by which Hungarian patriots are driven into exile, and the independence of European nations seems endangered, are entitled to precisely the same estimate with the decrees of Legislatures or the American Congress, by which the South is doomed to the enslavement of half its population; by which our countrymen are driven to the alternative of slavery or exile; and if they choose the latter, chased by the officers of despotism to the very line, which separates us from the colonies of an European monarchy. Tell me what you will of Laws making men property; I reverence Law,—therefore do I pronounce these statutes lawless and anarchic, impieties to God and tyrannies to men. I will try to prove my fidelity to true government by my treason to demoniac usurpation. I reverence Law; therefore I will obey it, though states, republics, congresses, the world itself, blaspheme its name by connecting herewith their own enormities. Not who made the statute determines

whether it be true law ; but what it is. Never can a majority impose obligation ; the question is forever open, Have the majority done right ? Very often they have done wrong. Further still, you assure me the Bible justifies slavery. Well, slavery then condemns the Bible. I certainly should be very slow to admit that, correctly interpreted, its language read through its spirit instead of its spirit enthralled to its language, the Bible could be fairly claimed, as it is now so often and so confidently claimed, to shield and even to sanctify American Slavery.—If, however, it be so,—if language, spirit, all, throughout, go for the enormity, the conclusion is a very plain one: The Bible cannot make wrong, right ; falsehood, truth ; darkness, light ; and the sole grounds on which the sacredness of the Bible or any Book can possibly stand, fall from under it the instant it is shown to contradict the eternal laws, the secret oracle, the everlasting God within. If all public religions pronounce tyranny, lawful government ; and injustice, rectitude ; and cruelty, virtue ; if all public religions catch up the politician's audacity, and stigmatize sympathy with the oppressed as prejudice, and call on us to conquer it ; if they join in the sneer, now so rife and biting, at sickly sentiment or idle abstraction, because the freedom of a man is preferred to the demands of pride or power or wealth ; then let those public religions stand, if so they can, without freedom, without humanity, without God ;—I would rather retire into the lonely sanctuary, and worship in the wilderness ; at least, God is present, the heavens are open, angels will bless me with their ministries !"—With such clearness of sight, such calmness of spirit, such steadfast faith, the true man may put away from himself the smooth speeches, the plausible arguments,

the cunning sophistries, by which American tyranny, just like all other despotisms of ancient or modern times, strives to reconcile itself with the religious faith, the moral sense, the conscience, the reason, and the humanities of the living soul.

Just here the great movement of the last twenty years in behalf of Freedom began. Its origin is, Faith in the absolute and unchangeable Justice. Hence it has been from the first the broadest movement of the age. The Christian Religion, united with other tendencies, both of the individual and of society, had reached a point of necessary application to this form of human wickedness. The issue has come, as it must come. The great alternative is presented to the nation, as it must be presented. The mighty problem has been stated, as it must be stated. It is very simple :—The Eternal God, or temporary gain ; the living man, or dead expediency ; spiritual worth, or material value ; divine union, or local confederacy ; virtuous cooperation, or vicious policy. The very same problem which has been so often proposed ; so often set at naught, yet forever recurring : If the Lord be God, worship him ; if not, where is your God ? Preachers had been long calling men to the decision. Preachers had long and loudly cried out to men, “ Repent and forsake your sins.” They had solemnly declared, “ No sin is to be cherished, even for an instant. Of whatever there is in our hearts or our conduct contrary to the unchangeable principles of the Divine Law, let the repentance be immediate, entire, final ; admit no qualifications, no limit, no apologies. Forsake all sin, and forsake it now.” The first Abolitionists understood the preachers as they preached. They saw the sin, present, palpable, atrocious ; and what the pulpit

had labored to prove and impress on them, they accepted and repeated. Each man has a divine right to freedom; such the nation's confession of faith. To make him a slave is therefore sin both to God and to man—to keep him as slave is simply making him slave each successive instant. The inference is irresistible; the sin must be forsaken, forsaken immediately; that is, let the slave receive immediate emancipation. Let the claimant of property in man surrender his false pretence; let the State, so far as its constitution and statutes uphold the oppressive power, correct its constitutions and its statutes; let the Federal Government, so far as it sanctions slavery, withdraw the sanction. Such is the Immutable Law, immediate abandonment of sin. As for difficulties, disadvantages, losses, consequences of all sorts, it has but one word to say:—Be they what they may, God must be obeyed. Though the heavens themselves fall, Justice must be done:—Slavery being, what a distinguished holder of slaves declared, a curse to the master, a wrong, a grievous wrong, to the slave, nothing remained but either obedience to the divine voice, which is emancipation, or denial of essential wrong in the act of enslavement, or oblivion of the moral question. Few were found ready for the first; such as regarded either conscience in themselves or the sentiments of other men, adopted the second course, denying the intrinsic and essential wrong of the enslaving act; many seem to have blinked the religious and moral question. Whence there have remained these two great tasks; the one, to convince a nation professing freedom and extolling Jesus Christ, that to deprive an innocent man of his freedom is neither right nor christian; the other, to arouse the conscience to sincere and faithful action.

These statements will help to explain the relations of this grand movement to the Colonization of free colored men on the Coast of Africa. Now, be it observed that the first doctrine it assumed was, Immediate and Unconditional Emancipation, the Right of the Slave, the Duty of the Master. The doctrine implied the right of the emancipated to choose, like others, their own place of abode, whether in Africa, or in America. If of themselves, from unforced and perfectly free choice, they wished to leave their native land, the home of their parents and their friends, every thing which is dear even to the slave in the name of country, and to remove to a distant and foreign coast, amidst all the hardships and perils of such an enterprise, the abolitionist had, of course, nothing to say; if they would do so, whatever his opinion of the wisdom or the folly of the measure, they must not be hindered. Nay, if out of friendship and sympathy, societies were formed to aid their purpose, so be it. But these were not the facts. These natives of our own soil, as most of them were and are, had no desire to leave their father-land. But their father-land they must abandon, or else remain slaves or suffer the bitterest persecutions of an inhuman and impious prejudice. To colonization on such principles and conditions, they must stand in direct conflict. The Eternal Law demands instant freedom, unconditional freedom, precisely the freedom which the American Republic affirms and vindicates in behalf of all citizens. Nothing less; as much more as the progress of humanity may gain for the whole. The conclusion is very natural, that a freedom granted only on condition of sacrificing country, home, and friends, is something quite different, not to say contrary. The Divine Message to our Country could not choose but oppose, nay,

denounce, measures thus supporting iniquities, indulging prejudice, and virtually justifying the half-confessed wrong.

But this scheme, whatever the intentions with which it had been originally framed or with which it continued to advance, had gathered into itself most of the religious sympathy which existed throughout the country toward its enslaved population. The consequence was, that in addition to the general insensibility and the political interests which resisted the great Word, it had an organization, strong in itself and identified with the religious enterprises of the day, to resist its progress. This, joined with the various theological peculiarities of the earlier advocates of freedom, alarmed many to whom Christianity and the church appeared only through the forms to which they had been accustomed to attach the names; while again, the manifold relations both of sects and of states, as well as of pecuniary interests, between the several portions of our confederation, all conspiring to uphold slavery, and to deepen the prejudice against the oppressed class, served to combine those mightiest agents in human affairs, Religion and Politics, against the millions whom both had oppressed. The last battle-cry, which now rallies the multitudes of our countrymen against the Lord and his Truth is, the Union of the States,—the country, we might say from the words of no obscure politician, the country, however bounded. The religious sects pronounce their benediction on the Knights who go forth to fight for the compromise, which sacrifices God to Mammon, Justice to Tyranny, Freedom to Slavery, Man to Pride, or Lust, or Avarice; all which constitutes true Union, to that which spreads the deceptive show over real and volcanic elements of discord. Now let it be that we have been pugnacious and obstinate, severe,

violent, ready to take fire at any thing, and to assail all divine and human things with indiscriminate rage; yet this we do say; we pronounce it with confidence:—It is a mighty Truth, the revelation of God in Humanity, with which we have been charged. This also we may likewise affirm:—A conflict of Truth with these several forms of hostility has been inevitable. When men said, the slave must not live free within his native state or country, what less could the Truth than contradict the assertion, and overthrow the policy which embodied it? When Catholics and Protestants of all sects united in sanctioning slavery, and binding this dead and noisome carcase to the living form of Christianity, what less could the Truth do than proclaim the falseness of the misnamed Christianity, and vindicate Jesus and the Father from such blasphemies? And when all, in state or church, in high places or low places, religious or irreligious, lifted up their voices and cried, The Glorious Union, at all events this must be preserved; what less could the Truth than proclaim, Any Union which crushes freedom and perpetuates injustice, is inglorious and false; let the strongest confederacy perish, rather than the ends of justice, of freedom, of humanity,—the sole ends which can make it holy,—fail through its treachery and baseness? The spirit has met each issue which has arisen, simply demanding that, above all fluctuations and turbulences and interests, its calm voice be heard and obeyed:—God is all in all. That is the whole.

We may well rejoice in the precise issue which has now come. We may well rejoice in the necessity, from which the country cannot escape, to meet the simple question, whether it will acknowledge as Supreme, God or Human Will. Men may tell us, if they choose, that this is not the

question. They may say that God is doubtless to be obeyed against the power of men and states; but then God himself requires us to obey, for example, the statute by which the Union is now convulsed. This statute, in other words, is right. With any man who avows this opinion, who pronounces the statute essentially right,—it is of little use, certainly for me, to reason. There is no common ground to stand upon. We begin our processes of thought at different points; we diverge farther and farther as we go forward, as if one of us were moving westward, the other eastward. We must settle a prior question, before we could approach each other. And that is the very question of the age, What is Right? What is it in essence, in nature, in immutable reality? Until such answer as some of us have learned,—we thought, from holiest sources,—be proved false, and baseless, we must denounce the statute as godless, inhuman, unjust; we must proclaim, that, in establishing it, the Nation has deepened the atrocity of its previous guilt, severed itself into wider distance from God, and made itself more false to both its religious creeds and its political professions; so that at this moment it is presented in that most degrading attitude, boastful liberty masking iron tyranny. If we are mistaken, why not teach us, instead of mocking and sneering? With profoundest reverence we speak, as we think, of a Higher Law than the Decrees of a Majority. Is there not a Higher Law? Why then pronounce the word with contempt, and when we hint our Faith, cry Nonsense, Treason, Fanaticism? Why that godless sarcasm which has rung through the land, of a Law somewhere between here and the third Heavens, higher than that which the majority of an American Congress presumed to pass in the midst of the nineteenth cen-

tury, naming Tyranny, Law ? Has proud and boasted intellect nothing to speak but such paltry and soulless and impious sarcasms ? Yes, my friends, we have fallen on evil times, and evil tongues ; we have lived to hear even Conscience reviled, and men who have faith in the God who speaks through it, reproached. With the Bible in our hands and the History of Milleniums open for us to read ; with the names of Moses, confronting the Egyptian king ; of Elijah, braving the King of Israel and his idolatrous priests ; of Isaiah, pronouncing woes upon legislators enacting unrighteous decrees ; of Daniel, openly disobeying the royal edict ; of Apostles, setting all power at nought in proclaiming their benignant message ; of Martyrs, nourishing the fresh growth of Christianity by their blood ; not to add those noble testimonies, which ethnic story has preserved, of eastern devotees or western lovers of truth,—with such names before us, of those who periled or surrendered life ; who went into the den with lions, or the fire as it kindled the wood about them ; who laid their bodies under the saw, or gave their necks to the sword or the axe ; who first endured poverty and shame, then refused not the cross,—nay, boasting our relations, through ancestors fugitive for their religion, to these devout and heroic spirits ; we have not outgone the age of sneers and persecutions aimed at conscience and righteousness. If there be no higher law ; if our conscience be but an illusion ; is it unreasonable to ask that our error be exposed, not our faith spurned, our simplicity reviled ? If there be such law, and if conscience be sacred, the laws and usages of slavery meanwhile harmonizing with it, we may be pardoned for asking that something besides sarcasm, and wrath, and reproach, and violence, and cries of treason, be presented as demon-

strations of the harmony. It avails not to assert, even to prove, that they are constitutional, and that they are necessary for the perpetuation of the Union; for whether we admit or deny the assertion, we cannot rid ourselves of the conviction that the Constitution itself might sometimes err, and that possibly something may be holier and dearer, even to an American heart, than this confederacy of states. Assure us even that God clothes the Government with power to enact such laws, so we must yield to them, as to him, unquestioning obedience; suppose it the obscurity of our vision; deal tenderly with us; strive to purge our dim lights; for really we cannot see the thing you declare; the government establishes and seeks to enforce the deed; that we cannot deny; but the power which looks through it and legitimates it, does actually seem to us, not God, whom we would gladly obey; but Devil, whom we would resist that he may flee from us and from the world.

Such the Confession, which, as an individual sincerely sympathizing with the Anti-Slavery movement and seeking its acceleration and success, I have sought to make of the Faith it involves. You will perceive, that according to these statements it is essentially religious, christian, at once pious and humane. If in any respect we have failed to develope these qualities; if we have any of us been in any degree irreligious or unchristian, impious or inhuman; then have we been false to the principles it involves and faithless to the service which has been assigned us. You will perceive also, that the development of this faith has in fact involved us in manifold antagonisms, and, if such you call them, aggressions. Why not? The light invades the empire of darkness without asking leave; the seed put into the earth sprouts and heaves and breaks the crust which

covers it ; the man invades forests to find himself a home, and subdues the elements which incommode him. Not less let the Spirit of Freedom, rising sunlike over a realm darkened like ours by Slavery and its affiliated vices, move serenely and steadily forward to drive back the night and to lead on the day. Not less let that Spirit, sown in the deeper soil of the human heart, rise, upheaving, breaking in pieces, overturning, all institutions and devices of men by which it is crushed or oppressed. Not less let it take its weapons of celestial temper, all bright and sharp from the armory of God, and forward to invade and conquer the gigantic evils which a selfish age cherishes for interest or pride, and which impious or deluded men pronounce good, and call christians and patriots to uphold. The Spirit of Freedom ! It is aggressive, authoritative, commanding. It has right so to be. It is the love and the truth and the power, whence the existences and the harmonies of the universe proceed. Admitted to a human breast, let it never be timid or shy ; let it neither falter nor be dumb ; let it evade no conflict, let it suppress no truth, let it decline no issue, let it shrink from no result. Men seem to speak and think as if this were strictly a question, a matter of doubtful inquiry, wherein the abolitionist and his opponent stand on equal ground ; and so whatever the former says should be merely expression and defence of opinions which he holds and the latter rejects ; the right or the wrong in the case being still problematical. The impression is false. The genuine abolitionist speaks, not a private opinion, but the word of God. His ought to be the port, not of the debater, not of the logician, not of the orator, not even of the politician, but of the true

Preacher, the living herald, of a divine message to his country and his age. Let him speak as uttering an oracle of the Eternal.

I have not finished ; but I must relieve your attention.— People of Salem ! as one of your number, happy to have lived with you so long, with whom I should have been happy, as I said, to die ; these words, or rather better words than these, words greater, holier, of diviner life and power than I can speak, I felt that I could gladly utter before I ceased to be with you. They have been long growing in my heart. I brought them with me from my distant retirement. I have tried, as far as I could, to convey them to other souls. I trust that they will only become more vital, more effective, more prolific, in any future ministries to which I may be called. If these fail, then all things fail. If these are false, then the universe is false ; if these are evil, then there is no such thing as good ; nay, if these are anarchic, then men are fatherless and the world is without a God. Politicians, degrading the noble name, may continue and redouble their sneers and their tyrannies ; Preachers, abandoning the Temple of the Father for the synagogues of sects and dogmatisms and parties, may proclaim basest deeds and laws holy ; Nations, apostate from God and Truth, may be false and cruel still ; but the Word of the Highest is above them all. The tumults of partisan conflict, the discords of sects, the material interests of states and confederacies, pass away with the seasons in which they rise, and swell, and fall ; the questions which agitate our times will lose themselves in oblivion or in still larger problems ; but the one great

problem will survive; whether God, in the Universe and in the heart, shall be confessed absolutely supreme, and his law of love and justice to all his children shall be fulfilled; or human passions and interests, expressed by majorities and enacted in statutes, shall hold dominion; this, if question at all, is perennial. For our country, the crisis, the judgment, is already presented. It cannot be escaped. Private citizens and public representatives, preachers and churches, courts, legislatures, congresses, all are summoned by the trumpet-tones, now rending the very sepulchres, to stand out and appear in the trial which none can avoid, in which character is becoming transparent. Brethren! Sisters! Let us greet this coming of the Lord. With heart, with voice, with hand, let us enter into the strife, firm in his strength, joyous in his love, serene in his peace. The work is his; faithfully let us do it; him let us worship in fulfilling it. Freedom, Virtue, God! Herein our inspiration and our undying trust. Brethren! Sisters! Accept these, my last words of service and of cheer. The Spirit hallow you with its everlasting benediction! Fare ye well!

Knives

ERRATA

On page 15th. second line from bottom, for herewith. read therewith.

On " 21th, line 12th. for dim lights, read dim sight.

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