

The Alleghenian.

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I WOULD RATHER BE RIGHT THAN PRESIDENT.—HENRY CLAY.

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Liberty: Its Use and Abuse.

A DISCOURSE PREACHED ON THANKSGIVING DAY, NOV. 28, 1861, IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EBENSBURG, PA., BY REV. D. HARRISON, PASTOR.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Ebensburg, Nov. 30, 1861.
REV. DAVID HARRISON—Dear Sir: Having had the pleasure of listening to the able and eloquent discourse delivered by you in the Presbyterian Church, at this place, on the morning of Thanksgiving Day, we would most respectfully solicit a copy of the same for publication.

In a crisis like the present, when Treason stalks boldly through our beloved country, and an unnatural and unholly Rebellion is being waged against the best government on earth, the dissemination of the patriotic and Union-loving sentiments enunciated by you cannot fail to accomplish much good. Trusting, therefore, that you will find it convenient to comply with our request at an early day, we are,
With high respect,
Your obedient servants,
JOHN THOMPSON,
A. C. MULLIN,
E. ROBERTS,
H. C. DEVINE,
W. K. PIPER,
G. A. KINKEAD,
E. HUGHES,
J. MOORE,
RICH'D. JONES, Jr.

Ebensburg, Dec. 2, 1861.
MESSRS. JOHN THOMPSON, J. P. JONES, A. C. MULLIN, and others—Dear Sirs: Your complimentary letter of the 30th ult., in which you express your approbation of the sentiments enunciated in the discourse delivered here on Thanksgiving Day, and request a copy of the same for publication, was duly received, and would have been answered sooner but that important official duties occupied my time till the present.

Your estimate of the worth of the discourse is, I assure you, far above mine; but I yield to your request, and place a copy at your disposal. If it shall, to any extent, serve the good cause which we all so dearly love, I will feel a satisfaction that words cannot express.
Most respectfully,
Your Friend and Pastor,
D. HARRISON.

DISCOURSE.

Text—As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.—1 Peter, 11, xvii.

This inspired letter was designed to have an extensive and general application. While its counsels and consolations were primarily intended for the benefit of the Christians dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, yet its promises and its precepts are adapted to the varying circumstances of believers in every country and in every age.

The disciples addressed in the text, though all residing within the limits of the Roman Empire, yet were in different provinces, under different governors, and were ruled through different institutions, and usages, and laws, administered by various degrees of wisdom. That is to say, the vast empire which exercised a general government over all the provinces was subdivided into districts or states, each of which had its local institutions and rulers; but all so united as to form one grand and powerful nation—bound together by general laws, and subject to the control of those national statutes which gave the Roman citizen a name that was honored and an influence that was felt throughout the world. Now, in the context, the Spirit of God, by the Apostle, gives these disciples the rule and measure of their obedience to the government under which they lived—"submit yourselves to every ordinance of man." While the duty here inculcated is of general application, it was particularly suited to the special circumstances of these early Christians. They lived among a people avowedly heathens and bitterly hostile to the gospel, and who looked with prejudice and hatred on all who had embraced it. Hence the urgency of the Apostle in calling upon them to be meek and harmless, to be exemplary and obedient to those who had the rule over them. The Roman government was likely to be obnoxious to the feelings and principles of men, whose spirit it had no fellowship with many of the acts it performed and many of the designs it pursued. Was there not, then, danger lest these Christians should fall into the sin of despising a government which was so corrupt in its principles and so cruel in its practices as that under which they lived? Might they not, under these circumstances, be tempted to suppose that they were not only at liberty, but required by a sense of duty, to disobey men who held their authority upon questionable grounds, and who often exercised it in the worst possible way? The Apostle adapts his instructions to persons so peculiarly situated; he lays down and explains the true principles of Christian obedience to government, and provides an antidote against that spirit of factious opposition and rebellion which is so ready to rise in circumstances where men think that their rights are invaded, their principles insulted, or their liberties endangered.

But while the inspired direction of submission to the ordinance of government was adapted to the case of the persons here addressed, it is highly valuable to Christian people everywhere, and under whatever circumstances they may be placed with respect to civil government—for government is a standing institution, which has hitherto existed, and must continue to exist, in one form or another, in every place and among all nations. Although it is not the design of divine revelation to treat systematically of government, any more than of any other branch of science, it is nevertheless a most essential and necessary part of Christian morality to elucidate and enforce the duties which we owe to such a valuable ordinance.

And here let it be noted, that there is an important distinction between government in its principle and in its application. In its principle it comprehends what is essential and immutable; in its application it relates to what is accidental and variable. Hence, Peter in the context calls civil government an ordinance or appointment of man, and Paul (Rom. xii, 2) calls it an ordinance of God. There is no discrepancy in these two inspired statements. That there shall be government is the ordinance of God.—"Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." But of what particular form the civil government shall be is the ordinance of man. In other words, God ordains that we shall live under government; man ordains whether it shall be monarchic, aristocratic or democratic in its form. It is altogether a matter of human prudence and arrangement whether we shall be ruled by one, by a few, or by the majority in the nation. The Bible does not prescribe any particular form, and as a consequence sanctions them all, and teaches the Christian citizen to yield a ready and cheerful submission to constituted authority—to be warm in his allegiance, decided in his support, and loyal in his heart, "to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake." Not only the supreme or general government of the nation, but also the subordinate branches of power, the governors who rule under the national head, are to be respected and obeyed, as the ministers of God, "sent for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

This exhortation to obedience is enforced by several considerations mentioned in the context. But the chief reason adduced why we should be dutiful, exemplary and loyal citizens, yielding not a tardy or reluctant, but a prompt and cheerful obedience to civil rulers, is the *liberty enjoyed*—or the exemption from an obligation to obey a command not founded on law, or a command which though in accordance with the supreme law of the land, is nevertheless directly opposed to the law or commandment of God. A liberty, or exemption from obedience, in such cases is not to be made an excuse for indulging a wayward and malicious temper of heart, or for throwing off the gentle yoke of just and due allegiance to lawful authority. Christian liberty exempts no man from the binding duty of yielding a ready and cheerful obedience to civil rulers, in everything not inconsistent with the clear requirements of God's holy word. "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. The minister of God must rightly divide the word of truth, and give the household of Christ their portion of meat in due season.

The blood-red cloud of an unnatural and terrible civil war now sweeping over our beloved land with its appalling desolations; the strange and conflicting views entertained by many of our citizens as to the allegiance due the government under which we live; the nature and extent of liberty; the right to rebel, and cast off the authority of law; the duty to resist, and subvert, and dismember, and change the lenient and generous, and glorious government under which we have long lived and prospered—I say the diversity of sentiment on points so solemnly important and so intimately interwoven with our national life and prosperity has led me to announce the teaching of the Bible on these subjects, and the duty of all Christian people, whether in the North or the South, the East or the West of our American Union.

Our widely extended nation, like the Roman Empire, embraces in its limits several separate commonwealths, each of which is independent in its proper sphere, having its own local institutions, and laws, and rulers; but all so united and knit together as to form a nation of vast proportions, unlimited in resources, mighty in power, fostering in influence, and generously paternal in the exercise of its authority. And if Christians under the Roman yoke were solemnly enjoined to

render obedience to their rulers, to respect their government, and use their liberty, without so abusing and perverting it as to make it a cloak of maliciousness, oh, how much more is it a religious duty for us, in this highly favored land, to strengthen the government, in whose stability, and honor, and efficiency centre all our hopes for freedom, and tranquility and happiness! Inheriting a liberty the most untrammelled; enjoying privileges unequalled in any nation under heaven; feeling a security in person and property the most complete—let us devoutly hear the divine warning, and obey the voice of God—"As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

In the liberties we enjoy God has given us a precious boon, the full value of which no arithmetic can ever reckon. It is much talked of by many who seem not to comprehend its nature. The word Liberty may be on the lips, while its import is not in the mind; and by pursuing a false kind of liberty, men may rush recklessly into the vilest slavery. The liberty pleaded for by many in our day, is the liberty of trampling upon law and despising government. They contend for the liberty of depriving their fellow-beings of their liberty. They fight for the liberty of demolishing the temple of liberty. They would pluck up by the roots the *tree of Liberty*, and plant in its stead the deadly *Upas*, whose pestilential influence would enslave and barbarize a nation of freemen. *This is the liberty of the dead.* Satan would have man cast off allegiance, subvert government and live after the flesh, and let anarchy run riot throughout the land.

Let infidels and rebels and revolutionists say what they will, we assert liberty to consist in a cheerful and ready submission to those just and wise and wholesome laws which guarantee our freedom, under penalties severe, and rigidly and impartially enforced. We could have no liberty if we were not securely guarded under constitutional law. Man's inhumanity to man is natural and proverbial; the depraved and wicked heart inclines to injustice and fraud and oppression; and if men were not restrained by law, our country would soon be a very picture of hell: murder, robbery and perjury would break all the relations which bind men together, and overturn the foundations of society and deluge the earth with human blood. For the protection and defence of mankind God has ordained government; and he makes those who exercise it his ministers to execute wrath upon them that do evil. Without this there could be no civil liberty. The nearer, therefore, that the laws of a country come to the moral law of eternal justice, and the more strictly they are enforced, the greater is the liberty enjoyed.

This inestimable blessing, that comprehends all that is precious and dear to man on earth, is to be rightly used. We must not so undervalue this inalienable legacy of patriotic sires, as to barter away our birthright for base and dishonorable considerations. We are to love warmly and hold fast and use well a privilege so noble and a freedom so unrestricted as we enjoy in this favored land. Liberty is the patriot's watch-word, and the soldier's battle cry. To purchase liberty men have freely poured out their blood and their treasure.—It is cheap even at such a price,—and the same costly sacrifices ought to be freely made for its preservation. Liberty distinguishes the freeman from the slave; and the angel in heaven from the devil in hell. But liberty is holy and pure. It is connected with everything that is noble and elevating and great, and yet the very name of liberty has been prostituted to shelter and sanction that vile abomination of human slavery. The worst crimes that have ever desecrated the earth have been perpetrated in the sacred name of dishonored and outraged liberty. Now we are taught to guard against abusing or perverting our liberty, and so turning it into a cloak or covering or pretense for maliciousness, either by word or act, by conversation or conduct.

Alas! how much of human passion and party spirit and disappointed ambition and grasping avarice and desire for power and position, are at the root of the present unhappy strife that rages in our nation.—Under the cry of liberty (bruised, bleeding and trampled on by despots) the hosts of our misguided and deceived countrymen are misshelled to the battle, the very object of which is to bury in a dishonored grave the mangled form of the goddess of Liberty. "Using their liberty for a cloak of maliciousness," they rally around their standard thousands and tens of thousands who unwittingly aim a deadly blow at that glorious constitution, which is the only sure and immutable palladium of our national liberties. The leaders in this unholy crusade will not any longer submit to a government in which they do not hold the place to which, in their vanity, they suppose themselves entitled—and, rather

than be ruled by the will of the majority of a nation of freemen, they hazard the experiment of breaking to pieces a government strong in the affections of the people, powerful for their protection, and justly revered by the enlightened and the true in every civilized nation. When these disappointed aspirants cannot rule in our national councils, they would bring ruin on the land and pull to pieces the whole social edifice and level to the ground with unsparring vengeance the bulwarks of our liberty. In this melancholy spectacle we have an affecting instance of men so given over to judicial blindness and so far under the wicked devices of their own deceitful hearts, as to "use their liberty for a cloak of maliciousness." Under the *false pretense* of contending for constitutional rights, which were never invaded nor infringed even in the least respect, they are perpetrating the most grievous wrongs on the very foundation and frame-work of our social institutions. The principles of such men are worse than erroneous; they are sinful and wicked to the last degree, and if perchance they should succeed in this unjustifiable attempted revolution, they would only build up their own aggrandisement upon the prostrate liberties of a beggared and ruined nation. When they speak lightly of an ordinance of God and of the obedience due such a valuable institution, when they teach others to despise and discard the powers that be, they are letting in a flood of moral and political evils, which, in turn, may, with fearful violence, sweep off the face of the earth those who have aided, abetted and inaugurated this sad drama of blood and fire and desolation. No men could commit greater crimes upon society than those who have plunged whole communities into rebellion, and conspired to set all law at defiance, and to overthrow our free constitution.

In this favored land we enjoy a liberty of speech such as is not known under any government on earth. We may freely discuss measures of general usefulness, and give expression to opinions on all topics pertaining to the public good. But this is a liberty secured within prescribed and reasonable limits. We may not, therefore, indulge in blasphemy, or slander, or evil communications that would sap the foundations of virtue and patriotism. And yet with some this liberty has degenerated into licentiousness. They have so perverted and abused this liberty of speech as to make it a cloak for maliciousness, beneath which they have insidiously assailed and traduced government itself. Under this false pretense of liberty of speech, bad men have diffused the most dangerous and revolutionary sentiments; and when, as a measure of self-defence and self-preservation, government has wisely restrained these treason-mongers, the affected cry of *gay law* has been raised, by those who, bent on mischief, were trampling upon the common law of the nation.

We here enjoy a liberty of the press greater than that which is known in the most favored lands. But this privilege is also granted within those provisions necessary for the public good. It is not that unlawful and licentious liberty of printing and circulating sentiments that would offend modesty and break down the barriers that protect the virtue and chastity of our people. It is not that liberty which would warrant the publishing of the atheistical dogma that for slight cause, or without cause, men may rebel against lawful authority, and pull up and break down with paralytic hands the fair temple where liberty, pure and beautiful, has made her favorite residence. And when men will not, out of respect to the divine warning, and for the upholding of a divine ordinance use their liberties as the servants of God, but abuse and pervert them, by making them a cloak for malicious words and acts, we have no sympathy for them, when, under the strong arm of the law, they are placed where they are powerless and unable to use their liberty for a cloak of maliciousness.

As a Christian people in name, and above all, as the servants of God, let us appreciate our liberty and so use it that it may be fruitful in blessings to ourselves and to others. And while many of our misled and infatuated fellow citizens wantonly cast it away, and rudely strike at an ordinance of God, let us the more fondly cling around the hallowed shrine of freedom, and more warmly love that beautiful banner—sweet emblem of liberty—which has so long waved in triumph over the land of the free. Let us show the loyalty of our hearts, and the patriotism of our religion, by cheerfully yielding a moral, and, if in the providence of God it should be needed, the physical support of our own strong arms for sustaining that now endangered government which has so lovingly protected us, and under whose fostering care we have so rapidly advanced in power, prosperity, and influence.

We mourn the sad havoc of this awful and unnatural war. We grieve over its desolations, its wounded and its slain; the thousands of families by bereaved of their beloved; the forests, fields and towns reduced to ruin by its ravages. We pray for its speedy termination, and long for the dawn of that happy day when the glad tidings of a righteous and honorable peace shall be proclaimed throughout our entire and unbroken Union.

And yet in the midst of this judgment we have mercy. While we mourn we give thanks, and feel that we have abundant reason for offering up this day to Almighty God the tribute of grateful hearts for his bountiful goodness to us in this highly favored portion of our afflicted country.—Although grim war, on a giant scale, is ravaging and ruining some commonwealths of our Union, our own free and happy State enjoys uninterrupted peace and wondrous harmony and prosperity. The scene of strife, and war, and blood is far removed from us. We have not witnessed, we have only heard of its appalling desolations. We know, as it were, nothing of this terrible judgment which has spread sufferings so intense and diversified and wide-spread in a faithless border State.—No unfriendly soldier has encamped upon our soil; no mustering squadrons have terrified our women and children; no hostile columns have invaded the privacy of a solitary Pennsylvania homestead. How mercifully is our lot made to differ from that of neighboring commonwealths.—There, in dread of armed hosts rushing furiously to the battle, multitudes have fled from ancestral homes, leaving their earthly all at the mercy of an unprincipled and implacable enemy, glad to escape with life itself, to wander the world in want and misery, perchance, all their days.—Here, we repose beneath the family roof, in security and peace; we worship under our vine and our fig-tree, and our devotions are not interrupted by the din of war; we enjoy our wonted pleasures, and in every respect feel the effects of this internal strife as little as if the conflict, with a foreign foe and on foreign soil. We may honestly and kindly differ in opinions of governmental policy, yet I trust we all truly love our nation, and are interested in its honors—and receiving common mercies, many and great, let us unite our hearts in giving thanks to our Heavenly Father who has made us to differ from others.

We have reason to express our gratitude to God not only for this happy exemption from trouble, and desolation, and bloodshed within our borders, but also because in his kind providence he has called forth such a vast array of *young, energetic and loyal volunteers* to defend our liberties, to battle for our nationality, and help the many thousands whose rights are invaded and whose liberties are suppressed by the unscrupulous usurpation of designing demagogues. Our patriotic soldiers win our admiration, and well deserve our warmest and most active sympathies. Our military forces on the land and on the sea ought to have, yes, and ever will have, our fervent prayer for their preservation, and the brilliant success of their arms in a cause so holy, so righteous, and so good as that which has called them forth from their peaceful homes to scenes of danger, and perchance to death. Let us feel thankful to God that he has these hundreds of thousands of strong, determined and willing warriors, the bulwarks of a nation's strength in the time of our nation's need. Let us not cease, till the conflict is over, to implore the divine blessing to crown all their efforts to preserve our nationality, our constitution, and our national liberties.

This judgment is awfully severe, and yet it is righteous. We have sinned against God, and therefore this evil has come upon us. But divine mercy appears in not sending famine and pestilence in addition to the sword. God has given us another year of great plenty, and a year of general good health. But few of our family circles have been broken by the rude visits of death. Our days are prolonged; our wants are supplied, the year is crowned with the goodness of the Lord; and these merciful dispensations of providence have placed us under renewed obligations to honor and glorify God with our bodies and our spirits which are his. Let us then receive these gifts with gratitude, and seek to enjoy the divine blessing with all our mercies. Let us study to be useful in serving our day and generation—"As free, and not using our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

The War Department, it is reported, is convinced that Gen. Scott was right in rejecting the offers of cavalry regiments for the war. It is found that raw mounted troops are of very little use for active service.