“Hast Thou Killed, and Also Taken Possession?”

by

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AN UNSPOKEN ADDRESS

JULY 4, 1899

“And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead. And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.” 1 Kings, Chap. xxi, v. 15-19.

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"It is weakness, rather than wickedness, which makes men unfit to be trusted with unlimited power."

John Adams. (Works; Vol. 4, p. 406.)

"No part of legislative rights can be exercised without regard to the general opinion of those who are to be governed. That general opinion is the vehicle and organ of legislative omnipotence. Without this, it may be a theory to entertain the mind, but it is nothing in the direction of affairs. If any ask me what a free government is, I answer that, for any practical purpose, it is what the people think so: and that they, and not I, are the natural, lawful, and competent judges of this matter."

Edmund Burke. (Works: Bohn’s Ed., Vol. 2, pp. 27-29.)

"As the happiness of the people is the sole end of government, so the consent of the people is the only foundation of it, in reason, morality, and the natural fitness of things. And, therefore, every act of government, every exercise of sovereignty, against or without the consent of the people, is injustice, usurpation, and tyranny."

Proclamation of Council and Representatives of Colony of Massachusetts. (Works of John Adams; Vol. 1, p. 193.)

"I consider civil liberty, in a genuine, unadulterated sense, as the greatest of terrestrial blessings. I am convinced that the whole human race is entitled to it: and that it can be wrested from no part of them without the blackest and most aggravated guilt."


"When any people are ruled by laws in framing which they have no part: that are to bind them, to all intents and purposes, without, in the same manner, binding the legislators themselves, they are, in the strictest sense, slaves: and the government, with respect to them, is despotic: because they are destitute of those checks and controls which constitute the moral security which is the very essence of civil liberty."

Same. (Vol. 2, p. 56.)

"Can it be true loyalty to any government, or true patriotism toward any country, to degrade their solemn councils into servile drawing rooms, to flatter their pride and passions, rather than to enlighten their reason, and to prevent them from being cautioned against violence, lest others should be encouraged to resistance? By such acquiescence great kings and mighty nations have been undone."

Edmund Burke. (Works; Vol. 2, p. 22.)
"HAST THOU KILLED, AND ALSO TAKEN POSSESSION?"

AN UNspoken ADDRESS, JULY 4, 1899.

In the yet dark morning of its deliverance from a galling bondage, one of Liberty's newest born looked across the sea from its Philippines for pledges and succor to the chosen continent of freedom, belted across and flashing from nearer to farther ocean with all her signal-fires to the down-trodden and oppressed. To the doors of our capitol were borne the urgent petitions of that little one. With doubtful rhetoric, nor well at ease in the English tongue—old and unconquerable ally of liberty!—those utterances, if brokenly, yet mightily, pleaded to conscience and our past. They might almost have stirred in its slumbers the neighboring dust of Washington—almost have moved aright in its scabbard his ancient sword. We replied with contumely. Our councilors scorned and our press jeered. We answered with new hastening squadrons, for intimidation or slaughter.

If it were to be so, well hide those petitions, without sign, in the most secret strong-place of your capitol, and, if you may, set its time-lock for release after the day of judgment, that at its tremendous Sittings, when before Him shall be gathered all nations, they escape not to testify against you: "Ye did it not to one of the least of these!"

Our chief men at war had looked upon the little outlying vineyard, and it was fair of promise "for a garden of herbs." Our religion had plausibly declaimed: "I will give thee for it a better vineyard." The queenly North-West, recreant to that ancient Ordinance of Liberties whereof she was born and greatly dowered, had whispered to her lord: "Dost thou now govern the kingdom?" Thereupon, with blood, we demanded the inheritance of their fathers.
"Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?"

Proudly bearing our Declaration of Independence, with all our other holy scriptures of liberty—under the shadowing glow of our uplifted flag, and in the presence of God, angels and men, and of the departed spirits of our fathers—we announce to a people hungering and by our examples in revolt for freedom:

“You, and your country, are ours—bought in at a price on war execution against your last master. These priceless teachings of liberty are too rich a cordial to agree with your constitution, or with our comfortable ownership. We will see that you partake of its great elixir in abstemious doses—out of our lesser United States spoon, long stained and odorous with like frugal administrations to our native subject races. Our representative Congress, which never saw you and knows neither your customs nor your speech, shall declare your fundamental laws in a foreign tongue, and write levies on your substance and earnings, and how they shall be expended. Its wise men maintain that, in the nature of things, your citizens cannot sustain to it those relations upon which depend even the humble remedy of the constituent by Petition. An elective President—for whom in no one of your thousand islands was ever ballot cast by one of their ten millions of inhabitants—shall equip your tribunals and appoint your overseers and task-masters. It is said that even now, with his advisers, he busies himself in pulling down irksome safeguards to purity in administration. At the end of each four years you shall compute new incoming with departing hordes.

“These gospels of independence are for the masters; for Anglo-Saxon blood; for white skins; for intrepid spirits willing, even with their women and little ones, highly to testify to them unyielding devotion with their utmost blood. No Tagal heart can rightly throb to them. They are not for you!”

Is this the residuum and deposit of a hundred and twenty-four Fourths of July, and was all the rest froth and fraud?

Having devised a bacterial and microbic liberty, to be progressively inoculated with attenuated virus, our engineers and artificers further construct complacent promises for humanity and good behavior—with performance and maturity at the option of the makers. With such bills of exchange in our newly expanded
Asiatic commerce we barter for men and independence. "Our priceless principles undergo no change under a tropical sun. They follow the flag." But hear it, thereupon, from behind the same mask smoothly declared that the CONSTITUTION, in whose sovereignty alone those principles securely abide and speak with final authority, expands not with the emblem folds of that flag, thus only consecrated, over the nation's possessions and people beyond intervening seas, there, also, with its supreme rebukes to protect and with its faithful benevolences to cherish and to comfort them. These are, instead, to "find that their cap of liberty is a soldier's helmet."

Have we laden our priceless principles, with shot, shell and powder, into our transports for alternative consumption by a people kindled for freedom by our home teachings? Ask the brown villager, lingering by the ashes of his cabin, beholding his desolated industries and the smoldering walls of his humble place of worship, rudely comforting his mangled living—whose "dim eyes to Liberty he turns"—and mourning for his dead,—ask him for faith in those principles which, conveyed by that flag, "running across the sea changed naught but sky" and remained capable of those things.

Sit, Cæsar, wearing imperial robes; sit, augurs of the faith of Him crucified; sit senators, patricians, high-born dames and gracious virgins; sit, my plainer countrymen, with wives and children, from homes blessed with "the peace of God";—safe sit, on this ancient holiday, in the secure places of the world-wide amphitheater, and with cheering acclaim hold your thumbs downward while Liberty, born of your fathers, thrust-at, sore-stricken and bleeding, stands faint upon the sands!

Is Independence at last slain—"yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" Throughout our land, in the bewildering darkness of the tragedy, "one laughed in's sleep, and one cried 'Murder!'" Was no resemblance to our own father-freedom to stay guilty ambition's dagger-stroke? "What! will these hands ne'er be clean?"

The debate is idle as to who struck the first blow. We assaulted when, signing and sealing the great feoffment, with livery of seizin to us of ten millions of people, to have and to hold their birth-places, their homes and their future, we haggled at
writing one little word of independence on all the mighty scroll. Each gatling-gun hurried to the Philippines after war with Spain was ended “though silent already belched forth” all the slaughter it has since accomplished. Then standing in their homes, with arms in our hands, each ominous muteness as to our intentions was an uplifted blow.

Equally idle is the pretense that we have gone too far to stop—Satan’s own maxim to his acolytes. “Let him that stole, steal no more.” What nation was yet lost in a straight road? Having eaten in those islands a bloody lotos, in whose delirium and dreadful stupor we forget our country and the God of our forefathers, shall we no more awaken, nor “smite hoary Ocean with our oars in sorrowing return?”

Not fit to be free! It was always the plea of tyrants. No brutal heel but trampled down springing liberties with that utterance; no slave but toiled and wept at its bidding; no plantation lash but fell to its cadence. It was the sailing-directions for the slave-ship, and the chart to the Middle Passage.

A horticultural liberty—selected, clipped, potted, and dealt in to order, over the counter, by shopmen with an eye to profit! It is a spurious plant. Her tree does not so grow. Its seed imperishably awaits, from the beginning, soil and opportunity. When these have called, it answers “I am.” That it has sprung up, is its voucher of legitimacy.

Independence is born of its own mighty travail, “with groanings that cannot be uttered.” Its texts are: “With a great sum obtained I this freedom,” and “These be they which came up out of great tribulation.” It grows by its own responsibilities and its own endeavors. Its seers forever sing: “Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.” It is greatly nourished even by its own mistakes and excesses, and thereupon by its own bitter tears and atoning blood. Though its form be at first crude and misshapen, by such struggles it stands mighty at last in fulfilled sovereignty.

“Now half appeared
The tawny lion, pawing to get free
His hinder parts, then springs as broke from bonds.
And rampant shakes his brinded mane.”

Liberty will never endure that her children shall be half slave and half free. Her mighty apostle declared a partial freedom to
be a most hateful mode of slavery. Lofty and incorruptible, she stoops to no morganatic alliance in which her offspring shall not take the full rank of every drop of their superior and descended blood. She counts them highly born even in mangers and rude places of the earth—"among beasts and base straw." She will not that any one of them shall have a keeper.

"Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" Who, indeed, shall keep the keepers, and shackle the master?

God made no man fit to be the autocrat and keeper of his fellow man. In his whole universe was found no clay which, even breathed on by his own breath and fashioned by his own hand, could be so tempered and molded. Creating man in his own image, he exhausted his profound order and resources when he made him Brother of his kindred man. Searched out by Omniscience was found no worthier or loftier name. In the beginning it was the Word. In the progress of time the Creator himself wore the badge of its exalted order, and, as very God, on earth wrought its craft and spoke its passwords of "peace" and "good will." Again, in the ages, his Spirit "moved upon the face of the waters" to a new world, and under new skies—toward accomplishment of the ancient promise of a new heaven and a new earth—through Its inspired ones in aid of that Word breathed the august formula, and new revelation and beatitude to mankind, of "government by just consent."

The world will not let that Word die. Whether dimly worshiped in caves of the earth as an unknown god, or through storm and stress in ripening civilization insisting on its judgments, it forever remains humanity's hope and consolation until, in the fullness of time, the great cycle shall have been run and "Man to man, the world o'er, shall Brothers be."

The rest, by whatever other name, is Slavery.* Let high priests, statesmen and traders wrap up its great falsehood with whatever tissues of holiness, policy and lucre they may; with every such enfoldment it becomes more and more a lie, and heavier and heavier to be carried. Its religion is of those "whose gospel is

**"The only distinction between freedom and slavery consists in this: in the former state a man is governed by the laws to which he has given his consent, either in person or by his representative; in the latter, he is governed by the will of another. In the one case, his life and property are his own; in the other they depend upon the pleasure of a master."

Alexander Hamilton. (Works, N. Y. 1850: Vol. 2, p. 3.)
their maw." Its statecraft is Moloch's. Its profits weight destiny
like the thirty pieces of Judas. Whether soon or late, shuddering
at its infections and tremendous reprisals, and with whatever of
dreadful amends—bawling our first-born and mourning our
wasted hopes and substance—we will cast the festering burden
down, with all its noisome cerements, to swift and abhorred burial;
and, that the place of its sepulchre might always be blotted out, and
that its contagions might no third time escape in our land, we
would, if we could, pour over it a hundredfold the bitter and deso-
lating waters wherewith the Almighty cleansed, and forever hid the
burial place of Sodom.

Our countrymen are "traitors" who think and speak these
things? Stand forth mighty and unnumbered shades who under
that ban wrought and died for Freedom, "of whom the world was
not worthy," but whose memories have found safe sanctuary in
God's eternal years!

Charles M. Sturges.

Chicago, Ills., July 4, 1899.
"To usurp dominion over a people, in their own despite; or to grasp at a more extensive power than they are willing to entrust; is to violate that law of nature, which gives every man his personal liberty; and can, therefore, confer no obligation to obedience."

Alexander Hamilton. (Works, N. Y. 1850; Vol. 2, p. 44.)

"In all free states the evil to be avoided is tyranny, that is to say, the summa imperii, or unlimited power, solely in the hands of the one, the few, or the many. * A usurping populace is its own dupe; a mere under-worker, and a purchaser in trust for some single tyrant, whose state and power they advance to their own ruin, with as blind an instinct as those worms that die with weaving magnificent habits for beings of a superior nature to their own."

Dr. Jonathan Swift. (Works, Edinburgh, 1814; Vol. 3, p. 301.)

"In order to defend the attempt to destroy the liberties of America, principles were laid down which, if carried into effect, would have subverted the liberties of England.

Buckle. (History of Civilization in England; Vol. 1, p. 345.)

"What do we not owe to the cause of civil and religious liberty? to the principle of lawful resistance? to the principle that society has a right to partake in its own government? As the leading republic in the world, living and breathing in these principles, and advanced by their operation with unequaled rapidity in our career, shall we give our consent to bring them into disrepute and disgrace?"

Daniel Webster. (Speech in Congress, Jan. 19, 1824; On the Revolution in Greece.)

"Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and under a just God cannot long retain it." Abraham Lincoln.

"What rights of a citizen will be deemed inviolable, when a state renounces the principles that constitute their security? * * Could he look with affection and veneration to such a country as his parent? The sense of having one would die within him. He would blush for his patriotism, if he retained any; and justly, for it would be a vice. He would be a banished man in his native land. * * Let me not even imagine, that a republican government, sprung, as ours is, from a people enlightened and uncorrupt, a government whose origin is right, and whose daily discipline is duty, can, upon solemn debate, make its option to be faithless. * * Such a nation might truly say to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and sister."

"America is not subdued. Not one unattacked village which was originally adverse * has yet submitted from love or terror. You have the ground you encamp on; and you have no more. The cantonments of your troops and your dominions are exactly of the same extent. You spread devastation, but you do not enlarge the sphere of authority."

"When they found that neither prayers nor menaces had any sort of weight, but that a firm resolution was taken to reduce them to unconditional obedience by a military force, they came to the last extremity. Despairing of us, they trusted in themselves."

"I can well conceive a country completely overrun, and miserably wasted, without approaching in the least to settlement. * But in case the sword should do all that the sword can do, the success of (your) arms and the defeat of (your) policy will be one and the same thing."

"It is to show how deep their crime and how heavy their punishment will be, who shall at any time resist a distant power actually disposing of their property, without their voice or consent to the disposition."

"We may call the effect of our victory peace, or obedience, or what we will; but the war is not ended; the hostile mind continues in full vigor, and it continues under a worse form; if your peace be nothing but a sullen pause from arms: if their quiet be nothing but the meditation of revenge, where smitten pride smarting from its wounds festers into new rancor."

"In order to produce * favorable unanimity in delusion * it is said, that being at war with the Colonies, whatever our sentiments might have been before, all ties between us are now dissolved; and all the policy we have left is to strengthen the hands of government to reduce them. On the principles of this argument, the more mishies we suffer from any administration, the more our trust in it is to be confirmed. Let them but once get us into a war, and then their power is safe, and an act of oblivion passed for all their misconduct."

"I entreat you again and again, neither to be persuaded, shamed, or frighted out of the principles that have hitherto led so many of you to abhor the War, its cause and its consequences. Let us not be among the first who renounce the maxims of our forefathers."

"Believe me, gentlemen, the way still before you is intricate, dark, and full of perplexed and treacherous mazes. Those who think they have the clue may lead us out of this labyrinth. We may trust them as amply as we think proper; but as they have most certainly a call for all the reason which their stock can furnish, why should we think it proper to disturb its operation by inflaming their passions? I may be unable to lend a helping hand to those who direct the state; but I should be ashamed to make myself one of a noisy multitude to haro and hearten them into doubtful and dangerous courses. A conscientious man would be cautious how he dealt in blood. He would feel some apprehension at being called to a tremendous account for engaging in so deep a play, without any sort of knowledge of the game. It is no excuse for presumptuous ignorance, that it is directed by insolent passion. The poorest being that crawls on earth, contending to
save itself from injustice and oppression, is an object respectable in the eyes of God and man; but I cannot conceive any existence under heaven (which, in the depths of its wisdom, tolerates all sorts of things) that is more truly odious and disgusting, than an impotent, helpless creature, without civil wisdom or military skill, without a consciousness of any other qualification for power but his servility to it, bloated with pride and arrogance, calling for battles which he is not to fight, contending for a violent dominion which he can never exercise, and satisfied to be himself mean and miserable, in order to render others *** wretched. If you and I find our talents not of the great and ruling kind, our conduct, at least, is conformable to our faculties. No man's life pays the forfeit of our rashness. No desolate widow weeps tears of blood over our ignorance."

Extracts from Address of Edmund Burke to his Constituents on the Contest for American Independence ("Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol"), April 3, 1777.