# John Brown: Angel of Light or the Devil's Tool?

**Henry David Thoreau, "A Plea for Captain John Brown," 1859 (excerpts)**

**William N. McDonald, *Two Rebellions; or, Treason Unmasked*, 1865 (excerpts)**

On October 16, 1859, radical abolitionist John Brown, commanding twenty-two men, attacked the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry along the Potomac River in what is now West Virginia. Brown hoped his raid would spark a slave insurrection and force upon the nation the war that would end slavery. His plan failed. The slaves around Harpers Ferry did not revolt. The local militia soon surrounded Brown and his men. When President James Buchanan learned of the attack, he dispatched federal troops under the leadership of then Colonel Robert E. Lee. By the time they arrived, the raid was already collapsing. Lee's men quickly suppressed what resistance remained. Brown was wounded and captured. When the shooting stopped, ten of his men, including two of his sons, lay dead. Seven raiders were taken prisoner; five escaped. Brown was tried for treason against the commonwealth of Virginia, murder, and conspiring with slaves to rebel. Found guilty, he was hung on December 2, 1859.

Brown became a touchstone in the increasingly heated slavery debate. Southerners and Northerners had to interpret his desperate, violent act. Generally, Southerners saw the raid as evidence of a widespread conspiracy against slavery and as a confirmation of what they perceived to be the North's implacable hatred of them and their way of life. In the North the response was more complex. Many Northerners had no sympathy for Brown and condemned his attack as the work of a madman. Yet beneath the condemnation lay enough latent sympathy so that by 1861 Brown's death had become, according to critic Franny Nudelman, "one of the founding moments in the development of a Northern nationalism."[1]

The two pieces offered here illustrate the sharply different ways in which Northerners and Southerners interpreted Brown's raid and in so doing further elaborate cultural differences between the North and the South.

Just two weeks after the battle at Harpers Ferry, Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) spoke in defense of Brown in Concord, Massachusetts. In "A Plea for Captain John Brown" he describes aspects of Brown's life and portrays him as a man of stern moral conviction, "Spartan habits," and "rare common-sense." He acknowledges that few in the North feel as he does toward Brown, perhaps only "two or three individuals to a town," but he points out that "at least a million . . . free inhabitants" would have "rejoiced if [Brown's raid] had succeeded." Moreover, he describes the moral squeamishness that Brown's "position and probable fate" provoke in many throughout the North. He defends Brown from charges of insanity and exhorts his listeners to emulate in their own lives the bracing example of Brown's heroism. In that connection Thoreau reinterprets the Revolutionary generation in the light of what he sees as Brown's tragic grandeur and finds the founders' glory greatly diminished. "The best of them," he writes, "fairly ran down like a clock. Franklin,--Washington,-- they were let off without dying; they were merely missing one day." It is as if Brown's attack had eclipsed what was left of the Revolution's power to bring unity to the states. If the Union were to persist, henceforth it would have to be based on something else.

For at least one Southerner, Brown's raid and not the Civil War marked the end of the Union. William N. McDonald (1834-1898) was born in Hampshire County, Virginia. After attending the University of Virginia, he taught in Louisville, Kentucky and then set up a law practice in

Charlestown, Virginia, the city in which John Brown was tried and executed. During the War he served as an officer in the Confederate Army. When the War ended, he devoted himself to teaching and to writing regimental history. In *Two Rebellions* McDonald describes the Civil War as a Northern rebellion, actually the *second* Northern rebellion. Brown's raid was the first. It helped to bring about the greater conflict, which McDonald characterizes as an "insane attempt" on the part of "the rebel masses at the North" to "dethrone the majesty of established laws and institutions." Interpreting Brown and his raid, McDonald covers the same territory as Thoreau—Brown's Puritanism, the nature of his followers, his family heritage, his passage into Kansas, etc. Yet on every point he reaches a conclusion that directly opposes Thoreau's. For example, both McDonald and Thoreau point out that Brown's father supplied beef to troops during the War of 1812, but, McDonald asserts, they were *British* troops. Brown and his family were traitors, not patriots. For McDonald, Brown was not a figure of tragic heroism. He was, instead, a fanatical coward who, when faced with a sentence of death, disavowed his intention of fomenting a slave rebellion.

In Thoreau's defense of Brown we see a man asserting the primacy of the individual conscience. In McDonald's condemnation we see a man asserting, with equal passion, the primacy of law and institutions. Who makes the stronger case?

[1] Franny Nudelman, *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War*, (The University of North Carolina Press; Chapel Hill and London, 2004) p. 16.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Thoreau shape Brown's biography to appeal to his Concord audience?
2. How does Thoreau attempt to refute the claim that Brown was insane?
3. How does Thoreau elevate Brown's failed raid into a noble act?
4. How does Thoreau's "Plea" legitimatize the North's use of violence against the South? To what end would Thoreau employ that violence?
5. Compare and contrast Thoreau's invocation of the Revolutionary generation with Abraham Lincoln's invocation of it in his 1838 Lyceum address (reading one in this section).
6. How does McDonald conceive of the Union?
7. What is McDonald's image of the North? The South?
8. Compare and contrast McDonald's treatment of Puritanism and Puritans with Thoreau's. Which is more convincing? Why?
9. According to Thoreau, what motivated Brown? According to McDonald, what motivated Brown?
10. In McDonald's view, why do Brown's raid and the Civil War constitute Northern rebellions?
11. Using evidence from Thoreau's "Plea," judge the accuracy of McDonald's claims about the effects of Brown's raid.
12. Compare and contrast Thoreau's view of "higher law" with McDonald's.
13. What cultural differences between the North and the South do these two texts suggest?
14. Which of the two portraits of Brown is more convincing? Why?

# A Plea for Captain John Brown by Henry David Thoreau; October 30, 1859

**[Read to the citizens of Concord, Mass., Sunday Evening, October 30, 1859.]**

I trust that you will pardon me for being here. I do not wish to force my thoughts upon you, but I feel forced myself. Little as I know of Captain Brown, I would fain (gladly) do my part to correct the tone and the statements of the newspapers, and of my countrymen generally, respecting his character and actions. It costs us nothing to be just. We can at least express our sympathy with, and admiration of, him and his companions, and that is what I now propose to do.

First, as to his history. I will endeavor to omit, as much as possible, what you have already read. I need not describe his person to you, for probably most of you have seen and will not soon forget him. I am told that his grandfather, John Brown, was an officer in the Revolution; that he himself was born in Connecticut about the beginning of this century, but early went with his father to Ohio. I heard him say that his father was a contractor who furnished beef to the army there, in the war of 1812; that he accompanied him to the camp, and assisted him in that employment, seeing a good deal of military life,--more, perhaps, than if he had been a soldier; for he was often present at the councils of the officers. Especially, he learned by experience how armies are supplied and maintained in the field,--a work which, he observed, requires at least as much experience and skill as to lead them in battle. He said that few persons had any conception of the cost, even the pecuniary cost, of firing a single bullet in war. He saw enough, at any rate, to disgust him with a military life; indeed, to excite in his a great abhorrence of it; so much so, that though he was tempted by the offer of some petty office in the army, when he was about eighteen, he not only declined that, but he also refused to train when warned, and was fined for it. He then resolved that he would never have anything to do with any war, unless it were a war for liberty.

When the troubles in Kansas began, he sent several of his sons thither to strengthen the party of the Free State men, fitting them out with such weapons as he had; telling them that if the troubles should increase, and there should be need of his, he would follow, to assist them with his hand and counsel. This, as you all know, he soon after did; and it was through his agency, far more than any other's, that Kansas was made free.

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I should say that he was an old-fashioned man in respect for the Constitution, and his faith in the permanence of this Union. Slavery he deemed to be wholly opposed to these, and he was its determined foe.

He was by descent and birth a New England farmer, a man of great common-sense, deliberate and practical as that class is, and tenfold more so. He was like the best of those who stood at Concord Bridge once, on Lexington Common, and on Bunker Hill, only he was firmer and higher principled than any that I have chanced to hear of as there. It was no abolition lecturer that converted him. Ethan Allen and Stark, with whom he may in

some respects be compared, were rangers in a lower and less important field. They could bravely face their country's foes, but he had the courage to face his country herself, when she was in the wrong. A Western writer says, to account for his escape from so many perils, that he was concealed under a "rural exterior"; as if, in that prairie land, a hero should, by good rights, wear a citizen's dress only.

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He was one of that class of whom we hear a great deal, but, for the most part, see nothing at all,--the Puritans. It would be in vain to kill him. He died lately in the time of Cromwell, but he reappeared here. Why should he not? Some of the Puritan stock are said to have come over and settled in New England. They were a class that did something else than celebrate their forefathers' day, and eat parched corn in remembrance of that time. They were neither Democrats nor Republicans, but men of simple habits, straightforward, prayerful; not thinking much of rulers who did not fear God, not making many compromises, nor seeking after available candidates.

"In his camp," as one has recently written, and as I have myself heard him state, "he permitted no profanity; no man of loose morals was suffered to remain there, unless, indeed, as a prisoner of war. 'I would rather,' said he, 'have the small-pox, yellow-fever, and cholera, all together in my camp, than a man without principle.... It is a mistake, sir, that our people make, when they think that bullies are the best fighters, or that they are the fit men to oppose these Southerners. Give me men of good principles,--God-fearing men,--men who respect themselves, and with a dozen of them I will oppose any hundred such men as these Buford ruffians.'" He said that if one offered himself to be a soldier under him, who was forward to tell what he could or would do, if he could only get sight of the enemy, he had but little confidence in him.

He was never able to find more than a score or so of recruits whom he would accept, and only about a dozen, among them his sons, in whom he had perfect faith. When he was here, some years ago, he showed to a few a little manuscript book,--his "orderly book" I think he called it,--containing the names of his company in Kansas, and the rules by which they bound themselves; and he stated that several of them had already sealed the contract with their blood. When some one remarked that, with the addition of a chaplain, it would have been a perfect Cromwellian troop, he observed that he would have been glad to add a chaplain to the list, if he could have found one who could fill that office worthily. It is easy enough to find one for the United States army. I believe that he had prayers in his camp morning and evening, nevertheless.

He was a man of Spartan habits, and at sixty was scrupulous about his diet at your table, excusing himself by saying that he must eat sparingly and fare hard, as became a soldier, or one who was fitting himself for difficult enterprises, a life of exposure.

A man of rare common-sense and directness of speech, as of action; a transcendentalist above all, a man of ideas and principles,--that was what distinguished him. Not yielding to a whim or transient impulse, but carrying out the purpose of a life. I noticed that he did

not overstate anything, but spoke within bounds. I remember, particularly, how, in his speech here, he referred to what his family had suffered in Kansas, without ever giving the least vent to his pent-up fire. It was a volcano with an ordinary chimney-flue. Also referring to the deeds of certain Border Ruffians, he said, rapidly paring away his speech, like an experienced soldier, keeping a reserve of force and meaning, "They had a perfect right to be hung." He was not in the least a rhetorician, was not talking to Buncombe or his constituents anywhere, had no need to invent anything but to tell the simple truth, and communicate his own resolution; therefore he appeared incomparably strong, and eloquence in Congress and elsewhere seemed to me at a discount. It was like the speeches of Cromwell compared with those of an ordinary king.

As for his tact and prudence, I will merely say, that at a time when scarcely a man from the Free States was able to reach Kansas by any direct route, at least without having his arms taken from him, he, carrying what imperfect guns and other weapons he could collect, openly and slowly drove an ox-cart through Missouri, apparently in the capacity of a surveyor, with his surveying compass exposed in it, and so passed unsuspected, and had ample opportunity to learn the designs of the enemy. For some time after his arrival he still followed the same profession. When, for instance, he saw a knot of the ruffians on the prairie, discussing, of course, the single topic which then occupied their minds, he would, perhaps, take his compass and one of his sons, and proceed to run an imaginary line right through the very spot on which that conclave had assembled, and when he came up to them, he would naturally pause and have some talk with them, learning their news, and, at last, all their plans perfectly; and having thus completed his real survey he would resume his imaginary one, and run on his line till he was out of sight.

When I expressed surprise that he could live in Kansas at all, with a price set upon his head, and so large a number, including the authorities, exasperated against him, he accounted for it by saying, "It is perfectly well understood that I will not be taken." Much of the time for some years he has had to skulk in swamps, suffering from poverty and from sickness, which was the consequence of exposure, befriended only by Indians and a few whites. But though it might be known that he was lurking in a particular swamp, his foes commonly did not care to go in after him. He could even come out into a town where there were more Border Ruffians than Free State men, and transact some business, without delaying long, and yet not be molested; for, said he, "No little handful of men were willing to undertake it, and a large body could not be got together in season."

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Not to mention his other successes, was it a failure, or did it show a want of good management, to deliver from bondage a dozen human beings, and walk off with them by broad daylight, for weeks if not months, at a leisurely pace, through one State after another, for half the length of the North, conspicuous to all parties, with a price set upon his head, going into a court-room on his way and telling what he had done, thus convincing Missouri that it was not profitable to try to hold slaves in his neighborhood?--and this, not because the government menials were lenient, but because they were afraid of him.

Yet he did not attribute his success, foolishly, to "his star," or to any magic. He said, truly, that the reason why such greatly superior numbers quailed before him was, as one of his prisoners confessed, because they lacked a cause,--a kind of armor which he and his party never lacked. When the time came, few men were found willing to lay down their lives in defence of what they knew to be wrong; they did not like that this should be their last act in this world.

But to make haste to his last act, and its effects.

The newspapers seem to ignore, or perhaps are really ignorant of the fact, that there are at least as many as two or three individuals to a town throughout the North who think much as the present speaker does about him and his enterprise. I do not hesitate to say that they are an important and growing party. We aspire to be something more than stupid and timid chattels, pretending to read history and our Bibles, but desecrating every house and every day we breathe in. Perhaps anxious politicians may prove that only seventeen white men and five negroes were concerned in the late enterprise; but their very anxiety to prove this might suggest to themselves that all is not told. Why do they still dodge the truth? They are so anxious because of a dim consciousness of the fact, which they do not distinctly face, that at least a million of the free inhabitants of the United States would have rejoiced if it had succeeded. They at most only criticise the tactics. Though we wear no crape, the thought of that man's position and probable fate is spoiling many a man's day here at the North for other thinking. If any one who has seen him here can pursue successfully any other train of thought, I do not know what he is made of. If there is any such who gets his usual allowance of sleep, I will warrant him to fatten easily under any circumstances which do not touch his body or purse. I put a piece of paper and a pencil under my pillow, and when I could not sleep, I wrote in the dark.

On the whole, my respect for my fellow-men, except as one may outweigh a million, is not being increased these days. I have noticed the cold-blooded way in which newspaper writers and men generally speak of this event, as if an ordinary malefactor, though one of unusual "pluck,"--as the Governor of Virginia is reported to have said, using the language of the cock-pit, "the gamest man he ever saw,"--had been caught, and were about to be hung. He was not dreaming of his foes when the governor thought he looked so brave. It turns what sweetness I have to gall, to hear, or hear of, the remarks of some of my neighbors. When we heard at first that he was dead, one of my townsmen observed that "he died as the fool dieth"; which, pardon me, for an instant suggested a likeness in him dying to my neighbor living. Others, craven-hearted, said disparagingly, that "he threw his life away," because he resisted the government. Which way have they thrown their lives, pray?--such as would praise a man for attacking singly an ordinary band of thieves or murderers. I hear another ask, Yankee-like, "What will he gain by it?" as if he expected to fill his pockets by this enterprise. Such a one has no idea of gain but in this worldly sense. If it does not lead to a "surprise" party, if he does not get a new pair of boots, or a vote of thanks, it must be a failure. "But he won't gain anything by it." Well, no, I don't suppose he could get four-and-sixpence a day for being hung, take the year round; but then he stands a chance to save a considerable part of his soul,--and such a

soul!--when you do not. No doubt you can get more in your market for a quart of milk than for a quart of blood, but that is not the market that heroes carry their blood to.

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Our foes are in our midst and all about us. There is hardly a house but is divided against itself, for our foe is the all but universal woodenness of both head and heart, the want of vitality in man, which is the effect of our vice; and hence are begotten fear, superstition, bigotry, persecution, and slavery of all kinds. We are mere figureheads upon a hulk, with livers in the place of hearts. The curse is the worship of idols, which at length changes the worshipper into a stone image himself; and the New-Englander is just as much an idolater as the Hindoo. This man was an exception, for he did not set up even a political graven image between him and his God.

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A man does a brave and humane deed, and at once, on all sides, we hear people and parties declaring, "I didn't do it, nor countenance him to do it, in any conceivable way. It can't be fairly inferred from my past career." I, for one, am not interested to hear you define your position. I don't know that I ever was, or ever shall be. I think it is mere egotism, or impertinent at this time. Ye needn't take so much pains to wash your skirts of him. No intelligent man will ever be convinced that he was any creature of yours. He went and came, as he himself informs us, "under the auspices of John Brown and nobody else." The Republican party does not perceive how many his failure will make to vote more correctly than they would have them. They have counted the votes of Pennsylvania & Co., but they have not correctly counted Captain Brown's vote. He has taken the wind out of their sails,--the little wind they had,--and they may as well lie to and repair.

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"It was always conceded to him," says one who calls him crazy, "that he was a conscientious man, very modest in his demeanor, apparently inoffensive, until the subject of Slavery was introduced, when he would exhibit a feeling of indignation unparalleled."

The slave-ship is on her way, crowded with its dying victims; new cargoes are being added in mid-ocean a small crew of slaveholders, countenanced by a large body of passengers, is smothering four millions under the hatches, and yet the politician asserts that the only proper way by which deliverance is to be obtained, is by "the quiet diffusion of the sentiments of humanity," without any "outbreak." As if the sentiments of humanity were ever found unaccompanied by its deeds, and you could disperse them, all finished to order, the pure article, as easily as water with a watering-pot, and so lay the dust. What is that that I hear cast overboard? The bodies of the dead that have found deliverance. That is the way we are "diffusing" humanity, and its sentiments with it.

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If Walker may be considered the representative of the South, I wish I could say that Brown was the representative of the North. He was a superior man. He did not value his bodily life in comparison with ideal things. He did not recognize unjust human laws, but resisted them as he was bid. For once we are lifted out of the trivialness and dust of politics into the region of truth and manhood. No man in America has ever stood up so persistently and effectively for the dignity of human nature, knowing himself for a man, and the equal of any and all governments. In that sense he was the most American of us all. He needed no babbling lawyer, making false issues, to defend him. He was more than a match for all the judges that American voters, or office-holders of whatever grade, can create. He could not have been tried by a jury of his peers, because his peers did not exist. When a man stands up serenely against the condemnation and vengeance of mankind, rising above them literally by a whole body,--even though he were of late the vilest murderer, who has settled that matter with himself,--the spectacle is a sublime one,--didn't ye know it, ye Liberators, ye Tribunes, ye Republicans?--and we become criminal in comparison. Do yourselves the honor to recognize him. He needs none of your respect.

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Insane! A father and six sons, and one son-in-law, and several more men besides,--as many at least as twelve disciples,--all struck with insanity at once; while the same tyrant holds with a firmer gripe than ever his four millions of slaves, and a thousand sane editors, his abettors, are saving their country and their bacon! Just as insane were his efforts in Kansas. Ask the tyrant who is his most dangerous foe, the sane man or the insane? Do the thousands who know him best, who have rejoiced at his deeds in Kansas, and have afforded him material aid there, think him insane? Such a use of this word is a mere trope with most who persist in using it, and I have no doubt that many of the rest have already in silence retracted their words.

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What have Massachusetts and the North sent a few sane representatives to Congress for, of late years?--to declare with effect what kind of sentiments? All their speeches put together and boiled down,--and probably they themselves will confess it,--do not match for manly directness and force, and for simple truth, the few casual remarks of crazy John Brown, on the floor of the Harper's Ferry engine-house,--that man whom you are about to hang, to send to the other world, though not to represent you there. No, he was not our representative in any sense. He was too fair a specimen of a man to represent the like of us. Who, then, were his constituents? If you read his words understandingly you will find out. In his case there is no idle eloquence, no made, nor maiden speech, no compliments to the oppressor. Truth is his inspirer, and earnestness the polisher of his sentences. He could afford to lose his Sharpe's rifles, while he retained his faculty of speech,--a Sharpe's rifle of infinitely surer and longer range.

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I have no respect for the penetration of any man who can read the report of that conversation, and still call the principal in it insane. It has the ring of a saner sanity than an ordinary discipline and habits of life, than an ordinary organization, secure. Take any sentence of it,--"Any questions that I can honorably answer, I will; not otherwise. So far as I am myself concerned, I have told everything truthfully. I value my word, sir." The few who talk about his vindictive spirit, while they really admire his heroism, have no test by which to detect a noble man, no amalgam to combine with his pure gold. They mix their own dross with it.

It is a relief to turn from these slanders to the testimony of his more truthful, but frightened jailers and hangmen. Governor Wise speaks far more justly and appreciatingly of him than any Northern editor, or politician, or public personage, that I chance to have heard from. I know that you can afford to hear him again on this subject. He says: "They are themselves mistaken who take him to be madman.... He is cool, collected, and indomitable, and it is but just to him to say, that he was humane to his prisoners.... And he inspired me with great trust in his integrity as a man of truth. He is a fanatic, vain and garrulous," (I leave that part to Mr. Wise,) "but firm, truthful, and intelligent. His men, too, who survive, are like him.... Colonel Washington says that he was the coolest and firmest man he ever saw in defying danger and death. With one son dead by his side, and another shot through, he felt the pulse of his dying son with one hand, and held his rifle with the other, and commanded his men with the utmost composure, encouraging them to be firm, and to sell their lives as dear as they could. Of the three white prisoners, Brown, Stephens, and Coppic, it was hard to say which was most firm."

Almost the first Northern men whom the slaveholder has learned to respect!

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"All is quiet at Harper's Ferry," say the journals. What is the character of that calm which follows when the law and the slaveholder prevail? I regard this event as a touchstone designed to bring out, with glaring distinctness, the character of this government. We needed to be thus assisted to see it by the light of history. It needed to see itself. When a government puts forth its strength on the side of injustice, as ours to maintain slavery and kill the liberators of the slave, it reveals itself a merely brute force, or worse, a demoniacal force. It is the head of the Plug-Uglies. It is more manifest than ever that tyranny rules. I see this government to be effectually allied with France and Austria in oppressing mankind. There sits a tyrant holding fettered four millions of slaves; here comes their heroic liberator. This most hypocritical and diabolical government looks up from its seat on the gasping four millions, and inquires with an assumption of innocence: "What do you assault me for? Am I not an honest man? Cease agitation on this subject, or I will make a slave of you, too, or else hang you."

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The only government that I recognize,--and it matters not how few are at the head of it, or how small its army,--is that power that establishes justice in the land, never that which

establishes injustice. What shall we think of a government to which all the truly brave and just men in the land are enemies, standing between it and those whom it oppresses? A government that pretends to be Christian and crucifies a million Christs every day!

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The United States have a coffle of four millions of slaves. They are determined to keep them in this condition; and Massachusetts is one of the confederated overseers to prevent their escape. Such are not all the inhabitants of Massachusetts, but such are they who rule and are obeyed here. It was Massachusetts, as well as Virginia, that put down this insurrection at Harper's Ferry. She sent the marines there, and she will have to pay the penalty of her sin.

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I hear many condemn these men because they were so few. When were the good and the brave ever in a majority? Would you have had him wait till that time came?--till you and I came over to him? The very fact that he had no rabble or troop of hirelings about him would alone distinguish him from ordinary heroes. His company was small indeed, because few could be found worthy to pass muster. Each one who there laid down his life for the poor and oppressed was a picked man, culled out of many thousands, if not millions; apparently a man of principle, of rare courage, and devoted humanity[.]

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This event advertises me that there is such a fact as death,--the possibility of a man's dying. It seems as if no man had ever died in America before; for in order to die you must first have lived. I don't believe in the hearses, and palls, and funerals that they have had. There was no death in the case, because there had been no life; they merely rotted or sloughed off, pretty much as they had rotted or sloughed along. No temple's veil was rent, only a hole dug somewhere. Let the dead bury their dead. The best of them fairly ran down like a clock. Franklin,--Washington,--they were let off without dying; they were merely missing one day. I hear a good many pretend that they are going to die; or that they have died, for aught that I know. Nonsense! I'll defy them to do it. They haven't got life enough in them. They'll deliquesce like fungi, and keep a hundred eulogists mopping the spot where they left off. Only half a dozen or so have died since the world began. Do you think that you are going to die, sir? No! there's no hope of you. You haven't got your lesson yet. You've got to stay after school. We make a needless ado about capital punishment,--taking lives, when there is no life to take. Memento mori! We don't understand that sublime sentence which some worthy got sculptured on his gravestone once. We've interpreted it in a grovelling and snivelling sense; we've wholly forgotten how to die.

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These men [Brown’s raiders], in teaching us how to die, have at the same time taught us how to live. If this man's acts and words do not create a revival, it will be the severest possible satire on the acts and words that do. It is the best news that America has ever heard. It has already quickened the feeble pulse of the North, and infused more and more generous blood into her veins and heart, than any number of years of what is called commercial and political prosperity could. How many a man who was lately contemplating suicide has now something to live for!

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Newspaper editors argue also that it is a proof of his insanity that he thought he was appointed to do this work which he did,--that he did not suspect himself for a moment! They talk as if it were impossible that a man could be "divinely appointed" in these days to do any work whatever; as if vows and religion were out of date as connected with any man's daily work; as if the agent to abolish slavery could only be somebody appointed by the President, or by some political party. They talk as if a man's death were a failure, and his continued life, be it of whatever character, were a success.

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Any man knows when he is justified, and all the wits in the world cannot enlighten him on that point. The murderer always knows that he is justly punished; but when a government takes the life of a man without the consent of his conscience, it is an audacious government, and is taking a step towards its own dissolution. Is it not possible that an individual may be right and a government wrong? Are laws to be enforced simply because they were made? or declared by any number of men to be good, if they are not good? Is there any necessity for a man's being a tool to perform a deed of which his better nature disapproves? Is it the intention of law-makers that good men shall be hung ever? Are judges to interpret the law according to the letter, and not the spirit? What right have you to enter into a compact with yourself that you will do thus or so, against the light within you? Is it for you to make up your mind,--to form any resolution whatever,--and not accept the convictions that are forced upon you, and which ever pass your understanding? I do not believe in lawyers, in that mode of attacking or defending a man, because you descend to meet the judge on his own ground, and, in cases of the highest importance, it is of no consequence whether a man breaks a human law or not. Let lawyers decide trivial cases. Business men may arrange that among themselves. If they were the interpreters of the everlasting laws which rightfully bind man, that would be another thing. A counterfeiting law-factory, standing half in a slave land and half in free! What kind of laws for free men can you expect from that?

I am here to plead his cause with you. I plead not for his life, but for his character,--his immortal life; and so it becomes your cause wholly, and is not his in the least. Some eighteen hundred years ago Christ was crucified; this morning, perchance, Captain Brown was hung. These are the two ends of a chain which is not without its links. He is not Old Brown any longer; he is an angel of light.

I see now that it was necessary that the bravest and humanest man in all the country should be hung. Perhaps he saw it himself. I almost fear that I may yet hear of his deliverance, doubting if a prolonged life, if any life, can do as much good as his death.

"Misguided"! "Garrulous"! "Insane"! "Vindictive"! So ye write in your easy-chairs, and thus he wounded responds from the floor of the Armory, clear as a cloudless sky, true as the voice of nature is: "No man sent me here; it was my own prompting and that of my Maker. I acknowledge no master in human form."

And in what a sweet and noble strain he proceeds, addressing his captors, who stand over him: "I think, my friends, you are guilty of a great wrong against God and humanity, and it would be perfectly right for any one to interfere with you so far as to free those you willfully and wickedly hold in bondage."

And, referring to his movement: "It is, in my opinion, the greatest service a man can render to God."

"I pity the poor in bondage that have none to help them; that is why I am here; not to gratify any personal animosity, revenge, or vindictive spirit. It is my sympathy with the oppressed and the wronged, that are as good as you, and as precious in the sight of God."

You don't know your testament when you see it.

"I want you to understand that I respect the rights of the poorest and weakest of colored people, oppressed by the slave power, just as much as I do those of the most wealthy and powerful."

"I wish to say, furthermore, that you had better, all you people at the South, prepare yourselves for a settlement of that question, that must come up for settlement sooner than you are prepared for it. The sooner you are prepared the better. You may dispose of me very easily. I am nearly disposed of now; but this question is still to be settled,--this negro question, I mean; the end of that is not yet."

I foresee the time when the painter will paint that scene, no longer going to Rome for a subject; the poet will sing it; the historian record it; and, with the Landing of the Pilgrims and the Declaration of Independence, it will be the ornament of some future national gallery, when at least the present form of slavery shall be no more here. We shall then be at liberty to weep for Captain Brown. Then, and not till then, we will take our revenge.

# THE TWO REBELLIONS OR TREASON UNMASKED

William N. McDonald

So that to obtain a few clear ideas concerning the causes and general characteristics of a great revolution, it is necessary to contemplate it at some point of its development where neither the obscurity of its dawn nor the impervious grandeur of its meridian brightness is encountered. One must select that period when the laws of its nature are just clearly unfolded, and the scale upon which they are exhibited admits of a determination of their tendency.

Now, it seems to me that that part of the present revolution which corresponds to this is that embraced in the length and breadth of the Harper's Ferry insurrection. It constitutes the first rebellion against the compact of peace and mutual interest, which at first was gradually formed by independent States within themselves, and afterwards was increased by the addition of a confederate superstructure.

It has an individuality distinct from the second rebellion of '61, though it may be regarded as a precocious and premature manifestation of their common causes. It preceded and prefigured the second rebellion, and is of interest, not only as forming an essential part of the development of the latter, but as furnishing in its petty outlines a photographic image of its prominent features. Upon its narrow stage was acted a small drama, typical of the great tragedy which now fills a continent, and in its single actors one sees personified those human passions which have animated the respective portions of the rebel masses at the North, in their insane attempt to dethrone the majesty of established laws and institutions.

Regarding the outbreak upon the Virginia border, in 1859, in such a character, we propose to embrace, in an investigation of its various causes and in a brief narrative of their practical development, an analysis also of those moral principles which, budding, blooming, and fructifying at the North, have at length resulted in producing the present terrible war. (p.8)

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John Brown was the first practical exponent of a radical system of ideas, that, for some time before his *emeute*, had almost entirely subjugated the northern intellect. What had been preached by others and received by the majority, he put in practice. Revolutions of ideas always precede those of action, but are never acknowledged to have occurred until discovered in the new forms of commonplace events.

That change of opinion which, in logical order, preceded this insurrectionary outbreak, is older than the American Republic. It may be discovered in almost any period of our colonial history. Indeed, it began with the first Puritan sect who confounded the idea of a free and equal salvation with wild notions of political equality.

The peculiar sins of the founders of the Puritan religion, and which have been faithfully transmitted to their descendants, were self-righteousness, covetousness, love of power, and envy of their superiors. While these, no doubt, are to be found among the back-sliders of all denominations, yet nowhere do they grow with such rank luxuriance, as in the soil of a bad Puritan's heart. There they flourish in the wildest wantonness, and are conspicuous among the host of smaller sins which ever attend them.

Now, with these evil propensities belonging to natures obstinate and energetic, as all Puritans are, it may be conjectured that a designing, wicked intelligence, could perform much mischief in the world.

Their overweening pride, their envy of the powers that be, and their utter contempt for that spirit of consideration for others which produces social peace and harmony, was a great temptation to the Devil to use them for the purpose of setting christendom by the ears. And this seems to have been effected by him upon more than one occasion since the origin of the sect.

The moral consequences, in their case, seem to have been according to the law that made Satan himself pre-eminent among the fallen. As he was the brightest of all who ministered around the heavenly throne, so when overcome by pride and envy he fell, he became the most active, energetic and efficient, of all the fallen spirits to plot and to do evil.

Now, perhaps it may be said with propriety, that the Puritans aimed at a higher standard of excellence than any of the reformers. Certainly the standard which they professed to have attained, was far above that which others reached. Hence, it seems, that as their virtues were of primal excellence their sins were the most diabolical, and likewise, as the qualities of faith, veneration, and obedience, seem to have made the Jews the favorite people of the Almighty, so those of pride, love of power, and envy, seem to have made the Puritans the pet darlings of Satan. Their palm of infamy is undisputed; the judgment of history has pronounced upon their merits, and "by their fruits ye shall know them," is the equitable statute that convicts this people, before an impartial world, of a pre-eminence in evil.

Much of the history of the world has never been written, and that which has had the most skillful delineators, is but little understood. The fathomless depths of human motive, escape the penetration of the historian, and the mysterious influence of trifling events is ill comprehended. But, if the history of the Devil's administration among the armies of evil could be written in a book, it would aid greatly in dispelling the obscurity that surrounds the past. And the history of the Puritans since the origin of their religion, if faithfully depicted, would, in all probability, constitute an important chapter of the book.

The Puritans have always maintained two apparently contradictory cardinal doctrines. First, that as Jesus Christ died for all men, and salvation is offered free to all, so men are equal in all things. Second, that to the saints belong the government of the world, and, they being the saints, are the divinely commissioned lords of creation.

The first assumed an importance in their practical life that did not attach to it from its natural significance, in their system of moral truths, so much as from the social condition of its advocates from the beginning.

They were all men of vulgar origin, and of that pestilent, envious class of low people, who readily receive any theory of religion or politics, which brings down the great, the intellectual, and the good, to their own level. They found society recognizing the fact that they had social superiors, and so they the more readily believed and inculcated the doctrines of equality. They found themselves without that taste and refinement of the heart, and incapable of that chivalry of disposition, which belonged to their superiors, and so they proscribed these with the other sins which they professed to abhor. And thus it happens, to the surprise and disgust of enlightened mankind, that from the very foundation of their *order*, it has been a part of their transmitted system to despise and denounce those soft and refining qualities of the heart which, in all ages, have been recognized as the essential qualifications of gentlemen.

The second cardinal doctrine mentioned, ignores and disavows that equality which the first proclaims. It does not, however, interfere with the advantages of the first, by intruding itself in a painful proximity to it. Like two faithful sentinels, these doctrines relieve each other, never both remaining on duty at the same time. The first is always preached when the saints are of the governed, the second they have the wisdom to keep silent about, except when they get the reins of government in their own hands.

There are three periods in their history when they proclaimed the second; and during the time of its ascendency, the first was forgotten. When Cromwell, like an exhalation in the evening, excited the astonishment and wonder of mankind; when New England rejoiced in a religious persecution of all disbelievers in Puritan perfection; and now when, upon the backs of black republican masses, they have exalted their opinions and their priests into federal power. Yet, in the several intervals between these periods, they have exhausted the powers of their rhetoric and the vehemence of their vindictive passions, in denouncing what they term the unequal asperities of the social and political surface.

It is their fate to be always busy. Like the wretched wandering Jew of romance, their lease of life rests upon a ceaseless activity. Progress, whether towards evil or good, seems to be a necessity of their restless energetic natures, and, with their propensities, some conjecture may be formed, from the very nature of the case, what an amount of evil these Puritans have accomplished. They are of that class whom the sacred writer thus describes: "The wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

While other denominations have frequently merited the charge of bigotry, it has been their peculiar, privilege to illustrate fanaticism. They have always been fanatical and extremists in all things. The error that was committed in making their standard unnatural and overdrawn, distorted their views and petrified and deformed what little of nature they had in the beginning. In the light of their system, genuine charity is an ever retreating phantom of the brain that they neither practice nor understand, and those who are

supposed to possess it differ from their fellows only in being either less covetous or more politic. For charity of heart, a forgiving disposition, and tenderness for the wretched, are virtues that never grow spontaneously in Puritan soil, and even when transplanted, have but the perishable beauty of the exotic, and soon disappear. For these Christian qualities, whose importance is so frequently dwelt upon in holy writ, they, imposing upon their imaginations, substitute an artificial sentimental sympathy for the remotely distant oppressed of the human race, artfully deluding their consciences by pretending to feel for the oppressed, when the emotion is really hatred of the prosperous oppressor. In this Way "They compound for sins they are inclined to, By damning those they have no mind to." And so profitable do they find this kind of moral exercise, that, by their devotion to it, they invariably succeed in mistaking the beams in their own eyes for spots upon their neighbor's character.

With such general propensities as these, it is not surprising that they have played the chief part in the destruction of the American edifice of civil and religious freedom. In mercy to the interest and the hopes of the American nation, Providence seems to have cast them upon the cold and bleak hills of New England. But their rebellious natures were not to be starved or chilled into a decent submission to the Divine will. And the Devil, who never forsakes his friends, converted the very hardness of their lot into the means of their destruction. From the barren rocks of New England, they regarded with wishful eyes the fertile fields and comfortable homes of their southern brethren. In their abundance, and happy lots, they discovered a partiality on the part of Deity, which made them, like Cain, rebellious against God and anxious to slay their brethren. And, meditating upon their comparative penury and the luxurious wealth of their brethren, they surrendered themselves up to an envy and hatred, which prompted them to attempt the ruin of the South. That such was their object, they did not of course admit to themselves; but, for the gratification of their own consciences, as well as to conceal their purposes, they called their antagonism to the South the antipathy of free to slave labor. It may be true, and perhaps is, that they disapprove of southern institutions. But it was the corroding cankers of unchristian envy and personal hatred, that made them at first the unconscious, and afterwards the avowed, enemies of the southern people.

Their hostility was first manifested in their orations and their writings. But when they found their arguments disregarded, and their officious counsel indignantly spurned, they abandoned the use of moral force against a stiff-necked people; and, in the depths of their fraternal solicitude and affection, proclaimed a crusade against their political brethren and advocated the military modes of rescuing people from the consequences of their own mad follies. (pp. 9-13)

...

While, however, many of the more fastidious villains did not conceal their aversion to Brown, and refused to associate with him, there were plenty left, whom the hope of plunder could easily blind to his horrible traits. They wanted profitable work to do, and, as they had long since sold themselves to Satan, they were not going to let a mere retching of the fancy deprive them of a successful leader. And there was never

wanting, at any time, staunch supporters and enthusiastic admirers of the "hero of Ossawattomie," among the household and familiar priests of the abolition god. These confidential and domestic counsellors of the popular divinity, who conducted the mysterious rites of the interior altar, and whose secret councils were held behind the veil which limited the reach of public penetration, they, of course, never thought of abandoning such a profitable fanatic as old Brown. They knew the "service he had done the state," and, if they were not grateful, they were at least anxious to retain such a valuable servant[.] What had excited horror in others not so deeply dyed in villainy as themselves, only excited in them sentiments of esteem and affection. So, these venerated apostles of the faith, instead of snubbing the invaluable old murderer, gently stroked the silver hairs of the fierce old fellow, and, patting him on the back, called him by endearing names. They supplied his wants, gave him money, and revived his drooping spirits. (p. 49)

...

Having thus unburdened his mind and defiantly avowed his nefarious purposes, before a gaping and curious crowd, to the Governor of the State, whose soil he had polluted, Brown sank back quite exhausted, and with the calmness, that unconquerable hate lends even to the dying, surveyed the bystanders. His countenance plainly indicated that his bosom was still . (p. 91)

...

During the war of 1812, in the days of blue lights and Hartford conventions, when the sturdy and industrious and virtuous Puritan fathers preferred peace with disgrace, to honorable war with pecuniary loss, John Brown was yet a boy. His father, no doubt, sharing in that feeling of disapprobation of the war which prevailed in New England, instead of indulging in the infamous blue-light method of aiding his country's enemies, preferred the profitable treason of selling cattle to the British and pocketing their gold.

John, it seems, according to his admiring biographer (Redpath,) being a lad of great energy, materially assisted his father in this treasonable business. It was here that he first displayed those qualities of self-reliance and boldness, which afterwards he exhibited in such a remarkable degree. It was here, too, he first displayed a more than usual ability in taking advantage of the topography of a country, to avoid or escape from a dangerous foe. His biographer does not say what other remarkable natural qualities he here, for the first time, displayed. But it is reasonable to suppose, from the character of his business, that he here displayed, though it may be not for the first time, an unusual talent for successfully appropriating the property of others, for which he was, upon more than one occasion afterwards, quite remarkable.

"It was here," says Redpath, "that he contracted that horror of war which never afterwards left him." It is certainly not singular that a member of the human family with rational faculties, should have a natural horror of war without waiting to contract it; much less that one should do so who witnesses it. But, it does seem that, if there is any occasion

when one is called on to praise war and esteem it a blessing, it is when he is not expected to fight, but is permitted to engage in an unlawful trade that the existence of war renders exceedingly profitable. There were, no doubt, moments during this period of treasonable traffic with the enemy, when the youthful John conceived a "horror for war." Sometimes, perhaps, when higgling over the price of a Connecticut bull with a British commissary, and finding his Yankee pertinacity outdone by British obstinacy; perhaps when shot at by American pickets, or relieved of his unlawful earnings by remorseless guerrillas; but certainly not when just having effected a successful run, did the sentimental John conceive his ineradicable "horror of war." It was, perhaps, with the profits accumulated in this business, that the father of John purchased the paternal estate upon which he afterwards lived, and the memory of whose broad acres ever stimulated the enterprising youth to become a landholder. (pp. 21-22)

...

Most men came to Kansas with arms in their hands; but John Brown, at his coming, exhibited a style of warlike display that could not but attract general notice, while it was received as a sort of declaration of his intentions.

His wagon was partially filled with ordnance of various descriptions, while the rifle-musket with the gleaming sword-bayonet and the naked sabre stood defiantly erected upon the sides of his vehicle.

Never did a bacchanalian devotee rush into the mad revels of the wine-god with more enthusiasm than John Brown did to the scenes of assassination and murder which Kansas then presented. Wild with delight at the prospect of a fit theatre of action for his bad and ambitious nature, before be had tasted of the oblivious sweets of slaughter, he astonished the most hardened villains of the precious brotherhood with his cruel plans of extermination. He was soon initiated into the mysteries of his order. An opportunity was not long wanting to one who watched its coming so eagerly. And it was but a short time, after having taken the plunge, before he surpassed all competitors in the savageness of his animosity and the fiendishness of his deeds. His untiring energy and staunch devotion to the cause of abolition soon made him a leader for others who were equally unscrupulous, but less active and ardent. Adventurous if not brave, and without any of those passing qualms of conscience, that sometimes haunt the most blood-stained souls, he hesitated at the perpetration of no outrage, and shrank from no enterprise, because success was to be obtained by the use of the most atrocious means. Like a devouring wild beast he was to the families of all who did not put faith in his creed; and was as little turned from the accomplishment of his purposes by the prayers of the mother as by the shrieks of the children. Busy, ever busy, with tracking and pursuing the pro-slavery man, he hunted him down with the pertinacity of a hound, and destroyed him, when found, with the ferocity of a tiger. (pp. 43-44)

. . .

[A]gitated with those malignant passions which had ruined him, and the apparent proximity of death and its awful sequel, seemed entirely forgotten in the concentrated hate that spoke in every lineament of his face. Governor Wise told him that he had better be preparing for death. He replied, with a sneer, that he, (the Governor,) though he might live fifteen years, would have a good deal to answer for, and that he had better be preparing for death himself. The defiant conduct of Brown was imitated, in a great measure, by most of his partners in guilt. The terrors of death seemed forgotten amidst the excitement of their capture, and it was not till the grim king of terrors was felt to be slowly approaching, through the solemn and deliberate forms of the law, that their guilty souls heard again the voice of conscience and were oppressed with gloomy forebodings.

As an evidence of the mad and diabolical spirit which filled them all, the following may be read by the curious; having been written by Watson Brown, (as is said,) in the engine house, while lying there mortally wounded. "Fight on, fight on, you hell hounds of the lower regions. Your day has come. Lower your black flag, shoot your dogs you devils. Hell and furies, go in for death." Such is, as it were, the dying manifesto of one of Brown's "martyr" children. His body, after his death, was transported to the dissecting room of the Medical College, at Winchester, and, when the first Yankee army entered that town the college building was burned by the Yankee soldiers, in revenge for the indignity perpetrated there upon Watson Brown's body.

The curiosity of the people to find out the motives of the outlaws, in doing as they did, restrained, for a time, their outbursts of wrath, which the more increased when they heard the criminals glory in their crimes. The proposition to hang them on the spot where they had committed their crimes, was received with loud and threatening applause, and nothing but the strong arm of the military, which was interposed for their protection, prevented their immediate execution. Notwithstanding there was a doubt concerning the right of jurisdiction in the matter, the outlaws having been captured on territory subject to the temporary control of the federal government, it was determined to hand them over to the authorities of the State whose sovereignty they had insulted. Accordingly, they were taken charge of by the civil authorities of Jefferson county, and securely confined in the Charlestown jail. (pp. 92-93)

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Finally, all the testimony had been heard; and the learned counsel, whom prominent abolitionists had procured from the North, concluded their last objection and rounded their last period. The jury were instructed and retiring from the court room, they, in a short time returned to render their verdict. This was rendered in the midst of a breathless mass of spectators assembled from all parts of the whole country. It declared the prisoners guilty of all the counts in the indictment. The verdict was one which all expected, and yet its announcement seemed to afford great relief. The clerk asked Brown, if he could assign any reason why sentence of death should not be passed upon him. Brown rose up to the height of his full stature and, with a countenance now, for the first time, manifesting fear and apprehension, spoke as follows:

"I have, may it please the court, a few words to say. In the first place, *I deny everything but what I have all along admitted, of a design on my part to free slaves*. I intended, certainly, to have made a clear thing of that matter, as I did last winter when I went into Missouri, and there took slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side. I moved them through the country, and finally left them in Canada. I designed to have done the same thing again on a larger scale. That was all I intended. *I never did intend murder or treason, or the destruction of property or to excite slaves to rebellion or to make insurrection*."

"I have another objection, and that is, it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner, which I admit has been fairly proved, (for I admire the and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case)--had I so interfered, in behalf of the rich and powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends, either father or mother, brother or sister, wife or children, or any of that class, and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right, and this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward, rather than punishment. This court acknowledges too, I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed here, which, I suppose, to be a bible, or, at least, the new testament. That teaches me that all things, whatsoever, would men should do unto me, I should do so even to them. It teaches me further, to remember them that are in bonds, as bonded with them. I endeavored to act up to these instructions. I say, I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe, that to have interfered, as I have done, in behalf of his despised poor, was no wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children, and with the blood of the millions in this slave country, whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit. So let it be done. Let me say one word further, I feel entirely satisfied with the treatment I have received on my trail. Considering all the circumstances, it has been more generous than I expected, but I feel no consciousness of guilt. I have stated from the first, what were my intentions and what were not. *I never had any design against the life of any person, or any disposition to commit treason, or incite the slaves to rebel, or make any general insurrection*. I never encouraged any man to do so, but always discouraged any idea of that kind. Let me say also, in regard to the statements made by some of those connected with me. I fear it has been stated by some of them that I have induced them to join me. But the contrary is true. I do not say this to injure them, but, as regretting their weakness. There is none of them but what joined me of his own accord, and the greater part at their own expense. A number of them I never saw, and never had a conversation with till the day they came to me, and that was for the purpose I have stated. Now I have done."

While Brown was speaking, great quiet prevailed. When he had finished, the court proceeded to pronounce sentence. After some preliminary remarks, in which the judge (Parker,) said, that no reasonable doubt could exist as to guilt of the prisoner, the court sentenced him to be hung on the 2nd December.

Such was the speech, word for word, made by Brown. It was republished in most of the northern papers. If any one will turn back and compare it with what he told Governor Wise, the morning of his capture, he will discover a flat denial in the last of what was triumphantly asserted in the first. To Wise, he, substantially, says that he came South to revolutionize the government and overthrow her whole social fabric, by means of the slaves and the disaffected non-slaveholders. For this purpose, he had brought jagged spears, for the untaught African, and rifles for the more intelligent whites. All his correspondence shows that such were his intentions; and all his abolition sympathizers boast of and admire him, because he had the heart to conceive it and the nerve to attempt it. His provisional constitution is based upon the idea of a general upheaving of the social and political institutions of the South; and there is not a shadow of a doubt, from his own acts and declarations, as well as those of his professed friends and admirers, that such was the object of the treasonable conspiracy, of which he was the open conductor.

This was what legitimized and sanctified, in the opinion of abolitionists, his arsons and murders, and invested him with the character of a divinely commissioned hero.

And yet, alas! for poor frail human nature, when the judge, with the fearful black cap sits before him, ready prepared to pronounce his doom, the great apostle of abolitionism trembles and denies his faith. Before the earthly tribunal, almost, and, indeed, pretending to be, certain of his fate; with the eyes of his enemies upon him, while thousands of big worshippers, at a distance, are waiting to hear of the triumphant declaration of his mission and his calm acceptance of martyrdom; yet, under all these stimulating circumstances, with not the brazen hardihood of an ordinary convict, he repudiates his destiny and equivocates and lies in his desire to move the mercy of the judge. (pp. 104-106)

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Thus ended the first rebellion. It was conceived in iniquity, born in sin, and met with the violent end it merited. Though its avowed object was unaccomplished, the blow struck contributed much towards it, and the designs of its instigators were certainly crowned with success. The blood that it cost, stimulated disunion; and the mutual bitterness and heartburnings, which it engendered throughout the country, were the dragon's teeth from which sprang crops of armed men. Like the war which followed it, it was a blessing in disguise; though its fruits have not entirely been made manifest. It is a part, and was, in some measure, the occasion of the present struggle. It familiarized the northern mind with the idea of intestine conflict. It robbed the grim-visaged monster of his revolting novelty, and baptized him the god-child of abolition and the champion of the oppressed.

Perverted as the whole affair was in northern journals, it not only served to excite the resentment of the North, but it convinced them of the weakness of the South, and of their own power. They felt no longer constrained to treat as an equal a section which they had long hated and feared, but now began to regard as an inferior in merit and strength. Spurning what they considered as the exploded idea of southern power, they gave full

rein to the many evil passions which they had entertained. They elaborated their wild notions of free soil and American destiny, treating with contemptuous indifference the possible objections of the South.

While its moral effect, in thus consummating that revolution of opinion which for years had been slowly gathering strength in the North, was great, its political consequences were immediate and significant. Sectional animosity, which was the source of vitality to the republican organization, was inflamed to that degree of fever heat, when the admonitions of reason are not heard amid the raging tempest of passion. Profiting by the storm, the republican leaders, whose political ambition was stimulated by bitter personal hostility to southern gentlemen, then threw off still more of the mask and proclaimed the doctrine of irrepressible conflict. The "music of the Union" was drowned amid the mere mutterings of the approaching revolution. The obligations of the federal compact needed only to be mentioned to call forth derision, and all sense of reason, propriety, and decency were lost in the insanity of the hour.

In anticipation of conflict, party organization assumed a military character; national wide-awake clubs were formed and the able-bodied members drilled in the exercises of war. Illuminations and bonfires, processions and popular gatherings, celebrated the coming triumphs of the implacable enemies of the South. The frenzy was almost universal, and those who still retained some glimmerings of reason, were helpless in the presence of the mighty flood which threatened to engulf all who resisted. "*Facilis descensus Averni*," and rapid indeed is the progress in evil of a people who, for the gratification of evil passions, shut their eyes to the obligations of duty.

Popular sympathy with abolition conspirators, whose despicable crimes merited the detestation of all good citizens, was but a sign of coming events which soon occurred. Sympathy with one act of rebellion, manifested a disposition to approve a similar undertaking and the diabolical chiefs of the anti-southern party, took advantage of the occasion. Thus is the connection between the first and second rebellions short and simple. For the outbreak at the Ferry was the first rebellion, with John Brown for its nominal leader. The second, though plotted for a long time, was publicly organized by Seward, Greely & Co., at Chicago, the following year.

The Chicago Convention was the grand consolidation of the numerous rebellious movements which, for years had been springing up and gathering strength in the North. The Chicago platform was the common "plan of action," upon which they all agreed, for the sake of overthrowing their common enemy--the constitution. Over it, all the factious interests, rampant radicalisms, and insurrectionary fanatics, joined hands of fellowship and subscribed pledges of mutual support. Each had a different ulterior end, but the overthrow of the constitution and the destruction of the South was the first step in their respective programs; and this the triumph of the Chicago platform and its champions would certainly bring about. For a long time these rebellious movements had been progressing. They had manifested themselves in a thousand different ways. Sometimes in acts of popular violence; sometimes in the treasonable resolutions of conventions and

assemblies, and not unfrequently in legislative statutes, and in the solemn acts of State Governors and other high officials.

A lively sense of the pecuniary advantages of peace and Union, for a period, repressed a general outburst. The great masses still, from fear of southern resentment, refrained from pushing matters to extremes; though they applauded and encouraged the violence of irresponsible mobs. They were guilty of the perfidy of disguising their real purposes, until they thought the moment had arrived for compelling the acquiescence of the South. In 1860 they thought that time had come, and they rallied, with a unanimity undreamed of in the South, to the support of an open and avowed attempt at rebellion. The Chicago platform became their bible and their constitution, and allegiance to it was held far superior to all other political obligations.

The first rebellion failed, the rather because its mode seemed impracticable to the northern mind than because its avowed objects were considered objectionable. For, even then, the overthrow of the constitution and the destruction of the South, at which it aimed, would have been agreeable to a very formidable portion of the northern people. The same bad men, who were privy to and helped to plot the first, more or less elaborated the second. The main objects of each were the same, namely: the dethronement of the legitimate majesty of the constitution, and, thereafter, the annihilation of the sovereignties of the States and the destruction of the South.

The leaders were impelled by motives of ambition and malignant hostility to the South. They did not hesitate to walk over the wreck of civil liberty into the high places of power, where, armed with authority, they proposed to gratify their feelings of vengeance.

The people, their tools, maddened with a senseless fanaticism and a blind resentment towards the South, were appalled by no consideration of loss in the pursuit of their mad projects. Like bound lunatics, as they were, they felt themselves ground down by the tyranny of a compact which, to a small extent, protected the minority against the imperious will of a majority. They could not and they would not endure its authority; and, if they could not overthrow it, they would not abide by it.

The plan of the most precipitate of the rebels, for sometime, was to profess an allegiance to a higher law, and respect the articles of the compact, only where it did not interfere with the statutes of the "higher law." This "higher law," the most indefinite and uncertain thing in the world, was capable of being modified, expanded, or repealed, according to the mandates of the reason of each individual, it was said; but, more properly, according to the kind and quantity of malignant passions that reigned in each individual breast. But, it was soon found that this subterfuge was unnecessary. A president and a numerical majority was all that was required; and then, acts of Congress could be passed or repealed to carry out all their designs. All they wanted, was this, and the constitution or the compact, *whatever it was called*, would have to stand aside. In other words, it would be overthrown, banished, done away with, and, in its place, a vulgar and fanatical majority would enthrone their capricious will. When fanatical villains declared in the federal Congress, that they acknowledged allegiance to another

government than the one which protected them, namely: to the provisional government or cabal of radicalists who promulgated and expounded the "higher law," nobody thought of calling them rebels. The very audacity of their treason prevented its being seen in its true light. And when these traitors went on, from year to year, doing the same thing and constantly increasing in power and influence, still, few regarded them as traitors plotting against the spirit and form of the constitution. The observed bitterness of their hostility to the slaveholder, blinded people, especially southerners, to their real designs. It was foolishly supposed that their whole antipathy was against the institution of slavery; hence they were merely called fanatical abolitionists and quietly despised. But these men, especially the more crafty of them, were making the proposed destruction of slavery a means and an end, at the same time. Their ruling passion was desire of power, and they declaimed against slavery, more for the purpose of obtaining, that, than from any real philanthropic aversion to the institution. True, they hated the slaveholder because he was a gentleman whose courtesy and courage annoyed them; but they cared nothing for the slaves.

In this way was their treason to the government so well concealed, it was not, until time and circumstances had put into their hands the whole political power of the North, that the southern masses penetrated their designs. It was then seen that they had banded to destroy the delegated majesty of the established constitution, and to exalt in its stead, not a new constitution modified, through the modes provided for in the old, but the capricious will of a mere numerical majority of legislators who would be guided in the use of their power by nothing but party interest and sectional hate. (pp. 111-115)