



The Alternative: A Separate Nationality, or by William Henry Holcombe

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THE ALTERNATIVE:

A SEPARATE NATIONALITY, OR THE Africanization of the South.

By WM. H. HOLCOMBE, M. D.

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THE ALTERNATIVE:

A Separate Nationality, or the Africanization of the South.

A sectional party, inimical to our institutions, and odious to our people, is
about taking possession of the Federal Government. The seed sown by the
early Abolitionists has yielded a luxurious harvest. When Lincoln is in

place, Garrison will be in power. The Constitution, either openly violated or emasculated of its true meaning and spirit by the subtleties of New England logic, is powerless for protection. We are no longer partners to a federal compact, but the victims of a consolidated despotism. Opposition to slavery, to its existence, its extension and its perpetuation, is the sole cohesive element of the triumphant faction. It did not receive the countenance of a single vote in any one of the ten great cotton States of the South! The question is at length plainly presented: submission or secession. The only alternative left us is this: *a separate nationality or the Africanization of the South.*

He has not analyzed this subject aright nor probed it to the bottom, who supposes that the real quarrel between the North and the South is about the Territories, or the decision of the Supreme Court, or even the Constitution itself; and that, consequently, the issues may be stayed and the dangers arrested by the drawing of new lines and the signing of new compacts. The division is broader and deeper and more incurable than this. The antagonism is fundamental and ineradicable. The true secret of it lies in the total reversion of public opinion which has occurred in both sections of the country in the last quarter of a century on the subject of slavery.

It has not been more than twenty-five years since Garrison was dragged through the streets of Boston with a rope around his neck, for uttering Abolition sentiments; and not thirty years since, the abolition of slavery was seriously debated in the Legislature of Virginia. Now, on the contrary, the radical opinions of Sumner, Emerson and Parker, and the assassination schemes of John Brown, are applauded in Fanueil Hall, and the whole Southern mind with an unparalleled unanimity, regards the institution of slavery as righteous and just, ordained of God, and to be perpetuated by man. We do not propose to analyze the causes of this remarkable revolution, which will constitute one of the strangest chapters of history. The fact is unquestionable. To understand rationally the events which are transpiring, and to foresee their inevitable issue, it is necessary to examine this element of discord between the Northern and Southern people, to investigate its true nature and extent, and weigh carefully the prospect of its cure.

The Northern mind has become thoroughly anti-slavery in sentiment. Even those who contend for our constitutional rights share in the universal opinion that slavery is a great moral and social evil. Those who have adopted the pro-slavery view are exceedingly few in numbers, and are regarded by the mass of Northern people as more fanatical than the most extreme Abolitionist. The press, the pulpit, the rostrum of the North are clamorous with declamation against us and our institutions. Slavery is considered not only immoral but debasing to both owner and owned. It is, they say, a relic of barbarism and a disgrace to an enlightened people. We are not regarded as equals but are merely tolerated, as persons whom they in their wisdom may possibly reform and improve. Churches refuse us participation in religious rites, and a baleful element of religious hate adds fuel to the fire of political dissension. From present appearances, the North will before very long be unanimous in opinion, and if it has the power or can invent the means, it will be ready to reduce the South to the condition of Hayti and Jamaica, and expect the approval of God upon the atrocity.

It is unquestionably true, although it be upon false issues, that the sympathies of the civilized world are united against us. The name of slavery is hateful to the ears of freemen and of those who desire to be free. The wise and just subordination of an inferior to a superior race, is rashly confounded with the old systems of oppression and tyranny, which stain the pages of history and have excited the righteous indignation of the world. We are supposed to have proved recreant to the great principles and examples of the liberators of mankind. It is almost impossible at present to disabuse the public mind of Europe and of the North of this shallow prejudice. In the meantime, whilst carrying out the designs of Providence in relation to the negro race, we must rest for a while under a cloud of obloquy and abuse. Let us be faithful to our sublime trust, and future ages will appreciate the grandeur and glory of our mission.

The pro-slavery sentiment is of recent development. It is more recent than any of the great inventions which have created the distinctive forms of our modern civilization. It is more recent than many of the great innovations of thought which now agitate mankind. The great and good fathers of our Republic unquestionably entertained anti-slavery sentiments or

predilections, and the flippant Abolitionist thinks he has silenced us forever by quoting the opinions of Washington and Jefferson and Madison on this subject. The anti-slavery sentiment of that era was partly derived from the radical influence of the French revolution, the mad frenzies of which fearful convulsion, the fanatics of the North may yet repeat in the Western hemisphere. It was partially also deduced from narrow, uncertain and sometimes false premises. The lapse of time has secured us a better stand-point. Africa has been explored and the African studied, anatomically, socially, morally, ethnologically and historically. Not only the physical science of man but the philosophy of history itself has been almost created since the days of the revolution. The question of slavery has been thoroughly sifted. The metaphysical and theological as well as the political bearings of the subject have been closely scrutinized. Liberia is before us with its feeble and precarious existence, with its little torch of civilization nearly extinguished by the foul atmosphere of surrounding heathenism. St. Domingo is before us with its bloody teachings, and Jamaica with its silent monitors of pauperism and decay. The meagre slave population of the last century has increased to four millions. Cotton and sugar have risen to an unparalleled political and industrial importance, so that the whole civilized world is deeply interested in its maintenance of African slavery. And lastly, though not leastly, the free negro settlements in the North and in Canada are social experiments for our analysis and instruction.

This pro-slavery party includes, with insignificant exceptions, nine millions of people of Anglo-Saxon blood. It is diffused over territory sufficient for a mighty empire. It contends that its principles are based upon large and safe inductions, made from an immense accumulation of facts in natural science, political economy and social ethics. It holds the most prominent material interests, and thereby the peace of the world in its hands; a wise provision of Providence for its protection, since those who cannot be controlled by reason, may be withheld by fear.

In opposition to the prevailing sentiment of the North, we believe that men are created neither free nor equal. They are born unequal in physical and mental endowments, and no possible circumstances or culture could ever

raise the negro race to any genuine equality with the white. Man is born dependant, and the very first step in civilization was for one man to enslave another. A state of slavery has been a disciplinary ordeal to every people who have ever developed beyond the savage condition. Those who cannot be reduced to bondage, like the American Indian, perish in their isolated and defiant barbarism. Freedom is the last result, the crowning glory of the long and difficult evolution of human society. Few nations have yet attained to that lofty standard. Those who say that the French, the Italians or the Prussians, are not yet fit for freedom, and are still unable to appreciate the blessings of constitutional liberty, would thrust the splendid privilege of Anglo-Saxon superiority upon the semi-barbarous negro! What folly, what madness!

Man has no "inalienable rights"--not even those of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." If the life he leads, the liberty he enjoys, and the happiness he pursues, are not consistent with the order and well-being of society, he may righteously be deprived of them all. Instead of that "glittering generality," which might serve as a motto for the wildest anarchy, the truth is, that men and races of men have certain natural capacities and duties, and the right to use the one and discharge the other. That government is the best, and its people the happiest, not in which all are free and equal, but in which equal races are free, and the inferior race is wisely and humanely subordinated to the superior, whilst both are controlled by the sacred bonds of reciprocal duty.

The negro is a permanent variety of the human race, inferior to almost all others in intellect, but possessing an emotional nature capable of the most beautiful cultivation. The greater part of this race in its native Africa is sunk in the deepest barbarism. What little civilization a few tribes may have, has been imposed upon them by Arabic and Moorish conquerors. Left to themselves, these poor people would no doubt remain barbarous forever; but when domesticated by the white man, they are elevated and christianized. The transfer in their bondage, from black men to white men, by the slave trade, was the first dawn of promise to the benighted children of Africa. It was permitted by God in order to teach us the way in which the dark races are to be elevated and civilized. Jamaica and Hayti have also

been permitted, as timely and salutary warnings, not to desert the path which was marked out by Providence.

African slavery is therefore a certain relation of capital and labor, in which capital owns its labor and is bound to maintain and protect it. It is only thus that an inferior race can exist in contact with a superior one. In the Sandwich Islands, in Australia, in New Zealand, the aborigines are passing away before the encroachments of English power and at the mere presence of English civilization. The free negroes of the North are dying out beneath the cold climate and the colder charities of that region. Freedom and competition with the white man would ultimately annihilate the negro race in the South. The only hope of the African is in his just subordination to the superior type.

Certain physical and spiritual peculiarities of the negro necessitate his subjection to the white man. It is for his own good that he is subjected. As long as this was doubtful or not clearly seen, the South itself was opposed to slavery. It remonstrated with England for imposing the institution upon it, and with Massachusetts for insisting upon a continuance of the slave-trade for twenty years after the adoption of the federal compact. The South is now fully convinced of the benefits and blessings it is conferring upon the negro race. It is beginning to catch a glimpse of the true nature and extent of its mission in relation to this vast and growing institution. The government of the South is to protect it; the Church of the South is to christianize it; the people of the South are to love it, and improve it and perfect it. God has lightened our task and secured its execution by making our interests happily coincide with our duty.

We anticipate no terminus to the institution of slavery. It is the means whereby the white man is to subdue the tropics all around the globe to order and beauty, and to the wants and interests of an ever-expanding civilization. What may happen afar off in the periods of a millennial Christianity we cannot foresee. No doubt the Almighty in his wisdom and mercy has blessings in store for the poor negro, so that he will no longer envy the earlier and more imposing development and fortunes of his brethren. Some shining Utopia will beckon him also with beautiful illusion

into the shadowy future. But with those remote possibilities we need not trouble ourselves. His present duty is evidently "to labor and to wait."

The Southern view of the matter, destined to revolutionize opinion throughout the civilized world, is briefly this: African slavery is no retrograde movement, no discord in the harmony of nature, no violation of elemental justice, no infraction of immutable laws, human or divine--but an integral link in the grand progressive evolution of human society as an indissoluble whole.

The doctrine that there exists an "irrepressible conflict" between free labor and slave labor is as false as it is mischievous. Their true relation is one of beautiful interchange and eternal harmony. When each is restricted to the sphere for which God and nature designed it, they both contribute their full quotas to the physical happiness, material interests, and social and spiritual progress of the race. They will prove to be not antagonistic but complementary to each other in the great work of human civilization. From this time forth, the subjugation of tropical nature to man; the elevation and christianization of the dark races, the feeding and clothing of the world, the diminution of toil and the amelioration of all the asperities of life, the industrial prosperity and the peace of nations, and the further glorious evolutions of Art, Science, Literature and Religion, will depend upon the amicable adjustment, the co-ordination, the indissoluble compact between these two social systems, now apparently rearing their hostile fronts in the Northern and Southern sections of this country.

The only "irrepressible conflict" is between pro-slavery and anti-slavery opinion: Here indeed collision may be inconceivably disastrous, and fanaticism may thrust her sickle into the harvest of death. The pro-slavery sentiment is unconquerable. It will be more and more suspicious of encroachment and jealous of its rights. It will submit to no restriction, and scouts the possibility of any "ultimate extinction." Nothing will satisfy us but a radical change of opinion, or at least of political action on the subject of slavery throughout the Northern States. The relation of master and slave must be recognized as right and just, as national and perpetual. The Constitution must be construed in the spirit of its founders, as an instrument

to protect the minority from the domination of an insolent majority. The slavery question must be eliminated forever from the political issues of the day. No party which contemplates the restriction of our system and its ultimate extinction can be tolerated for a moment. In assuming this bold attitude we simply assert our obvious rights and discharge our inevitable duty.

Now the Northern mind is equally determined and defiant. It has literally gone mad in its hostility to our institutions. The most conservative of the Republican party look forward complacently to the restriction and ultimate extinction of slavery, in other words, to the Africanization of the South and our national destruction. We will see to it that they precipitate no such calamity upon us, and we warn them to look carefully to their own fate. When a Northern Confederacy can no longer like a vampire suck the blood of the sleeping and compliant South; when agrarianism and atheism and fanaticism and socialism do their perfect work in a crowded and crowding population, will not the dark enigmas of free-labor civilization press heavily upon it, and the dread images evoked by the prophetic wisdom of Macauley arise indeed--taxation, monopoly, oppression, misery of the masses, revolution, standing armies, despotism, &c.? It may yet deserve the strange epitaph written for this nation by Elwood Fisher:

"Here lies a people, who, in attempting to liberate the negro, lost their own freedom."

Have we rightly comprehended the fearful import of those words, *the Africanization of the South*? According to the present rate of increase, in fifty years the negroes of these States will amount to twenty millions. Suppose them to be restricted to their present arena. Suppose them in addition to be free. Imagine the misery, the crime, the poverty, the barbarism, the desolation of the country! The grass would grow in the streets of our cities, our ships would rot in their harbors, our plantations would become a wilderness of cane-brakes. The re-subjugation of the negro, or the extermination of one race or the other would be inevitable, and in any event our children would be beggared with an inheritance of woe. Let us swear upon the altar of God, that as Christians and citizens we

will resist to the death the first step which might lead us towards this awful abyss!

If the Republican party is permitted to get into power, the Africanization of the South may be gradual, but it will be sure. Their leaders already boast to applauding multitudes that the heel of the North is at last on our necks. When the power, the patronage, the prestige of the federal government are wielded against slavery; when Southern men take office under it, and first apologize and then approve; when a free-soil sentiment gradually percolates through the South itself; when the brightness of Southern honor is tarnished, and the integrity of Southern opinion destroyed, what will be, what must be the inevitable result? Nothing hasty or violent will be attempted. The iniquity will be accomplished under the forms of the present Constitution. Remember that the coins of Nero bore the image of the Goddess of Liberty, and that a perverted Constitution is the choicest instrument of tyranny. Lulled by pleasant narcotics, we will pass from dreams of security, into the sleep of death. Or if we rouse ourselves at last, and reach out for our fallen thunderbolts, we will be found, like Sampson, blind and helpless, and they will make sport of our misery. The silken cords with which they bind us now, will change to iron fetters in our moment of revolt.

The precedent alone would be fatal. Shall we submit to an administration which received not a single vote in ten of our States? We could not be represented in its cabinet, nor in any foreign mission, for what Southern gentleman of proper sensibilities would accept office at its hands? The South would be unrepresented at home or abroad. She would have received a blow, politically, socially and morally, which would ensure her destruction. This is precisely what Seward, Beecher and Greeley are aiming at. We are to be coaxed, cheated, legislated out of our rights and liberties. What cannot be achieved by trickery, will at length be attempted by force. The most hateful feature in the despotism which threaten us is its religious element. If we are outraged because the Constitution is violated and broken, what shall we say of those hypocrites or madmen who have perverted the Word of God to the most detestable purposes of man!

The true test of statesmanship, according to Burke, is to preserve and improve, not to abolish and destroy. We apply this to the institution of slavery, and are willing to accord it to the existing Union: Have we exhausted our Constitutional remedies? Is not the Republican party powerless for injury, and may we not anticipate a thorough reversion of Northern judgment? These questions, and others like them, have been met and answered a thousand times by the able leaders of the South. Nothing but the speedy and universal uprising of the Northern people in behalf of State rights and Southern equality can preserve the Union. They have committed the aggressions, let them make the overtures. Is this miracle to be expected, and are we to await credulously its accomplishment? Compromises and compacts, the temporary make-shifts of politicians and philanthropists, will be useless. With what ingenuity the most sacred compact may be perverted, with what facility the most perfect compromise may be broken! You may put a new piece on the old garment, but the rent will be made worse.

The fact is, the Constitution is dead, for it carried with it the seeds of its own dissolution. The Union has achieved its mission; the last page of its history is written, and it may be safely deposited in the glorious archives of the past. The genius of Anglo-Saxon liberty, when she emigrated to these shores, bore twins in her bosom and not a single birth. The Northern race, bold, hardy, intelligent, proud and free, will receive into its embrace the heterogeneous spawn of European civilization, and mold it to its own shape, and prepare it for its own destiny. The Southern people are brave, courteous and gentle, credulous and forbearing--loving friends, chivalrous enemies and good masters, to whose strong and generous hands alone the Almighty would entrust the tutelage of his most helpless and degraded children.

The time for our separation has come, and let all good men unite to avert the calamity of civil war. But at all hazards the dissolution must come. The evolution of history, according to the laws of Providence, which supervise even the falling of a sparrow, necessitates it and demands it. The diversity of character, opinion, interest, climate and institutions in the two sections is beyond remedy. Each has a separate mission to fill and a glorious destiny to

accomplish. In our present relations, we incommode each other, threaten the peace of the world, and retard the operations of Providence. Let us part in peace; let us have an equitable distribution of the public property and the public territory; let us have an alliance offensive and defensive; let us scorn the idea, so mournfully entertained by many, that constitutional liberty will perish because we are divorced, that representative government will prove a failure because it becomes our duty and interest to separate. Let us prove by our wisdom and our courage that those great principles are dearer and more powerful than ever. Let us emulate each other only in the arts of peace, in the cultivation of friendship and in the worship of God.

It is unfair to represent this question as one of secession or submission. The word submission, in the sense of political degradation, does not exist in the Southern vocabulary. There is no man in the South so stupid, so cowardly, so base as to be willing to live in the Union as it is. There is no difference between us as to the fanaticism and tyranny of the North, no difference as to the wrongs and injuries of the South. Some of us would secede at once, unconditionally and forever. Others would give the North a last chance to abandon her false position, to make apologies and amend, and to secure us in the strongest bonds imaginable, against not only the encroachments but the existence of the Republican party. The difference is rather nominal than real, for all the conservatives doubt and many despair of proper concessions from the North. With those concessions, disunion is probable, without them it is inevitable.

It is the business of the Cotton States to move first in this important matter. They alone are the great conservators of the institution of slavery. The people of Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky and Missouri are unquestionably with us in spirit and principle, but we cannot disguise the fact, that the tenure of our social system in those States is feeble and failing. Those great communities must do as in their wisdom they see best, but we cannot wait for their decision nor promise to abide by it. Whether they go with the North or declare for a separate sovereignty, the mission of the Cotton States must be equally accomplished. We cordially invite their co-operation and believe they will share largely and richly in the benefits of a Southern Confederacy, and in event of trouble, we pledge our lives and fortunes to

the defence of their border.

To the professed Abolitionists, that motley crew of men who should be women and of women who should be men; who see in Fred Douglass a hero and in John Brown a martyr, whose venom is proportioned to their ignorance, as some animals are said to be fiercest in the dark; and who are ready to perpetrate the blackest crimes in the name of liberty and under the garb of virtue, we have *nothing* to say.

The Republican party itself, the best and the worst of it, we charge with having outraged our feelings, violated our rights, and initiated a policy which, if carried out, will be destructive of our liberties. It is not an election but a usurpation, and if we acquiesce, we are not citizens but subjects. The forms of constitutional liberty may have been observed, but the spirit of tyrannic dictation has been the presiding genius of the day. Suppose the people of the North were to repeal their obnoxious laws, to confirm and abide by the decision of the Supreme Court, to divide the territories in an equitable manner, and to recognize the equality as well as the Union of the States, what and where would the Republican party be? Dissipated into thin air, dissolved like an empty pageant, not leaving a trace behind. With the Republican party, therefore, as it exists at this hour we have no parley. If it questions us, we have no reply, but the words of the gallant Georgian. "Argument is exhausted, we stand to our arms."

To the conservative men of the North, who sacrificed their time, treasure, interest and popularity in our behalf, and who have proffered their blood in our defence, we have no language which can truly express the gratitude of our hearts. Generous and faithful spirits! Stand bravely a little longer in the imminent deadly breach, which is yawning between the North and the South, and stay, if it yet be possible, the bloody hand of fanaticism. Raise your eloquent voices once more for equality and fraternity, for justice and union. If it prove in vain, as alas! it will, keep firm at least to your principles and your faith; work without ceasing as a leaven of good in your infatuated communities; infuse into the contest before us some chivalric element, worthy of yourselves and of us, which, if the worst comes, shall mitigate the horrors of war, and hasten the returning blessings of peace.

When we think of you in the future, we will forget the violence of individuals and the disloyalty of State governments; we will forget the calumnies of Sumner and Phillips and Giddings, the blasphemies of Emerson and Cheever and Beecher, and the vile stings and insults of the aiders and abettors of thieves and assassins; we will willingly forget them all, and entwine you tenderly in our memories and affections, with the immortal friends and compatriots of our own revolutionary sires--with Otis and Warren, and Hancock and Putnam, and Wayne and Hamilton and Franklin. And in the fearful troubles which may come also upon your fragment of this dismembered nation, may the sign of our covenant be found upon every one of your door-posts, to ward off the destroying angel from your favored and happy homes!

Southerners! In this great crisis which involves the welfare of the present and the future, let us be united as one man. Let us survey the whole question in all its bearings, immediate and prospective. Let us act calmly, wisely, bravely. Let us take counsel of our duty and our honor, and not of our danger and our fears. Let us invoke the guardian spirit of ancestral virtue, and the blessing of Almighty God. Let us remember that, although precipitancy is a fault, it is better, in a question so vital as personal and national independence, to be an age too soon than a moment too late. If we succeed in establishing, *as we shall*, a vast, opulent, happy and glorious slave-holding Republic, throughout tropical America--future generations will arise and call us blessed! But if it be possible, in the mysterious providence of God, that we should fail and perish in our sublime attempt, let it come! Our souls may rebel against the inscrutable decree of such a destiny, but we will not swerve a line from the luminous path of duty. With our hands upon our hearts we will unitedly exclaim, let it come! The sons and daughters of the South are ready for the sacrifice. We endorse the noble sentiment of Robert Hall, that he has already lived too long who has survived the liberties of his country!

WILLIAM H. HOLCOMBE.

Waterproof, Tensas Parish, La.

Transcriber's Notes:

Passages in italics are indicated by *italics*.

The following misprints have been corrected: "opionions" corrected to "opinions" (page 3) "improves" corrected to "improve" (page 6)

Other than the corrections listed above, spelling has been retained from the original.

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