

New Bethel Christian Life Report – July 2012

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www.Senate.gov
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Quote of Day

“The man who is right is a majority. We, who have God and conscience on our side, have a majority against the universe.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852 at the Free Soil convention in Pittsburgh on the Fugitive Slave Bill. In Frederic May Holland’s *Frederick Douglass – The Colored Orator* (NY: Funk & Wagnalls, 1891; 442p.): 212; the following is condensed from pages 207-212 of Holland as he outlined the history and then quoted Douglass’ cogent appeals.

But do you know the CONTEXT of that mighty quote? Holland gave the context in a prior speech by Douglass at a Fourth of July celebration on July 4, 1852, *before* the Civil War, during which was a free man in *some* states and a fugitive in other states. In that **Fourth of July speech** he said these incendiary words, which speaks to a fire and clarity of conviction not often seen today anywhere:

“Fellow-citizens, above your national, tumultuous joy [in the Fourth of July celebrations], I hear the mournful wail of millions, whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are to-day rendered more intolerable by the jubilant shouts that reach them. If I do forget, if I do not faithfully remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day, ‘may my right hand had forget her cunning, and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.’ To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme, would be treason most scandalous and shocking, and make me a reproach before God and the world.... [identifying himself with slaves as a former slave] I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future. Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity which is outraged, in the name of liberty which is fettered, in the name of the Constitution and the Bible which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare call in question and denounce with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery, the great sin and shame of America. ‘I will not equivocate; I will not excuse;’ I will use the severest language I can command; and yet not one word shall escape me that any man....

“But I fancy I hear some one of my audience say, it is just in this circumstance that you ... fail to make a favorable impression.... Would you argue more and denounce less, would you persuade more and rebuke less, your cause would be much more likely to succeed. What point in the anti-slavery creed would you have me argue? On what branch of the subject do the people of this country need light? Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? That point is conceded already.... There are seventy-two crimes in the State of Virginia, which, if committed by a black man (no matter how ignorant he be), subject him to the punishment of death; while only two of these same crimes will subject a white man to the like punishment. What is this but the acknowledgement that the slave is a moral, intellectual, and responsible being.... Southern statue books ... forbidding, under severe fines ... the slave to read or write.... When the dogs in your streets, when the fowls in the air, when the cattle on your hills, when the fish of the sea, and the reptiles that crawl shall be unable to distinguish the slave from the brute, then will I argue with you that the slave is a man.

“For the present, it is enough to affirm the equal manhood of the negro race. Is it not astonishing that, while we are plowing, planting, and reaping, and using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses ... building ships, working in metals of brass, iron ...; that, while we are reading, writing, and ciphering, and acting as clerks, merchants, and secretaries, having among us lawyers, doctors, ministers, poets, authors, editors, orators, and teachers; that, while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises common to other men – digging gold in California, capturing the whale in the Pacific, feeding sheep and cattle on the hill-side, living, moving, acting, thinking, planning, living in families as husbands, wives, and children, and above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian’s God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave – we are called upon to prove we are men?

“Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? That he is the rightful owner of his own body? ... Is it to be settled by the rules of logic and argumentation, as a matter beset with great difficulty, involving a doubtful application of justice, hard to be understood? How should I look today

in the presence of Americans, dividing and subdividing a discourse to show that men have a natural right to freedom, speaking of it relatively and positively, negatively and affirmatively? To do so would be to make myself ridiculous, and to offer an insult to your understanding. There is not a man beneath the canopy of heaven that does not know that slavery is wrong for *him*.

“What! Am I to argue that it is wrong to make men brutes, to rob them of their liberty, to work them without wages, to keep them ignorant of their relations to their fellowmen, to beat them with sticks, to flay their flesh with the lash, to load their limbs with irons, to hunt them with dogs, to sell them at auction, to sunder their families, to knock out their teeth, to burn their flesh, to starve them into obedience ... to their masters? Must I argue that a system, thus marked with blood and stained with pollution, is wrong? No; I will not. I have better employment for my time and strength than such arguments would imply.

“What, then, remains to be argued? Is it that slavery is not divine; that God did not establish it; that our doctors of divinity are mistaken? There is blasphemy in the thought. That which is inhuman cannot be divine. Who can reason on such a proposition? ... The time for such argument is past.

“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation’s ear, I would today pour out a stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake!”

Holland then interjected that in the following month of August, Rochester sent a colored delegate to the Free Soil convention in Pittsburgh, at which black and white abolitionists gathered. On the steamboat, both coming and going, the black delegate had to pass the night on the deck. With fare paid for breakfast in a the general cabin, his chair was pulled out from under him by the captain. No refund given. Furthermore, the train for Pittsburgh stopped for dinner at a hotel; he was not allowed to eat. At the convention, as Douglas entered he was ushered to speak, the white speaker yielding to the acclamation. Douglass brought the house down several times. **On the Fugitive Slave Bill**, among other things, Douglas pleaded thusly:

“[The Fugitive Slave Bill] is too bad to be repealed, a law fit only to be trampled under foot.... The man who takes the office of a bloodhound ought to be treated as a bloodhound.... This infernal law does not interfere with singing of psalms ... but with the weightier matters of law, judgment, mercy, and faith.... Human government is for the protection of rights, and not for the destruction of rights.... It has been said that we ought to take the position of the greatest number of voters. That is wrong. It was said, in 1848, that Martin Van Buren would carry a strong vote in New York. He did, but he almost ruined us. He merely looked into the pig-pen to see how the animal grew, but the table was the final prospect he had in view. He regarded the colored population as fatlings to be devoured. Numbers should not be looked to so much as right. **The man who is right is a majority. We, who have God and conscience on our side, have a majority against the universe.**”

Holland then credits to Douglas with the idea that became, “One with God is a majority.”

Maness: what will it take to kindle Douglas’ fire and crystal clarity today against the corruption spreading so profusely throughout our land? It will not happen from a “holier than though” attitude. It will not come from mere statements or quotes from Scripture, as right as the quotes may be. I *know* it will not come from a gentle rain but perhaps it *could* come from a FIRE, even a whirlwind or earthquake of words hitting home.

“Baptists Debate Notion of ‘Christian America’”

by David Roach and Tammi Ledbetter, *Southern Baptist Texan* (6-24-12), edited by M.G. Maness

This article was among *eight* full articles that mostly quoted from recent Southern Baptist Convention leaders and scholars including ERLC President Richard Land, going back to Roger Williams and James Madison, along with a several sidebars including a quote from the *Baptist Faith and Message*, Art. XVII, On Religious Liberty, and three short book reviews on Land’s *The Divided States of America: What Liberals AND Conservatives Are Missing in the God-and-Country Shouting Match* (Thomas Nelson, 2007; 243p.), Jerry Sutton’s *A Matter of Conviction: A History of Southern Baptist Engagement with the Culture* (B&H Pub., 2008; 502p.), and Thomas White, Jason Duesing, and Malcolm Yarnell’s compilation *First Freedom: The Baptist Perspective on Religious Liberty* (Broadman & Holman Academic, 2007; 195p.). The decisive conclusion by SBC Baptist scholars and leaders, hands down, is that **America is not a Christian Nation and was not founded as one**. The subtle conclusion was that SBC Baptists are NOT really debating the “notion” of a Christian America at all, but are defending our ancient roots is defending separation of church and state in full religious freedom that is our Baptist heritage.