

THE DOCTRINE OF FORCE.

A Protest by Rev. William Brown Against the Imperialistic Tendencies of the Church.

In all the ages of the church there has been one thing manifested and that is when the ministry have become demoralized, and have followed after wealth and power and forsaken the fundamental principles of Christianity. There has risen within the church itself, men of power, and force to call the people back to the foundation of principles. In this way arose Sarvanola, Luther, Wesley. So in these latter times there seems to be men in the ministry who cannot be beguiled with the glitter of wealth. It is with pleasure that the Independent presents its readers with a most powerful discourse against the recent tendencies to forsake the doctrines upon which civilization has become what it is and go back to the old Roman and pagan doctrine of force. The following sermon is commended to the readers of this paper whether they be churchmen or not for soundness of argument, the ability and force with which the old truths are put and the protest that is made against forsaking them for the new doctrine of imperialism. The sermon is by Wm. T. Brown, pastor of Plymouth church, Rochester, N. Y. Mr. Brown took for his text:

John xix. 10: "Pilate therefore saith unto Jesus, speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee and have power to crucify thee?"

In Pilate's official palace at Jerusalem nearly nineteen hundred years ago, was enacted a scene in the drama of history which discloses with marvelous clearness the tragedy which is perpetually taking place in this world of ours. In that judgment hall in far away Palestine are outlined with perfect accuracy the forces which are perpetually arrayed against each other.

The issue drawn in that room between the two men who stood there face to face is the only moral issue that this world ever knew or ever can know. These two men are the representatives and embodiment of the perpetually hostile forces of this world of mankind. One of these men was Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, official representative of Tiberius Caesar. The other was Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet without a church, a man without a country, the discredited and despised apostle of the gospel of love. Pilate and Jesus! These are the two central figures in that historic picture which time nor change can ever erase from human memory.

Who are these two men, and what do they represent? What is the nature of the issue which was there so clearly drawn? What do we know about this historic scene?

We know that Pilate is an official of the Roman government. We know that no document exists to-day which substantiates or suggests any charge against that Galilean prophet which can make him a criminal. We know that this scene contains not even a hint of justice. The prisoner at the bar is guilty of no crime. The judge of that throne does not in the remotest way suggest a suspicion of justice. Pilate represents just one thing, and only one. And that is bald, brute force. No matter what his personal qualities may have been. They do not figure. He is an official. He is nothing but the projection of Caesar's personality and power. He embodies the existing government. He is the incarnation of a morally colorless power. It is of no consequence that the Roman tribunals sometimes administered justice. History bears me out in saying that they did so only when justice would answer the purpose of Caesar better than injustice. Pilate on the throne of judgment is the embodiment of Caesarism—of blind, brute force. That is exactly what the words of Pilate, addressed to that silent, worn-out man before him, mean, "Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee?" That is the deliverance of absolute power. That is the language of inexorable fate. It has not a suggestion of justice. Justice has no place in the picture. Back of Pilate, back of his words and his will, back of the man and the office is a military force which holds the world in a vice-like grip. No other military power exists that will venture to dispute that domination. Pilate knows what he is talking about. He is absolutely secure in his position and he doesn't propose to waste any words. He is not there to weigh arguments or measure principles with that man.

That is not a court of justice. In the mind of Pilate and of that which Pilate represents the prisoner at the bar is nothing. It doesn't matter to Pilate who he is or what he is. This lone Nazarene is only one man against a vast empire. That empire can stamp out his life, as a man crushes an insect under his foot. Jesus of Nazareth has no claim to consideration at the hands of that huge engine of physical might. He lives only by the sufferance of Rome. Says Pilate: "I have power to set you free, and I have power to kill you. You are utterly helpless in my hands. I can do as I please with you. You are in the presence of omnipotence. Your only hope of living on this earth lies in your gaining the good will of Caesar. In the hands of Caesar hangs your destiny."

And what of the man on trial there? Does he stand for anything worth thinking about? Does he represent anything that is entitled to your consideration or mine? I care not what you think of any or all the sayings ascribed to him in these four gospels. I care not what your opinion be as to the superstitions which have so easily grown up in the minds of men and women concerning him. I challenge the world to find any moral fault in that man. Every generation from that day to this has echoed the reputed words of Pilate: "I find no fault in him." That verdict stands. Perhaps he was not as scholarly as many of his contemporaries. Hellin was far his superior in Jewish learning. Socrates and Plato and Aristotle were incomparably greater philosophers. Philo of Alexandria, who lived through the same period, far excelled him in speculative wisdom. No one would think of comparing him in literary merit with the least of the Greek and Roman writers. And Saul of Tarsus has certainly far overshadowed him intellectually in the great institution that calls itself after his title. But the man who that day stood before Pilate for trial occupies a moral pre-eminence which no man has yet disputed. And we know what he stood for. We know the contrast which this picture presents. We know that in that palace chamber brute force in the person of Caesar's representative stood that day face to face with Love in the person of the Nazarene. That is exactly the meaning of that scene. Love was on trial before a morally colorless Brute Force, occupying the throne as judge. Brute Force passing sentence on Love, Physical Might joining issues with Justice! That is the essential and eternal significance of Jesus before Pilate. "I have power to let you live, and I have power to slay you," was the message which Brute Force that day delivered to Love. And Love that day by the mouth of Jesus—and eternally by the lips of undaunted Christs of God—declared and ever will declare, "You have no power at all. You are the very embodiment of impotence. You cannot touch the hem of Love's garment. You are a shadow. You are nothing. There is no power in the universe but Love. Love is God and beside him there is none to dispute his sway. Force is impotent against Love. Might is helpless against Justice. It can but slay itself. Love holds the very constellations in its hand."

A few hours after that scene in Pilate's palace three crosses had been raised outside the city walls, and on the middle one hung the mangled, bleeding body of the Nazarene. And all the world in that first century cried out: "Caesar has triumphed. Jesus is vanquished. Brute force is sovereign. Love is dead. Hail to the victor and king!" So said the contemporaries of Pilate and Jesus, so said the princes and mighty ones of all the succeeding centuries, and so say their idiotic posterity today, in press and pulpit, in counting room and legislative hall, in judicial court and in executive mansion. "All hail to victorious and conquering power! Cast your garlands at the feet of the man who wins! Let the homage of all men be paid to the strongest navy! Hats off to the most successful murderer! Nothing in the gift of the nation is good enough for the man who has slain his thousands!" I wonder if we really think that those men of that first century who their kindred in any century since were right? World-wide power, impersonated by the Roman empire, said, "We have blotted this man from the earth. We have erased him from the slate. Might is King. There is no reality save power. The empire is God. Its dominion is everlasting. Its law is inexorable. There is no appeal. A mere insect in a little corner of the earth has been trod upon. A flock of foam on the current of Roman supremacy has disappeared. A flickering heresy has been snuffed out, never to glow again." Was that true? I appeal to history. Was there one smallest atom of truth in that verdict? What

are the facts? If you will permit your minds to follow the current of history from that day in Pilate's palace down through the next three centuries you will find that the verdict of Caesarism was utterly false. You will find that the scene at Jerusalem was but the first one in a tragedy upon which the curtain never fell and never will fall until the villain is slain and the hero is crowned. You will find that every Roman emperor that ascended the throne found himself face to face with the same entity which Jesus stood for. You will find that from the day Jesus was crucified straight onward to the day Constantine was crowned, almost exactly 300 years later, that great empire was engaged in one long massacre of men and women who held the name of Jesus in supreme reverence. You have in that history nothing clearer than the struggle of organized power against the rise and spread of those sentiments for which the crucified Galilean was supposed to stand. Caesarism still held the throne of power but in every nook and corner of that vast empire the followers of the man who had been crucified multiplied by hundreds, by thousands, by millions. The religious idea which blossomed from the life and words of Jesus was the one thing that did grow during those three centuries. The power of the Caesars waned. The power of Jesus waxed stronger with every hour. It mattered not that Nero and Domitian and Hadrian and Trajan and Severus and Maximus and Valerian and Diocletian and even the great Marcus Aurelius put to death the Christians in droves as the enemies of mankind. That crusade of extermination was doomed to failure. The whole army of the empire was not large enough to crush out that growing multitude of men and women who in some measure reproduced the life and spirit of Jesus. They did not resort to arms. They did not even resist arrest. They resisted nothing. They were the very incarnation of physical weakness, even when they had grown to be the largest sect in the empire. They knew no weapon but love. They had no defense but justice. And the day came when brute force had to give up the struggle, when Caesar had to make terms with Jesus, when physical could no longer hold its throne, except by alliance with the eternal power of love. Caesarism could not crush out Christianity as represented in the high moral ideals of those early centuries.

And we know today how blind and foolish was the creed of Caesarism. Find me one man who knows the name of Tiberius Caesar, and for that one and for every other one I will find you a thousand men who know far better the name of Jesus. Find me one man who has ever read the writings of Caesar, and I will find you 10,000 who are far more familiar with the reputed words of the Nazarene. Find me one man who cares anything about any or all of the Caesars, and I will find you a million who profess to worship the man whom Pilate crucified. We should not know even the name of Pilate today but for the fact that he was the executioner of Jesus. The empire of the Caesars came under the dominion of the men who revered Jesus as a god, and the monuments of her greatness have been built into the walls of the churches where he is worshipped. Think once more of that scene in Pilate's palace. What is the charge? What is the prisoner's plea? And what is the verdict of the judge? The established order is the plaintiff in that trial, and it is also the judge. And the indictment which it brings against the prisoner, is that the course he is pursuing, the ideals he cherishes, the teaching to which he has given utterance, are fatal to the existence of that order. No matter whether they are true or not. That is not admitted into the case. This man is adjudged worthy of death because the adoption of his life mean the overthrow of the established order. He has insisted that there is but one law of life, the law of love. He has declared that no other law is tolerable. He has abolished class distinctions. He has insisted that every man is a brother and every woman a sister. He has told men that they are to call no man master on the earth, that no man may justly lord it over his fellow, as the nations do. He has dared to challenge the justice of force. He has dared to analyze the methods of acquiring property. He has cried out against the selfish rich and powerful. He has befriended and cast in his lot with the poor. He has sown the seeds of discontent among the masses. He has so stirred the minds of his Galilean countrymen, that they have attempted to make him their leader in a violent revolution. His teachings are the most revolutionary the world ever

received. No matter what the basis of those teachings is. No matter how righteous or humane his principles. They cannot be tolerated by the existing order. They are inconsistent with its very institution. Slavery cannot breathe in the atmosphere of those principles. Tyranny is doomed and damned by them. They are the very antithesis of the powers of the empire. That man must die.

To these charges there could be but one plea on the part of the prisoner. Such had been his teaching. He had put himself squarely and absolutely upon the platform of love as universal law. Anything else is lawlessness. Force is a synonym for evil. Only justice can have any authority. Force can accomplish nothing but its own undoing. Only love of men—love between man and man—the recognition of the familyhood of the world—can survive. Only that has any authority over the conscience or conduct of men. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every hill shall be brought low," he had said. No human institution of whatever sort that does not rest squarely on justice, that is not the blossom of love, can live.

Caesarism could listen to no argument. It never does. It did not nor does it ever consent to the arbitration of reason and conscience. Its appeal is perpetually to the arbitrament of hard, cold, soulless might. And it crushed the Christ beneath its heel.

But what has it proved? Has it proved that Caesar was right and Jesus was wrong? Has it proved that force is the God of the universe, and love is sensibly folly? I will tell you what it has proved in that contest and in every other to any man with a vestige of conscience in him. It has proved that brute force is everywhere and always embodied lawlessness, incarnate murder, and the very antithesis of God.

This brief glance at the scene enacted at Jerusalem nearly nineteen hundred years ago, and its consequences is of little importance to you and me unless we discover that in that scene we have a glimpse of a conflict which is perpetually going on. We need to know that every human struggle has been essentially this very same thing which stands out so clear in the picture of Pilate and Jesus. Only as we see the historical struggles of the world to be the measuring of strength between brute force and love can we have any adequate idea of their meaning. Only so are we put in possession of a criterion with which to judge the phenomena we see about us. Here are two distinct ways of looking at the world and life, two distinct ideals, two distinct judgments upon human action. They are the ideal of Caesar and the ideal of Jesus. Caesarism declares that force is the only God, power is a synonym for justice. We have the power to enact our will. We will therefore enact that will. Justice is a name for that which power does or proposes to do. Caesarism in the first century said: "The ideals taught by this Galilean are inconsistent with the maintenance of the existing government. If this man is permitted to go on his way and teach what he does teach, the empire cannot stand. Caesarism and the ideals of Jesus cannot exist side by side in the same world. They are opposites. The ideals of Jesus are a menace to the ideals of Caesar. Jesus must die. Christianity must be exterminated."

Caesarism again found itself face to face with Jesus in the time of George the Third. It is declared that power is the only God, that all virtue is embodied in obedience to the existing government. It branded as rebels those men who presumed to dispute that dictum. It would not parley with any one. No man had a right to question its supremacy. To the handful of its subjects on these distant shores in whose souls flamed the light of a juster ideal, it said, "There is nothing to be discussed between us. You have no rights which I am bound to respect. This is not a question for argument. It cannot be submitted to the arbitrament of reason. Might makes right." And love which is only another name for justice, in the persons of our heroic fathers, declared that no such ideal is tolerable. It denied that false doctrine, and declared that no authority is tolerable save that which is founded upon justice, that no government anywhere on this earth is just save that which springs from the consent of the governed. And the tragedy of Calvary was re-enacted on these shores in 1776. Power sought to crush justice. Brute force asserted its title to sovereignty, and the cross of Christ was raised on every battlefield of the revolutionary war. And the sole claim of the fathers of this nation to immortality lies in the fact that they refused under any circumstances to accept that sovereignty. And in spite of

the fact that there were hundreds of men in this country who held to the creed of force, that might makes right, Caesarism again failed; for there were men here who were willing to die in defense of justice and liberty and equality.

But the flight of years again disclosed here in our very midst the hideous monster we believed we had crushed in the war for independence. We found ourselves saying in deeds and institutions as well as in words, "The black man is an inferior. He is made to serve. It is right that the white man should be master, and the black man a servant. The white man belongs to the superior race. He is the more intelligent. He has the power; let him use it." He did use it and always grew up on our soil. All the resources of government and all the results of culture were on the side of the white. But power which does not rest on justice and love is a phantom. The demand for freedom and equality had but to be asserted to become resistless.

How is it today? Do you need to have me indicate how we are enacting the Pilate scene all over this earth?

Disguise it or deny it as you will, this American nation, the nation of Washington and Jefferson, and Lincoln, of the Declaration of Independence and the Proclamation of Emancipation, of Bunker Hill and Gettysburg, of Fannell hall and of the immortal Liberty Bell—this nation by the will of the present administration declares the stupid and devilish creed that might makes right. No one imagines for a moment that we should be waging this war of brutal conquest in the Philippines, if we did not know we have the power to do so. Pilate's words to Jesus are on our lips, and Caesar's will is our only law. We have said to men who a year ago called forth the plaudits of the world in their brave fight for freedom, "We have power to do with you as we will. You have no choice in the matter. And if you dare to assert your inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, if you presume to appeal as did our fathers to the eternal principles upon which this nation was founded, we, their sons, will slay the last man of you who resists our will." My friends we are commemorating these days the most shameful and humiliating deeds that can ever blot the history of a professed democracy. We do not rest our cause on justice, but on force. There is no justice in it. There is no honor in it.

We have disgraced our flag. It ceases to represent anything that commands a spark of patriotism or enthusiasm, save the patriotism of partisans and the enthusiasm of brutes, when it flies above our soldiers engaged in killing people who are fighting for their inalienable rights, for rights which we are solemnly pledged by all that is most sacred in human history to maintain. I do not wonder that this administration and its supporters have disowned the Declaration of Independence, as has been done over and over again in the meetings of present day Tories. And a daily press that would not know a moral principle if it saw it, takes the place of Pilate, and calls those men traitors whose only sin is their love of liberty and their desire to grant to others what they claim for themselves!

I want you, my friends, to realize what all this means and whether it is leading us. We are resting our cause on force, and on nothing under heaven but force. Not the force of reason or justice, not upon the appeal which our action makes to humanity but on brute force. That is exactly the sum and substance of the matter. We do not argue and we do not appeal to a sense of right. We shoot, we kill, we crush. That is the only meaning our soldiers, or officers, or guns in the Philippines have. They stand for nothing but Brute Force. Spell it just as you like. Spell God out of it, as does the president and no end of clergymen and politicians and commercial buzzards, spell it with a capital G, and bow down before it. It means nothing under heaven but Brute Force. And Brute Force means everywhere and always injustice, robbery, and murder. It doesn't mean anything else anywhere. If that is your creed I cannot go with you. We belong to different worlds. I must decline to be counted in with any man who worships Brute Force. I acknowledge no God but love. I deny that Brute Force ever yet decided anything, except the mere question of physical strength. And its exercise can nowhere be indulged in, without lasting moral injury to the man or the nation which makes use of it. We have perjured and polluted ourselves. And as surely as we had to pay the price of our wickedness in blood in the slavery struggle so surely will we have to make similar payment in this business.

Mr. Kipling was quite right

when he said, "They shall judge your God and you." They have already judged the God of this nation and for us to talk of sending missionaries to those islands to introduce Christianity is adding insult to injury. We do not believe in Christianity. We have forfeited the right to be its apostle among the nations of the world. I venture the prediction now that not until a new Declaration of Rights has given birth here to a new nation shall we know any peace.

"But this policy of ours in relation to the Filipinos is only a piece of our policy. What this government means to the Filipinos, it means to our people. Our policy here as there is one of force. There is no question of justice in our dealing with those who are asking for their rights in this country. There is coming to be an almost universal cry among working men for justice. I dare to say that it has not been met on that basis. Caesarism is as truly enthroned in commerce here as it was in government in the Roman empire. Not justice, but brute force is relied on to keep things as they are. Caesarism in the first century knew that it could keep its throne only by slaying men like Jesus. History repeats itself. Caesarism now would keep its throne by suppressing all who oppose it. It would smother the voice of protest. It would drown the voice of conscience, which cries out against the wickedness of its deeds. It would silence every patriot by calling him a traitor. It would close the mails to free citizens of this republic and menace them with trial for treason which it dare not actually submit to a court.

Think for a moment of the meaning of the great commercial combinations which are now arising so rapidly. They stand for nothing but force. They do not argue. They strike. They do not rest their cause on justice. They rest it on power. If I am not right, I am open to correction. They make no pretense of appealing to a sense of right. Conscience has nothing to do with them. They are the creations of human beings, but they are as remorseless as an earthquake. Through them one group of men are saying to their fellows who happen to be the weaker, "We don't care whether your cause is just or not. That has nothing to do with the case. You are not dealing with a soul, when you deal with us. You are dealing with the inexorable and the inevitable." And when some of us who believe in something better, who hold the faith of Jesus, the faith of brotherhood, that the world is one family and has no law but love, that any substitute for that law is outlawry, no matter what high sounding scientific title you apply to it—when we presume to question the right of the system, when we say, "This is a matter for all to solve together. These institutions whatever they are effect us all. They concern the interests of all. Come now, and let us reason together. Let us open the books. Let us get to the bottom of things. Let us see what these institutions rest upon. Let us find out whether they are right and just."

When we make that proposal, what is the answer we receive? We are told that it is no business of ours. We are met with the answer of Pilate: "Knowest thou not that I have power to let you live and power to crush you?" We are told that there is nothing to investigate. We are met at the response of blind, brute force. We are made to understand that our one chance to live on this earth depends upon our keeping silent on these questions. They are not to be discussed. The only thing we are permitted to do is to get on the right side of this great machine. If we cannot do that we are ruthlessly crushed. Says the man who fears to have men know the origin of methods of the accumulation of property: "If you speak of these things in the pulpit, you must take the consequences. I will not contribute to the support of any man who insists upon applying the law and rule of love and brotherhood to all realms of human life. I will do what in me lies to silence every such voice. I will pay my money to the man who keeps well within the lines of safety, who preaches the simple, old-fashioned gospel of a full and free salvation in the world to come. I will let that man live on this earth who will confine himself to theology, who never says anything that could possibly offend the conscience of any selfish man. But the man who insists upon declaring plainly and clearly what he believes to be the truth of God, who is impelled to do so by no other motive than that of love of justice and love of men and who has anything to say that stirs hope in the hearts of the hopeless and courage in the souls of the despairing, that man shall starve; he shall be crushed; he shall be branded as an anarchist or by any other name which will

bring upon him the hatred of society. That man shall not live, if I can help it. There is not room on this earth for the established order if such men are permitted to live."

That is precisely what we are coming to, and we are coming to it fast. It is well that we should see it plainly, and decide where we propose to stand. You and I, my brothers, are going to stand with Jesus, or we are going to stand with Caesar. But wherever we decide to stand, let us not lose sight of one thing.

The creed of brute force is a transparent lie. There does not exist a single institution on this earth which can escape the closest scrutiny of the eye of justice. Justice is a solvent which nothing can resist. But it has dissolved empires, and it will dissolve every government that is erected on the basis of force. It has dissolved superstitions, and it will dissolve others, whether they are in the realm of religion or in the realm of industry and commerce. We cannot hide ourselves, our conduct, our theories from the light of justice. We need to know that love alone is eternal. We live in a shadow or a dream, lacking that knowledge. The Caesars are gone and their empire has melted away. The tyrannies and despotism of the Stuarts and Tudors and the Georges have vanished. The deeds of the nations today—of England in Egypt and India and South Africa—of Russia in Finland and China and Siberia—of the United States in Cuba and the Philippines are not to be dismissed with a word. They are going to be weighed in the balance. The ledger of retribution is not by any means made up. But they shall all pay to the last farthing. "The mills of God grind slow, but they grind exceedingly small; though with patience He stands waiting with exactness grinds He all." Spain, four hundred years ago, was the foremost nation of the earth. Today she has fallen to the rank of a tenth-rate power. In the days of her pride, she brooked no protest. The house of Hapsburg appealed not to reason or justice or love or humanity but always to brute force. She took the sword and though she waited long, she has well-nigh perished by the sword. We boast of the Anglo-Saxon race, as if it were proof against the demoralizing infection of dishonor and perfidy.

Not only in the Philippines have we appealed to the sword, but also in the mines in Idaho, and Colorado in Illinois, Pennsylvania and everywhere where men are demanding a living wage. We, in this country, are doing our utmost to teach the "silent, sullen people" of mine and factory and railroad that might makes right. Do you want to learn that lesson? Do we want to speak to the arbitrament of the sword in the industry as we have in conquest? We may be sure that they will not be slow to learn that lesson. And we ought to know that in teaching it we are sowing the wind to reap the whirlwind. It was Jesus who said, "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

The truth for which I am contending today and every day before the jury of this congregation and all to whom my words may go is the same old truth for which Jesus stood. It is the truth that brute force never decides anything that no question is ever settled until the solution which love dictates is reached. Might can never make right. Brute force can never consummate justice by whomsoever exercised. And we shall never have anything like peace or prosperity save as we have justice. The appeals to force from above will be met by the appeal to force from below. The anarchists of the avenues will continue to spawn the anarchists of the alleys. And by the same token justice and love will call forth justice and love. It lies in the power of men and women to say that the social and industrial development of these coming years shall be peaceful and happy, or warlike and sorrowful. Nero accused the Christians with setting fire to Rome and thousands of them were massacred in consequence. He could easily make that charge plausible. For he could prove that the faith of the Christians was morally opposite to that of the empire, and that its success meant the empire's downfall. But every student of history believes that Nero was the incendiary.

It is easy for our modern Nero to accuse the men of this time who hold to the faith of Jesus with the triumph of their struggle means the overthrow of the existing system. But they are no more traitors than the Christians of Rome. It is still Nero who is the traitor and incendiary. He is guilty of treason who repudiates the only principle upon which just government can be founded, not he who repudiates the administration which violates that principle. He is the incendiary who sternly reforms