



DISCOVERY

Edited by
L. DALE PATTERSON

LETTER FROM THE REV. GILBERT HAVEN (LATER TO BE BISHOP HAVEN) TO JOHN BROWN

John Brown was convicted of treason against the Commonwealth of Virginia, along with other crimes, for his raid on Harper's Ferry in late October of 1859 and was executed by hanging on December 2, 1859. Gilbert Haven was a committed abolitionist and had joined the New England Conference in 1851. Haven had come of age just a few short years after the division of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844 into regional bodies.

The following letter to Brown from Haven was discovered during processing of the Gilbert Haven papers, a gift to the General Commission on Archives and History from Charles Eric North. The letter gives a sense of the emotion response across the nation caused by Brown's action.

In the letter, Haven mentions having met Brown at an abolitionist meeting at Tremont Temple Methodist Episcopal Church in Boston. This is the same church which a decade later would see the founding of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The church has seen some significant history.

In addition to the letter, Haven enclosed a copy of a sermon he had preached on November 6th. Haven later published this sermon with the title "The Beginning of the End" in a collection entitled *National Sermons: Sermons, Speeches and Letters on Slavery and its War*, published in 1869. The sermons were given over a period of years from 1850 until 1868.

It is worth noting how Haven sees Brown as a martyr—one who has "... washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Haven was not alone in this sentiment as David Thoreau had written similar ideas

in a plea for Brown's life.

We do not know if Haven actually mailed the letter and it was later retrieved by him, or if this is a draft and he sent a clean copy to Brown. The lines of text that are crossed out could imply that it was a draft. But in fairness, crossing out lines of text in a letter was not uncommon; many of Haven's incoming letters from friends show the same practice.

Below is the text of the letter along with a transcript copy:

Capt. John Brown

Honored Sir

I take the liberty
to send you a copy of a discourse
I preached on Sabbath Evening Nov. 6th
I trust it will generally harmonize with
your views though it ~~some points~~ it will
undoubtedly differ from them.

I had the honor of taking you by the
hand on the platform of Jeremiah Douglas
at the Anniversary of the Church Anti-
Slavery Society last May, an honor which
I shall be proud to tell to my children.

I hope & pray that you & your asso-
ciates may be saved from the fate that
overhangs you. Millions of sympathizers
North & South send up earnest prayers
for your salvation. The heart if not the

Millions of prayers from the lips of Northern Friends
 from the hearts of us the lips of the poor slave it is
 daily to God for your salvation
 Cabin of the Slave is full of
 May he who has all the hearts, read, have you this or what
 agonizing entreaty. ^{May these prayers}
 voice your life through a royal government
 be answered by the Submission of the South
^{Call} In the voice of humanity, the ^{calls} voice of God
 that is speaking to his heart.
 But if all these cries & tears shall
 not prevail, may the presence of
 that ^{Heavenly Father} Comforter ^{be} with you & your
 fellow sufferers, ^{lifting you to heaven} sustaining you in
 your remaining ^{these} last trials & giving you an
 abundant entrance into the glorious
 Army of the martyrs who have gone
 up through much tribulation &
 washed their robes & made them
 white in the blood of the Lamb
 Most respectfully & Truly
 Your Friend & the Friend of
 the Oppressed
 Cambridge
 Nov 8th 59
 G. Haven

Transcription

Capt. John Brown
Honored Sir

I take the liberty to send you a copy of a discourse I preached on Sabbath Evening Nov. 6th(?). I trust it will generally harmonize with your views though in some points it will undoubtedly differ from them.

I had the honor of taking you by the hand on the platform of Tremont Temple at the anniversary of the Church Anti-Slavery Society last May, an honor which I shall be proud to tell to my children.

I hope and pray that you and your associates may be saved from the fate that overhangs you. Millions of sympathizers north and south send up earnest prayers for your salvation. The heart if not the millions of prayers from the lips of Northern

friends and from the hearts if not the lips of those poor slaves go up daily to God for your Salvation. [a line scratched out by Haven: "cabin of the Slave is full of agonizing entreaty. May those prayers be answered by the submission of"]

May He in whose hand are the hearts of men move upon him on whose voice your life hangs and may that governor obey to the call of humanity, the call of God that is speaking to his heart.

But if all these cries and tears shall not prevail, may the presence of the Holy Spirit, Comforter, be with you and your fellow sufferers fitting you for heaven sustaining you in your remaining trials and giving you an abundant entrance into the glorious army of the martyrs who have gone up through much tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Most respectfully and Truly
Your friend and the friend of the oppressed
G. Haven
Cambridge
Nov 18th 59