

# HISTORY IS A WEAPON

## The Axe at the Root

by William Thurston Brown (1901)

"And even now is the axe laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." —Matt. iii:10.

Some one has said: "I know no way of judging the future but by the past." I do not now recall the name of the man who first gave currency to that expression, but I am inclined to think it was one of the men to whom we are indebted for the inauguration of this American republic. At any rate, it was a man with his face toward the future. And it suggests two important truths. The right attitude of a man is toward the future. Every real problem and every worthy task with which men have to do has relation to the future. And that is very natural, because life is not stationary. It is in motion. It is motion. It is in process of expansion. It involves the necessity of constant change of environment. A seed manifests the first sign of life when it breaks open its shell and establishes for itself a larger environment. And from that time forward until it dies its life is marked by continuous change of environment. It lives for and toward the future. Only with the advent of death does this process of change cease.

The same is true of every form of life. Human life, whether you think of the individual or of the mass, must have relation to the future. It must face the future. It must judge of the future. That means that it must judge of the trend of things—must know something about the direction in which the world is moving. The world is not like a stagnant pond without inlet or outlet. It is a stream flowing on and on from the past into the future. And only that man lives a normal life who sees it so, who finds out the direction of its current.

And here is the value of the past. It can tell us something about our present and about the future toward which we move. In it we can see the current better than anywhere else. The record of the past is made up. It lies before us like a panorama—like a vast landscape stretching out beneath our feet as we climb a mountain side. The future is hidden by the heights that rise above us. But the past is clearer to the eyes of the man who climbs than it was when he was plodding wearily over its surface.

The real value, therefore, of a backward look into history lies in the fact that it is able to throw light on present day problems and duties. All the records of history are in this sense sacred, and it is the only real sacredness they can have. The man who goes to such records as to an oracle—as men used to go to some cave or temple where for a price some priest or hermit would assume to answer all his questions—gains nothing whatever from his search. These records are not oracles. There are no oracles. No man or group of men, no being human or divine, ever lived on this earth who possessed the ability to solve in advance and for all time the problems of society.

I am going to ask you to think with me now for a moment of a certain period of the past and of some light which it has to throw on the present. The particular period of which I am thinking lies at the beginning of what we call the Christian era. Whenever we date a letter or any other document we tacitly recognize the fact that something occurred or was supposed to have occurred 1900 years ago of sufficient consequence to have an influence in changing the world's calendar. To be sure, the calendar was not actually changed until seven or eight centuries after the event from which the new era dates. But, slow as men were to recognize the fact, a new era had dawned upon the world. Perhaps it is true that other eras have opened since the beginning of the Christian era which are of equal or greater importance. There is the era of the Great Reformation, the era of the Renaissance in Europe, the era of invention and discovery, the era of Democracy, the era of

Capitalism. It is not incredible to us that some time in the future, whether far or near I do not know, another era will open having incomparably vaster issues and bringing with it an unspeakably more joyous and inspiring gospel to men than that of 1900 years ago. And perhaps in recognition of that event another change in the calendar will be made, a new beginning of days and years will be established and humanity will consciously enter upon a new and glorious stage of its upward march. And perhaps, too, in that coming day men and women will speak names quite familiar to you and me, names of men some of whom we have seen and known, when they turn the pages of their bibles. It is no disparagement of the Christian era to hold the faith that other and grander eras lie ahead. Indeed, the real disparagement of the present era lies in the superstitious idea that it is the last and largest contribution to human progress.

I am going to recall to your minds some of the things which marked the beginning of this era and of all era that we know anything about, in order that we may more clearly see and more intensely feel the meaning of certain phenomena which mark the time we are living in.

Let us understand right here on the threshold of our thinking that no one and no group of men has a patent on any great era of human history. We call this the Christian era, and we trace its beginning from the birth of a Galilean named Jesus, whom his followers afterward called the Christ. To me the term "Christ" has no meaning and no value whatever. It is a purely theological term. It is born of speculation and superstition. It is only as the man Jesus that the founder of Christianity has any value to me. We trace this era back to the birth of Jesus, we say. But no greater mistake can be made than to say or think that Jesus created or set in motion the influences which made this era. We are bound to ask, "Where did Jesus get his ideas? Who and what shaped and fashioned the mind of Jesus?" And the answer to that question does not carry us up through a rift in the clouds to a realm beyond the blue, whence like a shooting star this man swept down into the life of the world. Not at all. The lineage of moral ideas and spiritual power runs on and on far back into a past which no historian has seen or reported for us. For Jesus is the child of the Hebrew prophets—of Isaiah, of Hosea, of Amos, of Moses, of all the poets and seers of Israelitish history. And they, in turn, were the product of other and remoter influences.

But it is of the immediate predecessor of Jesus that I want to speak first of all. That man is known in history as John the Baptist. The name given him by his parents was John, and he came to be known as the Baptist or Baptizer, because he introduced the rite of baptism for a different purpose from what had been known before. So far as any one man can be called the herald of the Christian era, John the Baptist was that man. During the very period when Jesus was meditating up in Nazareth upon what he had read and what he had seen—turning over in his mind the strenuous ideals of the old prophets, whose words in his day had gone somewhat out of fashion—and responding to the spirit of unrest and longing which just then permeated the whole human world like yeast—during that same period this man John, of almost the same age as Jesus, was doing the same thing. And this leaven of study and reflection took effect and ripened into action in John somewhat earlier than it did in Jesus.

Suddenly, about twenty-five years from what we call the beginning of our era, this man John appeared at the Jordan side preaching a message that stirred men as nothing had done since the days of the older prophets. Great crowds of people began to flock to the Jordan valley. This preacher did not have to find his congregation—they found him. The whole country was moved from center to circumference. All sorts and conditions of men came to John and he was for the moment the most powerful personality in Palestine.

It must not be thought that all this was due to John. It is not explained on the ground of magnetism or hypnotism. These undoubtedly explain the power of some men, but never of such men as John the Baptist. It was because John was the spokesmah of a feeling that existed far and wide in the minds of the people that they thronged him. And the one sentence which more than any other explains the career and ministry of John is this: "And even now is the axe laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." In those words John is describing not at all

something which he has hatched out of his own brain in the solitude of the desert, nor yet some event which he himself supremely desires, but something that is decreed by the conditions which exist.

John the Baptist was but the mouthpiece of his time, of humanity in the birth—throes of a new epoch in its life. That is all a prophet ever is. He never leads men into the new era. He simply sees it, feels its strenuous pulse, and announces it to his fellows. They hear his message, because it is nothing but the articulation of their own unworded thought and aspiration. His voice, his word, his summons, is only like the touch of a man's finger tip to the electric button whose pressure sets in motion the machinery of a vast enterprise. It is the one thing needed to establish the necessary connections. Before, men were insulated from each other. Buried under superstitions, cherishing false notions, living under the fatal spell of tradition and custom, the life current of progress was clogged. There is no unity, no consciousness of reality. By and by a man comes along whose word clarifies the air like a lightning flash, uncovers the truth, sends the invigorated blood leaping through arteries and veins, and moulds the scattered particles of humanity into solidarity and strength.

Such a man was John the Baptist. And so potent was he, so responsive to the throbbing truth of the Eternal that ever beats at the heart of the world, so simply and sternly true to life, that his voice sent its summons a hundred miles away into the little village of Nazareth, into the home of Joseph the carpenter, into the very soul of his eldest son, and from that moment the fate of Jesus was sealed. He left his home for the Jordan side, and to the last day of his life he was not the same man he had been before. He could never return to Nazareth as he left it. Nazareth could never be to him what it had been before. Nothing could. Nothing was. Everything was changed. Thenceforth a new light illumined all the world for that carpenter's son. He found it inevitable that he should see every phase and feature of life in a new light. So perfectly true is this that the fact has been recorded in the New Testament that his own mother and brother and sisters—the persons with whom he had lived under the same roof and eaten at the same table for nearly thirty years—hardly recognized him as the same man, and never from that point onward understood him. They even thought him insane.

Now, the explanation of all this is simple and clear. There is no mystery about it. The life of the world goes on in cycles. It is like the incoming tide on the seashore. There is an insweeping of the tide, then a momentary pause or reaction, then another flow that sweeps a little farther up the beach. Humanity is an organism. It grows, as the individual does. For a time there may be no sign of growth. There is going on a conservation of energy for another enlargement of life. So it was at that time. The world was ready for another forward step. The time was ripe for a new unfolding, for a fuller disclosure of truth. And John the Baptist was conscious of that fact. He gave it a voice.

This is what he means when he says: "Even now is the axe laid unto the root of the trees." It is as if he had said: "There's no use trying to patch up a decadent civilization. The tree of life is not bearing good fruit. It must be cut down and burned. Way must be made for something better. No half-way measures will suffice. The diseased limb is putrid. Nothing but the surgeon's knife will answer." John the Baptist was in the lineal ancestry of our own Lowell, who fifty years ago spoke words which, like those of John, give utterance to that new life, that new aspiration, that new conviction already pressing on the souls of men:

"The time is ripe, and rotten ripe, for change;  
Then let it come; I have no dread of what  
Is called for by the instinct of mankind;  
Nor think I that God's world will fall apart  
Because we tear a parchment more or less."

That is exactly what that sturdy Hebrew prophet said 1900 years ago. The axe is laid unto the roots of the trees. No patching. No mending. No makeshifts. Nothing will answer but a new life, a new beginning, a new order of things. As I have said, the people thronged him. They came in droves. First of all came the common people, the so-called lower classes. They have been from the beginning of history the first to respond to a prophet's voice. These immediately

aligned themselves with John. By voice and action they said: "We have been waiting for you. We understand you. Your voice but words our own deepest yearning." And from those men he took his disciples. A little later, so strenuous and so widespread was the feeling aroused by his preaching, down came the Pharisees and scribes, the respectable and the pious, the upper classes, the pillars of society, the learned, the privileged, the eminent, the somebodies of Palestine, the ruling class. They, too, were affected by what that man from the desert was saying. And they said to themselves: "We must go down and inquire into this disturbance. We must see what it means." And they joined the procession.

And what do you think John said when he saw them coming? You need not take my word for it. It is all right here in the third chapter of Matthew. This is what he said: "What has brought you here, generation of vipers? Are you fleeing from the wrath to come? Are you bent on escaping from the catastrophe which you yourselves have done your best to ensure?" And when this multitude of people, dimly conscious that in that strange prophet's words was involved some grave crisis for them all, cried out, saying: "What shall we do?" his unvarying answer was: "Repent." No word in the Bible has been so misrepresented as that. It has been made to mean penitence. We have been taught to think of it as having a place in some theological scheme relating to personal sin. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The word John used was not the word "repent." What he said to that crowd was, "change your minds. Admit to your thought new ideas. The world is not what you have thought it. You are living in a dream. You are following an illusion. Change your minds. About face. A new era is here. It requires a new type of man to meet it. Open your eyes and hail the new truth rising above the horizon. The life you are living is radically wrong. The system you are cherishing is rotten to the core. Do not imagine that these things can last. The tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and burned. Even now is the axe laid unto the root of your institutions. Their doom is sealed. They are a menace to the life of man. They must go."

Do we find all these words here? No. But we find their equivalent. The portrait of John could not have been more clearly drawn. We know him perfectly well. The whole world knows him. And the same is true of Jesus. We know him in spite of the long-continued effort of the institution which pretends to regard him as divine to fill the world with darkness and superstition. I say we know John the Baptist, and I'll tell you how we know what kind of man he was. Within less than twelve months after this young man of thirty first uttered his burning message there on the bank of the Jordan he was arrested, imprisoned and beheaded by order of Herod. And who was Herod? Herod was a man who bore the title of king, and that means just one thing, and only one. Herod was the agent—the paid agent—of the ruling class of his time. That is all Herod was. And what he did was applauded by every member of that class. It was exactly what they would have him do.

The truth of the matter is, John the Baptist had not been preaching six months before he discovered a fact which some people now on the eve of the twentieth century do not seem to know. He found out that there is such a thing as a *class struggle*. It was none of the common people that caused the arrest of John. They loved him. They listened to him. He spoke the language of their hearts. He aroused the highest aspirations of their souls. No, it was another class entirely that put this man out of the way. And of all the men who have lived on this earth whose words have been recorded and preserved, not one has had so much to say about this "class struggle" as this man Jesus, whom the great institution calling itself the Christian Church has the audacity to pretend to worship. There is not one discourse of Jesus on record nor an incident of his life reported in which that fact does not appear. What was the life of Jesus? It was one long, bitter struggle against the persistent, systematic persecution of one class of society. You need not believe me. You have access to the New Testament, and if that does not verify what I say I am a deliberate falsifier of history. It was not the common people that persecuted Jesus, though they did finally desert him. It was everywhere the pillars of church and state who did that. It is said that "the common people heard him gladly." It is nowhere said that the pillars of society did that. And the fate which the pillars of society visited upon John within less than twelve months from the beginning of his ministry they visited upon Jesus less than three years after. And they did it in both cases for the same reason—the

one reason which is always conclusive with that class—because John and Jesus were a menace to their interests.

But some one will say "Everything is changed now. We are living in the midst of a Christian civilization. This is the Christian era. This is a Christian government. And here is a great church overspreading the earth, founded and maintained for the sole purpose of preaching the gospel of that crucified Galilean." If any one ever says that to you, I want you to tell him nothing could be farther from the truth. There does not exist on this earth today an institution that is more distinctly or persistently hostile to all that Jesus stood for, or that is more radically opposed to all his teaching, or that has a greater contempt for that Nazarene, than this church which pretends to worship him as a God. The church did not even adopt the name of Jesus. It was under the name of Jesus that the pillars of church and state crucified him. They did not crucify a Christ. Not at all. They put to death Jesus of Nazareth, the man whose ideas and ideals were hostile to all they were cherishing. That was the man the pietists and rulers of that first century were after.

And the church of today has as great a contempt and hatred for that man as did those who nailed him on the cross. It is a Christ that the church worships and deifies. "Why do you preach so much about Jesus?" said a woman to me somewhat over a year ago. "We do not want to hear about Jesus. We want to hear about Christ." My friends, you can make anything you like out of a Christ. Christ is only a name, a title, a fancy, a superstition. But Jesus is a historic fact. You cannot evade that fact. It belongs to all the world. No one can take it away from us. There it is—a man of flesh and blood, a man with a message, a man with an ideal, a man with an experience of persecution and failure and death—an outlaw, a criminal, a felon. That is what law and authority made him. But the Christ is a mystery. Only the initiated can know anything about it. You must take it on faith. It is an attenuated theory, a missing link in the speculations of people living in a world of ghosts. So Christ is the great cornerstone of an institution whose permanence depends upon its power to mystify and delude men. An institution which will today squarely plant itself upon the historic fact of Jesus' life and teaching and advocate his ethics as the true basis of human association will be refused the designation of a church.

But the point I want to make is simply this, that the time comes when a radical departure must be made, when the axe must be laid unto the root of the trees, when the worthless structure of a false and outgrown civilization must be torn down and burned up as refuse, that a new and better growth may be realized. That time has come many times, and it is easy to see why it has come, why it is here now, and why it will come again and again in the future. It came 1900 years ago, not at the call of any individual. It was not from personal choice that John and Jesus acted as they did. They did not set out to get themselves killed. They loved life as really as you and I. Every man wants to live. That is his first and highest desire. But he may discover something that subordinates and smothers that desire. That was true of John and Jesus. It has been true of scores of others.

Illustrations of my point are scattered all through history. Savonarola illustrates it. He did not deliberately choose to get himself killed. But the time for the opening of a new era in the life of man was approaching. Savonarola had eyes to see, ears to hear, soul that was sensitive to the movings of the great organism we call Humanity. He saw how inadequate its existing garments were. He saw the open corruption of church and state, the denial on every side of every truth that time had uncovered. And he spoke. He could not do otherwise. He claimed no credit for it. He disowned the idea that he had fashioned any scheme for the church or the world. He said just what John did to those who criticised him. He declared himself only a "voice." That was all. His was the voice of awaking man. And the after years demonstrated the truth of his claim. He was the forerunner of the "great reformation."

The same was true of Rousseau and the French Encyclopedists, of Thomas Paine and Samuel Adams, of the fathers of the French and American Revolutions. And, by the way, nothing could more clearly indicate the putrid and decadent condition of our American civilization today than the selection of a list of heroes whose names are to be inscribed in a hall of fame. We have in that list some names, it is

true, who belong in any list of the world's great souls—Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Horace Mann, Henry Ward Beecher, Channing, Emerson, and others. But a list of heroic Americans that has no place for Thomas Paine, Samuel Adams, William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Harriet Beecher Stowe, John Brown, Henry George, Frances Willard, and others, is a monument to the blindness of the nation that applauds or ratifies the selection.

It was only the opening of another chapter in the scroll of human evolution that was marked by the great movement toward democracy which fell in the closing years of the eighteenth century. And who shall dare to say that it was not as sacred an epoch, as divine an unfolding in the life of man as that which has determined our calendar? And who shall dare to withhold the same meed of heroism from the men who then declared that the axe was laid unto the root of the trees which we pretend to give to the heroic souls of that first quarter of the first century? The truth of the matter is, and the developments of the coming years will prove it, we cannot refuse to recognize the sanctity of one epoch of human history without sooner or later denying all sacredness to every other. The movement has already begun which is to end in the utter repudiation of all that Jesus of Nazareth stood for. Indeed, there are men today—and they belong without exception to the ranks of the Pillars of church and state—who frankly say that Jesus was a misguided man, that his ethics have no place in the affairs of this world, and that the only thing that remains for men and women is to settle down to the ancient task of man's animal ancestry—that of coolly eating each other up. A good, respectable, Christian man of Rochester, who assured me with great solemnity that he believed in God, declared to me in this very room: "We must eat each other up. There is no other way." And it is such men as that upon whom depends the maintenance of the Christian Church! It is to such men as that that we must look for the means of propagating the gospel these churches believe in. Indeed, in the last analysis—and there is no escaping the logic of it—it is to such men that we must look for the only gospel the church is to be permitted to preach. It follows, therefore, that it is some form of the gospel of cannibalism that the church must bear to the world.

Men and women, I am sure you do not need to have me tell you that this message with which that rude Hebrew stirred the souls of men down on the banks of the Jordan nineteen centuries ago is the message which events are speaking more eloquently than words in the days in which we are living. Now is the axe laid unto the root of the trees. Of no age were those words truer than of this. And any man of intelligence and courage knows that our civilization is a failure. He knows that it is miserably inadequate. It is a putrid corpse. It menaces the well-being both of those who seem to profit by it and of those whom it crushes with remorseless cruelty. It damns men and women at both ends of society. Both exploiters and exploited are the pitiable victims of a hideous system. The fact is being seen and felt all over the earth today. Edward Carpenter, one of the clearest minds of England, puts his philosophy in an essay entitled "Civilization—Its Cause and Cure." That is to say, he sees that our civilization is a malignant disease, and that the thing to do is to purge the social body of its corruption, that man may live a normal and healthful life.

But what I want you especially to see is the thing that is producing this new era. It is, of course, the growth of the organism—Humanity outgrowing the clothes it has hitherto worn, bursting off buttons, ripping open seams, emerging somewhat naked from an investiture that is no longer adequate, and demanding garments sufficient to clothe its nakedness and preserve the life that beats within. But, laying metaphor aside for a moment, it is the scientific spirit which we have to thank to a large extent for the new era that is dawning upon us. That spirit has acted upon the organism like a breath of spring, like the showers that water the earth. And what is the scientific spirit? It is the whole-souled determination to get at the truth. Against that nothing can stand. It has dissolved superstitions and will dissolve more. It is, indeed, when rightly understood, the very soul of a new religion. It never accepts authority for truth. It gladly accepts truth as authority. It holds truth alone to be sacred. And more and more is it coming to see that the very essence of truth is human life. It could not make a grander discovery. Truth ultimately is flesh and blood. There is where it must bring us at the last. That is the end of our search. All roads lead thither. If the path of science has led far off among the stars and constellations, we shall sometime see that it was an

illuminated road straight to human life. If science has led other men down into the heart of the earth to explore its buried life, the unexpected has been found. For in that exploration men have discovered the long road along which humanity has come, one arc of the vast curve which the race is describing through the ages, and from that arc men are slowly but surely discovering something about the vaster curve of human destiny than they dreamed of knowing before.

Science is only another name for the unquenchable human quest for truth. To it religion has been saying for centuries and is still saying: "Thus far and no farther." But science knows no such thing as a stopping place. No door can remain barred to its entrance. And so, one by one, superstitions vanish. We thought that somewhere beyond this world a hell yawned at the feet of souls that venture out into the unknown, and for others heaven opened. Now, for enlightened minds, both these specters of a darkened age have vanished, and the truth is making headway that the present is the only time a man can know, that here and now he must do and be all that he can do or be. By and by science will dissolve our social and economic superstitions, and the world will wonder that it could ever have believed or thought it believed what today is proclaimed as final law.

No word of mine is needed to summon you, men and women, to the solemn task that lies ahead. Events are doing that. Not a day passes that does not in a thousand ways publish to all who have eyes to see or ears to hear the decadence and putrescence of this hideous system of cannibalism. And I can do no greater service to my generation than to repeat the refrain of John the Baptist: "Now is the axe laid unto the root of the trees. The useless tree must be cut down and be burned. Away with makeshifts. The system must go." Instead of talking, as the deluded beneficiaries of this murderous system would have us, about getting men to be good and virtuous, we had better talk about shutting the mill that grinds out such products of vice and animalism. Instead of interesting ourselves in the building of penal institutions for the punishment of the victims of social injustice or for the cure of the mildest cases of social disease, we had better devote ourselves to the task of stopping the manufacture of criminals, the great majority of whom hold the reins of industrial and political government. Instead of strengthening our charity institutions, which are the monuments of our shame and cowardice and hypocrisy, we had better spend our efforts toward the realization of justice, which will make charity a forgotten word. Instead of continuing the fruitless swing of a political pendulum, now this way, now that, but always for the interest and in the direction of one vast system of robbery and murder, we had better put our thought upon the idea of getting rid of the whole iniquitous thing.

"We are in the rapids of a new era," writes Henry D. Lloyd. I did not make the era. You cannot hold me responsible for it. It is here and no sane man can doubt it. Its heralds are to be found in every civilized nation on the globe. In every language is its advent being told. Perhaps its heralds are not the pillars of society. They never have been. John the Baptist was not a pillar of society. Neither was Jesus, nor Savonarola, nor Luther, nor Rousseau, nor Sam Adams, nor Tom Paine, nor William Lloyd Garrison. Far from it. But they did not need to be pillars of society to see the truth and speak its message. Indeed, the chances are decidedly against a pillar of society ever seeing or speaking the truth. That is left for peasants and farmers and tramps and nobodies.

Nineteen hundred years ago, when John spoke his burning words by the Jordan side, and when for three years a carpenter's son from Nazareth continued the work too soon laid down by that rude prophet of the wilderness, a time had come in human history which was destined to try men's souls, to test the worth of all that was. That is precisely what took place. The temple and synagogue could not escape that testing. Not even the power of Rome could escape it. Neither Pharisee nor Sadducee, neither Herod nor Pilate could escape it. It was there. A new page was turned in the life of man, and only they who could read the language on that page, only they who were in harmony with the spirit of that new age, only they whose souls responded to the emerging hopes and aspirations of the human organism could enter and enjoy its boundless beauty and blessedness.

The same thing is here today. A time is here that tries men's souls and shows of what stuff they are made, that lays bare the secrets of human life and discloses the hideous deformity that an unjust system has wrought. We are going to see, nay, we are already seeing, to the very foundations of our social and political institutions. Their hidden rottenness is coming to light and calls for cleansing. The pillars of society stand out before men's eyes for exactly what they are. Herod was not seen to be a murderer until he had ruthlessly beheaded John. That proclaimed him a homicide. The church and state had not been seen to be the incarnation of anarchy and murder until they nailed Jesus on a cross. The light which now arises above the horizon is revealing the fact that what we have been accustomed to call business is only stealing made legal, that commerce is only piracy made respectable by law, that respectability is for the most part a thin veneer made necessary to maintain the immoral distinctions of class, that religion is very largely hypocrisy, and statemanship the art of proving the virtue and value of a vicious system.

And now as then to those who have ears to hear there comes the same divine summons to freedom and fraternity. No diviner or more authoritative voice spoke in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago than speaks today in the hopes and faiths and longings of the common people. I cannot better bring the articulate summons of the new era than in the words of two of our American poets—Lowell and Whitman.

It was over fifty years ago that Lowell wrote:

"Men whose boast it is that ye  
Come of fathers brave and free,  
If there breathe on earth a slave,  
Are ye truly free and brave?  
If ye do not feel the chain,  
When it works a brother's pain,  
Are ye not base slaves indeed,  
Slaves unworthy to be freed?"

Is true Freedom but to break  
Fetters for our own dear sake,  
And with leathern hearts forget  
That we owe mankind a debt?  
No! true Freedom is to share  
All the chains our brothers wear,  
And with hand and heart to be  
Earnest to make others free!

They are slaves who fear to speak  
For the fallen and the weak;  
They are slaves who will not choose  
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse,  
Rather than in silence shrink  
From the truth they needs must think;  
They are slaves who dare not be  
In the right with two or three."

And this is the song which the spirit of this new era called forth from the soul of Whitman:

"Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,  
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever  
shone upon,

I will make divine magnetic lands,  
With the love of comrades,  
With the life-long love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all  
the rivers of America, and along the shores  
of the great lakes, and all over the prairies;

I will make inseparable cities with their arms about  
each other's necks,  
By the love of comrades,  
By the manly love of comrades."

### Back To History Is A Weapon's Front Page

'A people who want to win independence  
cannot confine themselves to ordinary methods  
of warfare. Mass insurrections, revolutionary  
warfare, guerilla detachments everywhere —  
such is the only way.'

-Frederick Engels

