

Fourteen

The Sectional Crisis

The 1850s was a decade of crisis, as the last hopes for peace between the North and South were shattered. As seen in your text, the Compromise of 1850 quickly proved to be a failure, and as the years progressed, the political system became deadlocked and was unable to deal with the growing sectional divisions. Each day seemed to bring another occasion for Northerners and Southerners to become hardened in their stands. This chapter describes some of the events that inflamed sectional differences.

The Fugitive Slave Act, part of the Compromise of 1850, angered and impassioned many Northerners, including Harriet Beecher Stowe. It inspired Stowe to write her bestselling novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which sold over 300,000 copies in the first year after its publication in 1852. So influential was it that during the Civil War Abraham Lincoln reportedly referred to Stowe as "the little lady who started this big war." The selection from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* excerpted here showcases the sensationalist and heartrending aspects of the novel, which brought the ethics of slavery into question for a wide audience.

In the midst of the sectional debate over slavery in the 1850s, one proposal put forward was to annex Cuba and make it part of the United States. This proposal was announced in the Ostend Manifesto of 1854, and, if it had gone through (it didn't), it would have added another area of slave territory to the United States.

While debate raged, until 1857 the United States Supreme Court had not been directly involved in the sectional conflict. However, a case on appeal from the circuit court afforded the Supreme Court the opportunity to finally render a decision on the constitutionality of the Missouri Compromise. Dred Scott and his wife Harriet sued the state of Missouri for their freedom. They argued that because they had been taken into territories where slavery was prohibited, they should be freed. The Supreme Court's decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* was one of the most controversial events in a decade full of political controversy.

Historians have long debated why Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, a staunch Jacksonian and a southern Democrat, would abandon his hesitancy to impose judicial solutions on political problems. Taney's appointment in 1836 roughly coincided with the emergence of slavery as a national issue. At that time, the law, as it related to the status of slaves and free blacks, consisted of the Constitution, a few isolated Supreme Court cases, and a few, similarly isolated, acts of Congress and the executive branch. The Constitution clearly recognized slavery. The three-fifths compromise and the provision prohibiting the outlawing of the African slave trade until 1808 both implicitly recognized the institution of slavery. Moreover, the Constitution specifically provided that persons who owed service or labor in one state and escaped should, upon recapture, be returned to the person to whom such service was due. In its *Dred Scott* decision, the Supreme Court argued that blacks—whether free or slave—were not citizens and thus could not sue in federal court. In addition, the Court declared that, because Congress did not have the power to ban slavery, the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional. *Dred Scott* and his wife remained slaves.

The 1850s ended with one final dramatic event related to slavery. In 1859, the fiery abolitionist John Brown led a raid on a federal arsenal in Harpers Ferry, Virginia, hoping to arm a slave rebellion. Brown and his raiders were caught and tried, and Brown was sentenced to hang for his actions. To some in the North, Brown's extremism in the pursuit of a noble goal—the ending of slavery—justified his violent means, and Brown became a martyr to the abolitionist cause. He also exemplified what slave owners feared most.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)

*This selection from Uncle Tom's Cabin describes a violent exchange between the slave master Simon Legree (a transplanted Connecticut native) and the patient slave Uncle Tom. Southerners criticized Stowe, who had very little (if any) experience of plantation life, for an atypical, distorted perception of slavery. Most Northern readers were taken in by Stowe's tale and its somewhat sensationalized and sentimental portrayal of slavery.**

“And now,” said Legree, “come here, you Tom. You see, I telled ye I didn't buy ye jest for the common work. I mean to promote ye, and make a driver of ye; and tonight ye may jest as well begin to get ye hand in. Now, ye jest take this yer gal and flog her; ye've seen enough on't [of it] to know how.” “I beg Mas'r' pardon,” said Tom; “hopes Mas'r won't set me at that. It's what I an't used to—never did—and can't do, no way possible.”

“Ye'll larn a pretty smart chance of things ye never did know, before I've done with ye!” said Legree, taking up a cowhide and striking Tom a heavy blow across the cheek, and following up the infliction by a shower of blows.

“There!” he said, as he stopped to rest; “now, will ye tell me ye can't do it?”

“Yes, Mas'r,” said Tom, putting up his hand, to wipe the blood that trickled down his face. “I'm willin' to work, night and day, and work while there's life and breath in me. But this yer thing I can't feel it right to do; and, Mas'r, I never shall do it—never!”

Tom had a remarkably smooth, soft voice, and a habitually respectful manner that had given Legree an idea that he would be cowardly and easily subdued. When he spoke these last words, a thrill of amazement went through everyone. The poor woman clasped her hands and said, “O Lord!” and everyone involuntarily looked at each other and drew in their breath, as if to prepare for the storm that was about to burst.

* From Harriet B. Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Cleveland, 1852).

Legree looked stupefied and confounded; but at last burst forth: "What! Ye blasted black beast! Tell me ye don't think it right to do what I tell ye! What have any of you cussed cattle to do with thinking what's right? I'll put a stop to it! Why, what do ye think ye are? May be ye think ye're a gentleman, master Tom, to be a telling your master what's right, and what an't! So you pretend it's wrong to flog the gal!"

"I think so, Mas'r," said Tom; "the poor crittur's sick and feeble; 'twould be downright cruel, and it's what I never will do, nor begin to. Mas'r, if you mean to kill me, kill me; but, as to my raising my hand again any one here, I never shall—I'll die first!"

Tom spoke in a mild voice, but with a decision that could not be mistaken. Legree shook with anger; his greenish eyes glared fiercely, and his very whiskers seemed to curl with passion. But, like some ferocious beast, that plays with its victim before he devours it, he kept back his strong impulse to proceed to immediate violence, and broke out into bitterly raillery.

"Well, here's a pious dog, at last, let down among us sinners—a saint, a gentleman, and no less, to talk to us sinners about our sins! Powerful holy crittur, he must be! Here, you rascal, you make believe to be so pious—didn't you never hear, out of yer Bible, 'Servants, obey yer masters'? An't I yer master? Didn't I pay down twelve hundred dollars, cash, for all there is inside yer old cussed black shell? An't yer mine, now, body and soul?" he said, giving Tom a violent kick with his heavy boot; "tell me!"

In the very depth of physical suffering, bowed by brutal oppression, this question shot a gleam of joy an triumph through Tom's soul. He suddenly stretched himself up, and, looking earnestly to heaven, while the tears and blood that flowed down his face mingled, he exclaimed, "No! no! no! my soul an't yours, Mas'r! You haven't bought it—ye can't buy it! It's been bought and paid for by One that is able to keep it. No matter, no matter, you can't harm me!"

"I can't!" said Legree, with a sneer; "we'll see—we'll see! Here Sambo, Quimbo, give this dog such a breakin' in as he won't get over this month!"

The two gigantic Negroes that now laid hold of Tom, with fiendish exultation in their faces, might have formed no unapt personification of powers of darkness. The poor woman screamed with apprehension, and all rose, as by a general impulse, while they dragged him unresisting from the place.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

1. Despite the melodramatic nature of the story related in this passage, what deep truths is Stowe attempting to show? Do you think her use of melodrama was overdone, or appropriate for the audience of her day?
2. Do you see racial stereotypes embedded in Stowe's characterization of Southern plantation life? Explain.

Fourteen.2

Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857)

*Dred and Harriet Scott first sued for their freedom in 1846, after their master, a doctor, had brought them from Missouri to Minnesota and Wisconsin. They waited more than ten years before the Supreme Court decision, which ultimately denied them their freedom, was handed down. This excerpt is from Chief Justice Roger Taney's decision.**

The Question is simply this: Can a negro, whose ancestors were imported into this country, and sold as slaves, become a member of the political community formed and brought into existence by the Constitution of the United States, and as such become entitled to all the rights, and privileges, and immunities, guarantied [sic] by that instrument to the citizen? One of which rights is the privilege of suing in a court of the United States in the cases specified in the constitution.

...The only matter in issue before the Court, therefore, is, whether the descendants of such slaves, when they shall be emancipated, or who are born of parents who had become free before their birth, are citizens of a State, in the sense which the word citizen is used in the Constitution...

The words "people of the United States" and "citizens" are synonymous terms. ...They both describe the political body who, according to our republican institutions, form the sovereignty, and who hold the power and conduct the government through their representatives....The question before us is, whether the class of persons described in the plea in abatement compose a portion of this people, and are constituent members of this sovereignty? We think they are not, under the word "citizens" in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States. On the contrary, they were at that time considered as a subordinate and inferior class of beings, who had

been subjugated by the dominant race, and whether emancipated or not, yet remained subject to their authority, and had no rights or privileges but such as those who held the power and the government might choose to grant them....

In discussing the question, we must not confound the rights of citizenship which a State may confer within its own limits, and the rights of citizenship as a member of the Union. It does not by any means follow, because he has all the rights and privileges of a citizen of a State, that he must be a citizen of the United States....

In the opinion of the court, the legislation and histories of the times, and the language used in the Declaration of Independence, show, that neither the class of persons who had been imported as slaves, nor their descendants, whether they had become free or not, were then acknowledged as a part of the people, nor intended to be included in the general words used in that memorable instrument....

They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations, and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit....

...there are two clauses in the constitution which point directly and specifically to the negro race as a separate class of persons, and show clearly that they were not regarded as a portion of the people or citizens of the government then formed.

...upon full and careful consideration of the subject, the court is of opinion, that, upon the facts stated,...Dred Scott was not a citizen of Missouri within the meaning of the constitution of the United States and not entitled as such to sue in its courts....

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

1. What are the most momentous points made in Taney's opinion in the *Dred Scott* case? What was your reaction as you read it?
2. How do you suppose Southern supporters of slavery reacted to Taney's opinion?

Fourteen.3

Frederick Douglass, Independence Day Speech (1852)

*Frederick Douglass spent his young years as a slave in Maryland where he was (illegally) taught to read and write. As a young man, he escaped to New York City and later Massachusetts. In his twenties, he became an abolitionist speaker of renown and was the leading black abolitionist of his time. This speech was given in Rochester, New York on Independence Day 1852.**

Fellow citizens above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, today, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee 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 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 would make me a reproach before God and the world. My subject, then, fellow citizens, is *American Slavery*. I shall see this day and its popular characteristics from the slave's point of view. Standing there identified with the American bondman, making his wrongs mine. I do not hesitate to declare with all my soul that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this Fourth of July! Whether we turn to the declarations of the past or to the professions of the present, the 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, 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

* Reprinted from *The American Reader: Words That Moved a Nation*, ed. Diane Ravitch (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 133-136.

of language I can command; and yet not one word shall escape that any man, whose judgment is not blinded by prejudice, or who is not at heart a slaveholder, shall not confess to be right and just.

But I fancy I hear someone of my audience say, "It is just in this circumstance that you and your brother abolitionists fail to make a favorable impression on the public mind. Would you argue more and denounce less, would you persuade more and rebuke less, your cause would be much more likely to succeed." But, I submit, where all is plain, there is nothing to be argued. What point in the antislavery 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. Nobody doubts it. The slaveholders themselves acknowledge it the enactment of laws for their government. They acknowledge it when they punish disobedience on the part of the slave. 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 the same crimes will subject a white man to the like punishment. What is this but the acknowledgment that the slave is a moral, intellectual, and responsible being? The manhood of the slave is conceded.

It is admitted in the fact that the Southern statute books are covered with enactments forbidding, under severe fines and penalties, the teaching of the slave to read or to write. When you can point to any such laws in reference to the beasts of the field, then I may consent to argue the manhood of the slave. When the dogs in your streets, when the fowls of 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 a 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. It is not astonishing that, while we are plowing, planting, and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper and silver, and gold; that, while we are reading, writing, and ciphering, 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 hillside, 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 that we are men!

Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? That he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it. Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery? Is that a question for republicans? Is it to be settled by the rules of logic and argumentation, as a matter beset with great difficulty, involving a doubtful application of the principle 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 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 fellow men, to beat them with sticks, to flay their flesh with the last, 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 and submission to their masters? Must I argue that a system them 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? They that can may; I cannot. The time for such argument is past.

At a time like this, scorching iron, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation's ear, I would today pour out a fiery 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. The feeling of the nation must be quickened, the conscience of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

What, to the American slave is your Fourth of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sound of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass-fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to Him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States at this very hour.

Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the Old World, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

1. What accounts for the impassioned anger in Douglass's 1852 Independence Day speech? How does Douglass address those critics who charge that his tone is often too angry?
2. When Douglass states that "America reigns without a rival," to what is he referring? Is this claim fair? Explain.

Fourteen.4

The Ostend Manifesto (1854)

*The war with Mexico in the 1840s divided many in the United States, many of whom were concerned especially with the additional slave territory added to the country following the war. In the contentious 1850s, some in the federal government sought to acquire the island of Cuba, still controlled by Spain, and issued the Ostend Manifesto, detailing why this acquisition was desirable. Although Cuba was not acquired, the debate over the Ostend Manifesto added additional fire to the sectional disputes of the decade leading up to the Civil War.**

The Ostend Manifesto

Aix-La-Chapelle: October 18, 1854

SIR:—The undersigned, in compliance with the wish expressed by the President in the several confidential despatches you have addressed to us, respectively, to that effect, have met in conference, first at Ostend, in Belgium, on the 8th, 10th, and 11th instant, and then at Aix la Chapelle in Prussia, on the days next following, up to the date hereof.

We have arrived at the conclusion, and are thoroughly convinced, that an immediate and earnest effort ought to be made by the government of the United States to purchase Cuba from Spain at any price for which it can be obtained...

The proposal should, in our opinion, be made in such a manner as to be presented through the necessary diplomatic forms to the Supreme Constituent Cortes about to assemble. On this momentous question, in which the people both of Spain and the United States are so deeply interested, all our proceedings ought to be open, frank, and public. They should be of such a character as to challenge the approbation of the world.

* From House Executive Documents, 33 Cong., 2 Sess., Vol. X, pp. 127-136.

We firmly believe that, in the progress of human events, the time has arrived when the vital interests of Spain are as seriously involved in the sale, as those of the United States in the purchase, of the island and that the transaction will prove equally honorable to both nations.

Under these circumstances we cannot anticipate a failure, unless possibly through the malign influence of foreign powers who possess no right whatever to interfere in the matter...

Cuba is as necessary to the North American republic as any of its present members, and that it belongs naturally to that great family of States of which the Union is the providential nursery.

From its locality it commands the mouth of the Mississippi and the immense and annually increasing trade which must seek this avenue to the ocean...

The natural and main outlet to the products of this entire population, the highway of their direct intercourse with the Atlantic and the Pacific States, can never be secure, but must ever be endangered whilst Cuba is a dependency of a distant power in whose possession it has proved to be a source of constant annoyance and embarrassment to their interests.

Indeed, the Union can never enjoy repose, nor possess reliable security, as long as Cuba is not embraced within its boundaries...

Extreme oppression, it is now universally admitted, justifies any people in endeavoring to relieve themselves from the yoke of their oppressors. The sufferings which the corrupt, arbitrary, and unrelenting local administration necessarily entails upon the inhabitants of Cuba, cannot fail to stimulate and keep alive that spirit of resistance and revolution against Spain, which has, of late years, been so often manifested. In this condition of affairs it is vain to expect that the sympathies of the people of the United States will not be warmly enlisted in favor of their oppressed neighbors...

It is not improbable, therefore, that Cuba may be wrested from Spain by a successful revolution; and in that event she will lose both the island and the price which we are now willing to pay for it—a price far beyond what was ever paid by one people to another for any province.

It may also be remarked that the settlement of this vexed question, by the cession of Cuba to the United States, would forever prevent the dangerous complications between nations to which it may otherwise give birth.

It is certain that, should the Cubans themselves organize an insurrection against the Spanish government, and should other independent nations come to the aid of Spain in the contest, no human power could, in our opinion, prevent the people and government of the United States from taking part in such a civil war in support of their neighbors and friends...

The United States have never acquired a foot of territory except by fair purchase, or, as in the case of Texas, upon the free and voluntary application of the people of that independent State, who desired to blend their destinies with our own.

Even our acquisitions from Mexico are no exception to this rule, because, although we might have claimed them by the right of conquest in a just war, yet we purchased them for what was then considered by both parties a full and ample equivalent.

Our past history forbids that we should acquire the island of Cuba without the consent of Spain, unless justified by the great law of self-preservation. We must, in any event, preserve our own conscious rectitude and our own self-respect.

Whilst pursuing this course we can afford to disregard the censures of the world, to which we have been so often and so unjustly exposed.

After we shall have offered Spain a price for Cuba far beyond its present value, and this shall have been refused, it will then be time to consider the question, does Cuba, in the possession of Spain, seriously endanger our internal peace and the existence of our cherished Union?

Should this question be answered in the affirmative, then, by every law, human and divine, we shall be justified in wresting it from Spain if we possess the power, and this upon the very same principle that would justify an individual in tearing down the burning house of his neighbor if there were no other means of preventing the flames from destroying his own home....

We have already witnessed the happy results for both countries which followed a similar arrangement in regard to Florida.

Yours, very respectfully,
 JAMES BUCHANAN
 J. Y. MASON
 PIERRE SOULÉ

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

1. What arguments are made in the Ostend Manifesto to suggest that Spain would be far better off to sell Cuba to the United States?
2. What pressing issue is totally ignored in the language of the Ostend Manifesto? Do you think that omission is intentional? Explain.

Fourteen.5

John Brown, Address to the Virginia Court (1859)

*The fire of abolitionism burned strong in John Brown, a deeply religious white man who became increasingly fervid in his denunciation of slavery. Brown and his sons fought guerrilla battles in "Bleeding Kansas" in the mid-1850s, then he became renown nationwide in 1859 for masterminding an attempt to start a slave rebellion in Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia). After seizing weapons at the federal arsenal, the revolt was quickly put down, and Brown was captured, convicted, and sentenced to death for his role. Most in the North as well as the South viewed him as a dangerous threat to the Union, and there is evidence he may have been mentally unbalanced. A minority of prominent Northerners, however, viewed Brown as virtually a biblical prophet, and his speech to the court at his sentencing helped seal his status as a martyr.**

I have, may it please the Court, a few words to say.

In the first place, I deny every thing but what I have already admitted, of a design on my part to free Slaves. I intended, certainly, to have made a clean thing of that matter, as I did last winter, when I went into Missouri, and there took Slaves, without the snapping of a gun on either side, moving them through the country, and finally leaving them in Canada. I desired to have done the same thing again, on a much larger scale. That was all I intended. I never did intend murder, or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite Slaves to rebellion, or to make insurrection.

I have another objection, and that is, that it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner, and which I admit has been fairly proved,—for I admire the truthfulness and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case,—had I so interfered in behalf of the Rich, the Powerful, the

* From Pearson Online http://wpa.ablongman.com/wpa/media/objects/1676/1716309/documents/doc_1125.html.

Intelligent, the so-called Great, or in behalf of any of their friends, either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class, and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right. Every man in this Court would have deemed it an act worthy a reward, rather than a punishment.

This Court acknowledges too, as I suppose, the validity of the Law of God. I saw a book kissed, which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament, which teaches me that, "All things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even so to them." It teaches me further, to "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done, as I have always freely admitted I have done, in behalf of his despised poor, I have done no wrong, but RIGHT.

Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life, for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and MINGLE MY BLOOD FURTHER WITH THE BLOOD OF MY CHILDREN, and with the blood of millions in this Slave country, whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments,—I say, LET IT BE DONE.

Let me say one word further: I feel entirely satisfied with the treatment I have received on my trial. Considering all the circumstances, it has been more generous than I expected; but I feel no consciousness of guilt. I have stated from the first what was my intention, and what was not. I never had any design against the liberty of any person, nor any disposition to commit treason, or excite Slaves to rebel, or make any general insurrection. I never encouraged any man to do so, but always discouraged any idea of that kind.

Let me say something, also, in regard to the statements made by some of those who were connected with me. I hear that it has been stated by some of them, that I have induced them to join me; but the contrary is true. I do not say this to injure them, but as regarding their weakness. Not one but joined me of his own accord, and the greater part at their own expense. A number of them I never saw and never had a word of conversation with, till the day they came to me, and that was for the purpose I have stated. Now I have done.

John Brown

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

1. In what ways does Brown invoke God and the Bible in his address to the court? Is the religious base to his argument compelling? Explain.

Chapter Study Questions

1. How would Harriet Beecher Stowe have reacted to the *Dred Scott* decision?
2. In what ways can novels convey information better than newspapers or other media? Can movies today have the same kind of impact on public opinion as Stowe's book?
3. What elements to Stowe's novel and Douglass's speech have in common? How would each have reacted to the *Dred Scott* decision?
4. How did the *Dred Scott* decision shake up the entire national debate over slavery? In what ways did it force Northerners to take stock of their acceptance of slavery in the South and the status of slaves and former slaves?
5. In what ways was John Brown's 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry an exclamation point for the growing sectional anger in this decade before the Civil War? In what ways was it rather a sign of greater bloodshed to come?