

of a sacrilegious act, and the violation of our sworn obligations?

If State Conventions could, by their action, add whatever powers they choose to those of the Federal Government, you could thereby, in a mode and manner not contemplated by the Constitution, change the whole structure of our Government. The Constitution says it shall only be amended in the mode prescribed in the 5th article; and to surrender to the General Government powers to which it is not entitled, would be just as much *revolution* on our part, as the act of those States which are now waging a war against the Government, except in this, that in the one case they revolutionize with arms in their hands, and in the other we do it by clinging like babes, at the feet of those in power.

I might further weary your patience, Mr. President, by going through and comparing the Constitutions of other States, and showing how no such provisions exist in the Constitutions of any of the States; and how, in some of the States, Massachusetts for instance, when the proposition was offered to add to the oath of the qualifications of office, an amendment requiring that the words "and support the Constitution of the United States" should be included, it was voted down, and in Massachusetts no *State* officer is sworn to support the Constitution of the United States, although the Constitution of the United States expressly requires it. But I forbear longer to trespass upon the indulgence of the Convention.

Day after day, Mr. President, as we have assembled here and commenced our labors, the minister of God has supplicated the Almighty to restore *peace* in our time. These days of terrible carnage, exhausting the resources of the land, and sending to their last and final rest the spirits of so many brave men, who have consecrated their lives to what they deem "a holy cause," cannot last forever.

I stand here to-day, the embodiment of the prayer of the preacher, a peace man on terms honorable to all sections of the country.

Mr. SANDS. Will the gentlemen permit me to ask him what these terms are?

Mr. CLARKE. When we have any mode of extending terms, then these terms, I humbly conceive, will be discussed, and the gentleman will have my views upon them; but while there is no power on our part to do any thing in reference to offering terms, I regard the question as premature. But I will say this, that I regard the first step should be an armistice; the next the appointment of commissioners, or the call of a Convention under the Constitution, in which all the States shall be represented. If commissioners are preferred, take three or four of the best men in the country; Franklin Pierce, for one; he is one of the best you can get. Put Chase on the commission for another; for I will put Chase

and Pierce together, and then Fremont or Abe Lincoln, or Buchanan, or Fillmore. Make it a commission of twenty-one if you choose. Then have upon it Alexander Stephens and some of the best southern men—for the Government would never let Stephens submit his propositions—and I will guarantee that these great men of the country will settle upon terms honorable to both sections. But as the gentleman would never consent to have me placed upon the commission I do not know that I should further give him my views.

They might settle our difficulties by recognition. If so, it would be for the people to say whether or not they would accept it. They might do it by separating for a little while,—providing for a separation for so long a time as would enable both sides to see how they like it, and see whether they would not want to unite again. They might do it by admitting that the rights of slavery and the rights of all the States are intact, and shall be preserved; and that the Southern States shall come back with slavery established under the Constitution as firmly as ever. Or if the South chose to say, "they would give up slavery," it would be for them to determine for themselves.

I do not know the exact mode; but if we start upon that plan, of an armistice, commissioners, a Convention, and some peaceful mode to be submitted to the people of this country, the Constitution will be preserved as the palladium of the freedom of the white men of this country in some shape or form; and this war, which never would have commenced if the spirit of patriotism, compromise and conciliation had governed those who held the destinies of the nation in their keeping, will come to an end.

To resume, after this digression into which I have been led by the interrogatory propounded to me, I say that this forgetfulness of sound constitutional principles of government, which now prevails, cannot be forever tolerated.

The American heart, if it throbs more ardently in favor of one dearly won principle than another, that principle is "*constitutional freedom*." A day of terrible reckoning will come for the politicians of Maryland who have thus preyed upon her vitals, surrendered the liberties of her people, and taken pleasure in assisting in the work of her degradation. Her people will yet, in tones of thunder, cry out "*Shame, shame, shame upon you*." The peaks of the Alleghanies will begin the cry which will doom you to political death—the Blue Ridge, from her "misty shroud," will reverberate to the same sentence, until, growing louder and louder, crossing the waters of the Chesapeake, the echo shall be lost amid the roar of ocean—the noise of the "great roaring of the sea." Even now, with oaths, and bayonets and threats—*even now*, with your judges putting questions and solemn