

ETHNOGENESIS

HENRY TIMROD OF SOUTH CAROLINA

I.

Hath not the morning dawned with added light?
And shall not evening – call another star
Out of the infinite regions of the night,
To mark this day in Heaven? At last, we are
A nation among nations; and the world
Shall soon behold in many a distant port
 Another flag unfurled!
Now, come what may, whose favor need we court?
And, under God, whose thunder need we fear?
 Thank Him who placed us here
Beneath so kind a sky – the very sun
Takes part with us; and on our errands run
All breezes of the ocean; dew and rain
Do noiseless battle for us; and the Year,
And all the gentle daughters in her train,
March in our ranks, and in our service wield
 Long spears of golden grain!
A yellow blossom as her fairy shield,
June flings her azure banner to the wind,
 While in the order of their birth
Her sisters pass; and many an ample field
Grows white beneath their steps, till now, behold
 Its endless sheets unfold
THE SNOW OF SOUTHERN SUMMERS! Let the earth
Rejoice! beneath those fleeces soft and warm
 Our happy land shall sleep
 In a repose as deep
As if we lay intrenched behind
Whole leagues of Russian ice and Arctic storm!

II.

And what if, mad with wrongs themselves have
 wrought,
 In their own treachery caught,
 By their own fears made bold,
 And leagued with him of old,
 Who long since, in the limits of the North,
 Set up his evil throne, and warred with God –
 What if, both mad and blinded in their rage,
 Our foes should fling us down their mortal gage,
 And with a hostile step profane our sod!
 We shall not shrink, my brothers, but go forth
 To meet them, marshalled by the Lord of Hosts,
 And overshadowed by the mighty ghosts
 Of Moultrie and of Eutaw – who shall foil
 Auxiliars such as these? Nor these alone,
 But every stock and stone
 Shall help us; but the very soil,
 And all the generous wealth it gives to toil,
 And all for which we love our noble land,
 Shall fight beside, and through us, sea and strand,
 The heart of woman, and her hand,
 Tree, fruit, and flower, and every influence,
 Gentle, or grave, or grand;
 The winds in our defence
 Shall seem to blow; to us the hills shall lend
 Their firmness and their calm;
 And in our stiffened sinews we shall blend
 The strength of pine and palm!

III.

Nor would we shun the battle-ground,
 Though weak as we are strong;
 Call up the clashing elements around,
 And test the right and wrong!
 On one side, creeds that dare to teach
 What Christ and Paul refrained to preach;
 Codes built upon a broken pledge,

And charity that whets a poniard's edge;
 Fair schemes that leave the neighboring poor
 To starve and shiver at the schemer's door,
 While in the world's most liberal ranks enrolled,
 He turns some vast philanthropy to gold;
 Religion taking every mortal form
 But that a pure and Christian faith makes warm,
 Where not to vile fanatic passion urged,
 Or not in vague philosophies submerged,
 Repulsive with all Pharisaic leaven,
 And making laws to stay the laws of Heaven!
 And on the other, scorn of sordid gain,
 Unblemished honor, truth without a stain,
 Faith, justice, reverence, charitable wealth,
 And, for the poor and humble, laws which give,
 Not the mean right to buy the right to live,
 But life, and home, and health!
 To doubt the end were want of trust in God,
 Who, if he has decreed
 That we must pass a redder sea
 Than that which rang to Miriam's holy glee,
 Will surely raise at need
 A Moses with his rod!

IV.

But let our fears — if fears we have — be still,
 And turn us to the future! Could we climb
 Some mighty Alp, and view the coming time,
 The rapturous sight would fill
 Our eyes with happy tears!
 Not only for the glories which the years
 Shall bring us; not for lands from sea to sea,
 And wealth, and power, and peace, though these shall be;
 But for the distant peoples we shall bless,
 And the hushed murmurs of a world's distress:
 For, to give labor to the poor,
 The whole sad planet o'er,
 And save from want and crime the humblest door,
 Is one among — the many ends for which

God makes us great and rich!
The hour perchance is not yet wholly ripe
When all shall own it, but the type
Whereby we shall be known in every land
Is that vast gulf which laves our Southern strand,
And through the cold, untempered ocean pours
Its genial streams, that far-off Arctic shores
May sometimes catch upon the softened breeze
Strange tropic warmth and hints of summer seas.

Native of Charleston, Henry Timrod (1828–1867) is often called the (unofficial) Poet Laureate of the Confederacy. "Ethnogenesis" was written during the meeting of the first Confederate congress in Montgomery, Alabama in February, 1861.