OUR COUNTRY

SAFE FROM ROMANISM.

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A SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING

OF THE

THIRD PRESBYTERY OF PHILADELPHIA,

AT ITS SESSIONS

IN THE WESTERN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

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BY THE

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NOTE.

The following Discourse was written under all the cares and labours of pastoral duty, and without the slightest reference to the press. Several brethren, in whose judgment the author reposes great confidence, advised its immediate publication. An unwillingness to interfere in a great controversy, where he might meet rebukes from both parties, and also the want of time and health to revise and amend the discourse, have delayed its appearance until the present time. As the subject has an interest, that wanes not with years, as the facts and relations of the case remain unchanged, and as the author's feeble health will not allow him to go afresh over the whole ground, he has determined to publish the sermon substantially as first delivered. If it shall strengthen the confidence of the Church in God, and inspire hope, courage, energy, and benevolence, among those who would lead the victims of error to the fountains of salvation, his object will be attained. He asks, as he expects, no commendation of its style or method. He only asks that it may be read with attention and candour, and then remembered or forgotten, commended or censured, as it deserves.

OUR COUNTRY SAFE FROM ROMANISM.

TEXT:

2 KINGS vi. 16.—*Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.*

THE controversy on Romanism, which has been carried on in this city for several years, has recently created an unusual excitement. The presence of a public lecturer from abroad, occupying in succession a large number of our pulpits—the set discourses of some of our most able pastors, with the reiterated statements and appeals of a portion of the religious press, have so aroused attention and agitated the public mind, that with many, Romanism has become almost the sole topic of their conversation, and the source of their deepest religious emotions.

It is well known that in this controversy, the speaker and most of those who act with him, have taken no part. There was a time, when my own fears were greatly excited, and when I deemed it my duty to raise an alarm through the press; but except to bring out and defend the doctrines of Protestant Christianity, I have seldom alluded to Romanism during my four years' labours in

this city. Even now, I approach the subject with extreme reluctance; a reluctance only alleviated by the conviction, that you have a *right* to know the reasons which have caused us to stand aloof from this controversy, where the truth lies, and what is the safe channel for your sympathies, influence, and prayers.

If this controversy as now conducted, be demanded by the signs of the times, and the glory of God, we have no right to seal our lips, and leave the responsibility of the conflict to others. If, on the other hand, its spirit, tendencies, and past results, promise no compensation for the attention which it excites, and the sacrifices which it involves, then, as your spiritual guides, we are bound "to show you a more excellent way." This is my apology for diverting your attention, to-day, from those elevated and practical truths of the gospel, which ought in all ordinary cases to be the subject of pulpit discussion.

And that the remarks which follow may neither be misunderstood or perverted, I deem it here proper to disclaim any design to censure persons honestly engaged in contending against the errors of Romanism. Every pastor is the spiritual watchman of his own flock. His own convictions, constitute his rule of personal duty. What he believes, he may speak; what he feels, he may express, in regard to any set of religious opinions, under his responsibility to God alone. As a citizen of this republic, as a Protestant Christian, and as an ambassador of God, he has a right to discuss, in a proper spirit, all

subjects which bear on the religious interests of man. To show that the acknowledged doctrines of Romanism are inconsistent with the Bible and common sense—that her organization and usages are unfriendly alike to religious liberty, to the elevation of society, and to the salvation of souls—is the *right* and may be the *duty* of any Protestant clergyman.

Every watchman of Zion must decide for himself, when and where, and how, his influence can best be employed for the promotion of truth; and we may respect his zeal and fidelity, while we distrust his wisdom.

While, therefore, I most cheerfully concede to my Protestant brethren the right to discuss Romanism, in any way which they deem proper, under their responsibility to God, I only ask that the same indulgence shall be extended to me, if I improve the present occasion for stating my doubts as to *some* of the principles assumed in this controversy, and my fears as to its beneficial results.

In this discussion, it has been asserted and attempted to be proved, that these United States are in the most *imminent danger* of being over-run with Roman Catholicism. Lately, I heard a Protestant clergyman remark in presence of his Presbytery, that "*do what we would, the Romanists will have this country.*" A religious journal, with unusual prophetic definiteness, has announced that their control will extend to just *three and a-half years!* If this be true, it would certainly justify another declaration of an eminent pastor, that *the suppression of*

Romanism, is the highest responsibility now entrusted to the Protestant clergy of the United States.

If our civil and religious liberties are about to be annihilated—if the light of Protestant Christianity be here flickering in the socket—if the Bible be about to be re-consigned to the cobwebs of convents, and the returning mists of the middle ages are threatening to re-enshroud in darkness and gloom, the glorious sun of righteousness, then the alarm cannot be sounded too loud or too long.

But if these fears are founded in misapprehension, they should no longer be allowed to harrow the bosom of the Church, and divert her sublime energies from the office of the world's conversion.

That Romanists most earnestly desire to gain a religious and political ascendency in the United States, is evinced by the immense amount of money which they have collected in Europe, and here expended in schools and colleges—by the ten or eleven hundreds of nuns and sisters of charity, which they have distributed as teachers over the land—by the numerous priests which they have imported from Germany and Ireland, and by their own declarations, as brought out in Reports sent by them to Europe, which have been republished in this country.

But in estimating our danger, we are not to inquire what are the desires and expectations of Romanists, but what are their prospects of success.

And here I can adopt the language of the text, "*Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be*

with them;" or in other words, I will venture to lay down the following position: EXISTING CAUSES, FURNISH NO GROUND TO FEAR THAT ROMANISM WILL EVER BECOME THE PREVAILING RELIGION OF THIS COUNTRY. By existing causes, I mean the religious influences now operating on the public mind, together with the resources by which these influences are likely to be modified and augmented.

We believe that the 17,000,000 of our land will have bread during the next twelve months, because we believe they will perpetuate the industry and carefulness by which subsistence is procured. We know that universal idleness would introduce universal starvation; but to assume that this idleness can exist in this country, is doing violence to all experience. Should Protestants fold their hands in sloth, and leave the whole public mind to the sole occupation of Roman zeal, no doubt our country might become a vassal of Rome. But we are to cherish no morbid fears of this description.

We are allowed to assume that the Protestant influences now bearing on the public mind, will continue as certainly as rivers will continue to flow towards the broad ocean. In this sense, we aver that existing causes give no sanction to fears that Romanism will ever be the prevalent religion in this land.

In sustaining this position, I remark,

I. THAT THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF ROMANISM IN NORTH AMERICA AND ELSEWHERE, HAS GREATLY WANED IN THE LAST CENTURY.

The conquest of Canada in 1759, wrested the vast empire on our northern border from the political control of a Roman Catholic king, and the direct influence of the Vatican. The purchase of Louisiana in 1803, took from the hands and influence of Catholic Spain, the immense territory which lines our western border, and stretches from the Mississippi to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. More recently, Florida, the last possession of Spain in North America, has become ours, and is rapidly filling-up with a Protestant population. Texas, comprehending a domain equal to five or six of our largest States, and where Romanism was by law established, has lately taken its place among Protestant nations. Perhaps we have no reason to congratulate ourselves on the moral character of its population, or on the means by which it became a republic. Still, it stands forth as a monument of the enterprise and vigour nourished by Protestantism, contrasted with the palsying influence of an immoral and ignorant priesthood. I might allude to Maryland, originally occupied by Romanists, but where they have now but a lean minority. I have said enough under this head to furnish a glance of the mighty changes which a century has wrought in the political aspects of North America, and all in favour of Protestantism. Looking at South America, we see that the palmy days of Romanism have passed by. The power of her priesthood is constantly frittering away, under the resistance which they are supposed to make to the spirit of liberty.

Glancing at the old world, we see Great Britain seizing almost every post of strength, and throwing upon it Protestant sympathies and institutions. The Romanists first doubled the Cape of Good Hope; they first planted their colonies and their empires in Eastern Asia. They for centuries had the commerce of the Indies. Where are they now? India, with her hundred millions, now submits to British control. All Northern Asia, being held by Russia, is Protestant in resistance to Rome. Spain, Portugal, and Italy, are heaving with the spirit of revolution and reform, under the distant vision of liberty. If the priests and Papal see resist the tendency of the age, they come in contact with men struggling for civil rights. If they yield to the people, their political power is irrecoverably gone. France, in religion, has no heart. The form of Romanism still stalks amid her vine clad hills, but it is a skeleton from which life has departed. Austria, as she is the most insulated, is perhaps the most bigoted empire of Europe; but the same seclusion which has kept her behind the age, neutralises her power to act politically in favour of Romanism, upon the world.

The truth is, since the French Revolution, which unsettled opinions as well as dynasties, the religious sentiment, or if you please so to call it, superstition, has ceased to be the governing principle in the old empires of Europe. The spirit which originated the crusades, has been supplanted, among the great, by political emulation and avarice; and among the mass,

by the spirit of liberty, urging on to revolution. This change, as it has made Rome less able to uphold the thrones of kings, has to the same extent abated her political power and the influence of her priesthood. I have taken this brief glance at the political aspects of the world, to show that we have nothing to fear at home or abroad from the civil power of Romanism. From the days of the Reformation it has steadily waned, and the causes still operate to effect its annihilation.

But it is said that in the United States, Romanists at the polls can exert a direct influence upon our political destinies—that they are taught by their priests to utter one cry, and that they are held in the market to throw the balance of power in favour of any party which will favour Romanism. I admit that there is force in this statement. I am obliged to concede that the introduction to the polls of foreign emigrants, (ignorant of our institutions, and of the questions which agitate the country,) is fraught with great evils. I think I have seen in both parties, among leading politicians and editors, a truckling and sycophantic courtship of foreign voters, as disgusting to good taste as it is treasonable to the American spirit. But I have also seen most of these politicians "fall in the pit which they themselves have digged." Our danger from Romanist influence in our elections, is neutralised by the fact,

1. That most of the emigrants to this country have seen enough of civil tyranny at home, to hate it abroad; and hence they are almost all not only republican, but

ultra democratic, and therefore unlikely to attempt a change in our institutions.

2. The questions which agitate the country, respect state policy or the qualifications of rival candidates, about which the nation is nearly equally divided, and should Catholic votes throw the balance on either side, it would occasion no serious detriment to any vital interest of the country.

3. Should a question arise deeply involving any principle of religious liberty, the Romanists if misled by their priests, would still be harmless; for they constitute but a powerless minority in the presence of that aroused and concentrated mass of all Protestant religious creeds, which a sense of common danger would send to the polls.

4. Any religious sect which should attempt to hold permanently the balance of power between the great parties of this nation, would eminently fail. The new combinations which parties are constantly forming, would compel such a sect to vibrate with ludicrous rapidity, and finally sink under the combined weight of parties, all of whom it had successively outraged and betrayed.

To assume that Romanists, by holding the balance of power in the United States, can work permanent injury, is to assume that nearly one half the Protestants of this land will unite with them to lay a suicidal hand on their nation's welfare, and betray principles which to Americans are dearer than life. On an insulated

question, and under special excitements, the Protestant community may surrender principle for party, but I rejoice to believe the great heart of this nation beats with true patriotism, and hence I apprehend that no foreign influence which Romish priests can control, will lead Protestant voters to perpetrate treason against Protestant principles.

II. THE RELATIVE PROPORTION OF ROMANISTS TO THE PROTESTANT POPULATION OF THIS COUNTRY, FURNISHES NO GROUND FOR ALARM.

Our last census showed an aggregate of more than *seventeen millions*. Of this number, the Romanists claim one million and a-half; and those Protestants who wish to excite alarm, eagerly adopt and circulate the report, that we have among us a *million and a-half* of Catholics. It may be so. But I do not believe it. Five years ago the Romanists were rated at 800,000. On what data is it assumed that they have, in 1843, 1,500,000? Romish priests have obvious motives to magnify their numbers, and they are most industriously, as well as most unwisely aided in the matter, by Protestant alarmists. I do not believe that 1,200,000 Romanists can be found in the United States. But admit there are a million and a-half. Now when it is remembered that Maryland, Louisiana, Missouri, and Florida, were originally colonised by Romanists, and that ever since our Revolution, the oppressed Romanists of Ireland and Germany have been seeking an asylum upon our shores,—is it not wonderful that

Catholics now constitute only about one-twelfth part of our population?

The emigration to this country from Europe, has averaged 70,000 annually for the last ten years; great numbers of whom have gone back dissatisfied with the country; but we will leave these out of the estimate. Of 70,000 emigrants, admit that 50,000, more than two-thirds, are Catholic. Our annual increase of population, exclusive of emigration, is now about 430,000. One-twelfth of this, or 35,000, is the natural increase of the Catholic population. Add to this, 50,000 Catholic emigrants, and the growth of the Catholic population is about 85,000 annually. Deduct this from 500,000, the whole increase of the country, and you have a Protestant gain of 415,000 annually, or about five to one. Beginning with fifteen and a-half millions in advance, and gaining annually in the ratio of five to one, Protestants are not very liable to sink into a minority. If we rate the Romanists at 1,200,000, which I believe is as many as they could number, our relative gain is still larger; but we will give in the estimate all they claim.

It is not pretended that these estimates are mathematically exact, but they so approximate truth, as to render it evident that nothing but the miraculous agency of Almighty God, revolutionising all existing causes, can give the Romanists a majority in these United States.

But it may be said, that this estimate assumes that there will be no conversions to Romanism, while there

is real danger that our 16,000,000 of Protestants, in large masses, will apostatise from the faith of their fathers. This makes it proper that I should remark,

III. THAT THE MORAL POWER OF ROMANISM IN THIS COUNTRY, DOES NOT SO TRANSCEND OUR EVANGELICAL AGENCIES, AS TO JUSTIFY ALARM.

Is Romanism to prevail from the number of clergy? She has in this country engaged as preachers and teachers, 572 priests; or one to 2600 of her own population. On the other hand, the Methodist denomination alone has 8000 clergy—laborious men, nearly half of whom are making their circuits of light and love, from the white crested waves of the Atlantic, to the most distant hamlets of the far west. In the United States there are probably not less than *eighteen thousand Protestant clergy*, all furnished with the glorious gospel, all indulged with full liberty of speech, and all united in a common zeal for the Protestant faith.

Now, if 572 Roman priests, not generally distinguished by their education or eloquence, mostly foreigners, and hence insulated from the natural sympathies and confidence of the American people, as much by their origin as their creed,—if these 572 can, not only protect their own flocks of 2600 each, from all the influences of a Protestant country, but absolutely neutralise the preaching of 18,000 Protestant ministers, then they may well claim the miraculous power of which Rome has so long boasted.

When Elisha smote the river with the mantle of the

ascended prophet, he cried, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" We may well ask, where is the God of Luther? Where is the spirit of the man who, guided by truth and strengthened by Heaven, roused Romanism from its sleep of a thousand years, and against the civil and ecclesiastical power of Christendom, rescued the Bible from its seclusion, and wrung empires from the control of the Roman See? Has the truth lost its power, or Jesus ceased to be the guardian of Zion, that 18,000 Protestant clergy are not able under God to defend this enlightened country from the influence of 572 Roman ecclesiastics?

But we are told that they are bringing to this country large sums of money to be employed in the endowing of colleges, and the erection of churches. This is true. French, Austrian, and Italian Catholics, furnish some two hundred thousand dollars annually for the promotion of Romanism in the United States. But how many churches have they actually in this country? Built and building, they have 656, or one church to 2300 of their own people—one church to about 26000 of our entire population. We will not undertake to predict the result of their future zeal in building churches, but as they have not yet supplied edifices for their own people, they have done nothing to justify either their own boasting, or the fears of Protestants.

As to their literary institutions, the academies, colleges, theological seminaries, convents, nunneries, and orphan asylums, which they are founding by money

collected in Europe, we admit that these constitute *the chief power of Romanism in this country.* Aware that the cause of education is here popular, and that little can be done among us by the religious pageantry and superstitious mummeries which sway the unenlightened masses of Ireland, Spain, and Italy, Romanists have with wonderful tact adapted themselves to the genius of our people, and the spirit of the age. Leaving the masses of Europe in the most degrading ignorance, they have here set up as patrons of literature; and are collecting pecuniary charities from the poor and illiterate of Europe, to educate us in the United States. From the hand of Italian beggar and Irish pauper, they are asking alms to plant literary institutions in this most enlightened land. Their object none can mistake. They wish to entrap and alienate our youth from Bible Christianity; and as these Romish schools are patronised by some injudicious Protestants, they doubtless have a strong tendency to fix Romish prejudices in many educated minds. But, Romanists cannot plant schools and colleges without elevating directly or indirectly their own people. To hold their own people, they must conform to the popular prejudice in favour of universal education.

Now, as true sons of the Reformation, we must ever contend that science, by whomsoever taught, is the handmaid of truth. The more Romanists, by means of colleges and academies, elevate the minds of their people, the better do they prepare them to under-

stand Protestant arguments, and to feel the power of that Protestant public sentiment, which here moves with almost irresistible force in all the learned professions, and in all the elevated circles of society. The Romanists have about 100 male and female colleges and academies, with more than 4000 students. They have various orphan asylums, instituted to secure popular applause, and to furnish teachers who, shut out from the world, have been carefully trained from their very infancy in the tenets of Rome.

But what are these in a population of 17,000,000, with Protestant colleges, academies, and common schools, which, in the aggregate of youth brought under their influence, exceed the Roman institutions as fifty to one? What can these imported foreign teachers accomplish in this country, when they are met by more than 100,000 Sabbath-school teachers, engaged every Sabbath in instilling the truths of Protestant Christianity into the minds of at least 1,000,000 of our youth?

Every common school in our land where the Bible is read, as well as every Sabbath-school, is a tower of strength to our cause. Protestant schools are indigenous to the country, and are almost every where springing up; and none the less salutary, because they excite less relative attention than those Roman institutions, which owe their notoriety to their novelty and their pretensions. The sun is not less efficient, because its daily dispensation of light is less noted than the comet's blaze. The schools of Romanists are relatively few

compared with their own population; and where you will find one Protestant child under Catholic instruction, I believe you will find in the whole country, two Catholic children under the influence of Protestant teachers. I have known one school, in which near 100 German Catholic youth were daily taught the pure doctrines of the Reformation.

Some may imagine, that these are very plausible statements, while yet as a matter of fact the Romanists are really making great accessions to their ranks.

That now and then a Protestant child is brought under the permanent influence of Romanism, by means of their orphan asylums and other agencies employed by the priests for this purpose, I have no doubt. That now and then Romanists succeed in transferring a family from nominal Protestantism, to their fold, there is no question. It is no more surprising nor alarming, that some persons are converted to Romanism, than that they are converted to Mormonism. A playmate of my childhood, has lately gone with his family to unite with the Shakers at Lebanon, New York. In one neighbourhood of this State, 100 have joined the Mormons. In this city, I doubt not, the Mormons the last year have made two converts to where the Romanists have made one. But we are not thence to infer that the whole country is about to be subjected to the Prophet of Nauvoo. In all nations and all communities, there are persons prepared to yield to any religious influence which comes recommended by plausibility, kindness, and assi-

duity; and that now and then Roman priests make a convert to their creed, will surprise none who have noted the laws of the human mind.

But that these conversions have existed in this country, or are likely to exist in such numbers as to justify panic fear, I utterly deny.

I was, as you know, five years in Cincinnati, one of the strong holds of Romanism. Four years of that time I conducted two religious papers, one for adults and one for children. I had correspondents all over the central portion of the Great Valley, and yet I never knew personally one man, one woman, nor one child, to abandon Protestantism for Romanism. I doubt not there have been such conversions. I have seen accounts of such in Catholic periodicals. But not one either fell under my own eye, nor was ever brought to my notice by a correspondent, so far as I now remember. On the other hand, I have known many native Romanists introduced into the Protestant churches. One obscure clergyman, in a single revival, brought twenty Catholics hopefully converted into the fold of Christ.

I take this occasion to say that in the West, there is but little more reason to apprehend the controlling prevalence of Catholicism, than in the East. You may travel for days and weeks over that vast and beautiful region, without the vision of a Roman priest or a Roman chapel. In Cincinnati, Louisville, and St. Louis, and here and there over the country, you will find large clusters of Romanists, but they are mostly poor fo-

reigners from Germany and Ireland. Their influence, literary, pecuniary, social, and political, is very small; and in numbers, they are as a drop in the bucket compared with the Protestant population.

I know the eagle eye of Rome is fixed on the great Western Valley. I know that immense amounts of money are sent over to erect splendid cathedrals, and establish seminaries, to aid in its subjugation. I know a project is on foot to introduce Irish paupers, by thousands, to aid in the work. But I also know, that the true spirit of Protestantism no where beats with more energy, than among the first settlers of the west. They may be tempted to abandon all concern for the soul in strife for the world. Their very independence and insulation from the fixed habits of the old States, may expose them to strike out new paths, and run into new *isms*. But to give up their own judgment, and submit passively to the control of an Irish, French, or German priest, would be scouted by the most ignorant Protestant of the west. Hence, while Romanists there wield a vast and apparently dangerous machinery, they make in fact but few converts. Our Home Missions if rightly sustained will save the west.

In this city we hear much of the increase of Romanism; but leaving foreign emigration out of view, I see no evidence of its truth. Popular preachers of all creeds and countries, who know how to excite the passions of the multitude, will have hearers. And we are not to take it for granted, because our youth now

and then fall into the current, and attend a Catholic chapel, that they are therefore about to abandon the faith of their fathers, and adopt the peculiarities of Romanism.

One clergyman of our Presbytery tells us, that during his labours in this city, he has received into his church thirty converts from Romanism. Among the pew-holders of my own church, there are several who were educated in the Roman creed; and within the last few years, five persons brought up by Catholic parents have united with us, one of whom under the best auspices is now studying for the gospel ministry at Yale College.

On the other hand, in this city I know personally but a single Protestant who has made a transition into the Roman church. It would not surprise me, to hear that in some cases, professional or political cupidity and ambition, ties of marriage or of blood, social friendship, or the assiduity of Roman priests, have transferred a nominal Protestant into the Romish ranks, or taken a weak lamb from our fold; but one case alone of this kind, has yet occurred in the field of my observation. For this let us thank God, and take courage.

Does this state of things among us, present a case so desperate that we need foreign agents to come to our rescue? Is the necessity so urgent, that the peace of the city need be put in jeopardy, as it has sometimes been, and multitudes collected day after day to hear that our Catholic fellow-citizens ought to be regarded with universal suspicion, because, fleeing from the oppres-

sions of the old world, they have really had the audacity to bring with them the religion of their ancestors?

Is the danger so imminent, that pastors are called upon to intermit their high and Heaven-enjoined efforts, for the promotion of practical godliness and the salvation of souls, that they may engage in assaults upon Romanism? Those who think they see danger, do right in sounding an alarm. But really I meet no evidence, that Romanism exerts much influence beyond the foreign population under its control; and this population will be benefited more by expostulation than denunciation. "I speak as to wise men, consider what I say."

But we may be admonished that there is another view of this subject. We may be told that the cause of alarm is not what the Romanists now are as to numbers, nor what they have yet done for the conversion of Protestants. Fear is said to be grounded on the peculiarity of our institutions—on the mental habits of the American people, and on the internal power of the Roman system of religion in its adaptedness to the nature of man.

These and similar suggestions induce me to remark,

IV. THAT THIS COUNTRY WITH ITS PRESENT CHARACTERISTICS, FURNISHES EXTRAORDINARY AND INEXORABLE OBSTACLES TO THE CONTROLLING PREVALENCE OF ROMANISM.

It is a *free* country. Every man is at liberty to adopt and promulgate his own religious opinions. This harmonises with the spirit of Protestantism, and the

republican organization of our churches. None will pretend that our condition would be improved if Romanism were here established by law. And none who know the effect of persecution, how tenaciously the human mind resists a religion enforced by temporal pains and disabilities, desire to see Catholics appealing to popular sympathy, under an invasion of their civil rights. Here Romanism has the opportunity to exhibit its true character unchecked by law, and here it is divested of all just plea for crying, "persecution." What more can any Protestant desire, than to have the opportunity to meet error unshielded by law, and unprotected by the sympathy which invests error when persecuted?

So long as Romanists acknowledge as their head the Roman Pontiff, and thus depend on a foreign power, they will find our free institutions, our jealousy of liberty, an almost insurmountable obstacle to the progress of their creed. Democracy is political Protestantism. Men who hate despotism in the State, will not long submit to despotism in the Church. Romanism is the child of thrones, and with thrones it must fall.

If there be any two characteristics which distinguish the American people, they are, 1st, a disregard of mere authority in matters of religion, and 2d, a jealousy of religious liberty. There is scarcely a native American citizen to be found, to whom the proposition to surrender his Bible, and his private judgment of right and wrong,

that he might lean on the authority of a Roman priest, would not be met by instant and indignant repulsion. Distrust of their own judgment in religious matters, is not a trait of our citizens. They would as soon summon a congress of nations to decide what they should daily eat, as give up their right to read the Bible and think for themselves in matters of faith, in order to hunt for truth in the musty records of ancient councils. The liberty demanded by the American people, is a universal liberty, and no system of faith which contravenes this passion of the country, can become popular.

It may be said this is theory—that as a matter of fact, there is in certain classes among us a strong sympathy for Romanism. To some extent this is true, and is accounted for, 1st, by the weakness of Romanism, which disarms jealousy, and 2d, by their belief that Romanists are harshly treated by their Protestant opposers.

The very principle of liberty, which would render a man personally deaf to all appeals from Romanism, as a religious system, might create in his mind a very active sympathy for the poor Irish and German Catholics, when coming strangers to our shores, as an asylum from oppression, they are met with the suspicion of treason, and held up as enemies to the land of their adoption. This sympathy, though often urged as an evidence of our danger, might perhaps with more justice be attributed to the fact, that many Protestants, while they have regarded all other sinners as men to

be won by argument, and kind persuasion, have treated Romanists as enemies to be crushed by denunciation.

"I will allow no man to tell me where I shall go to church," is an expression which I have heard from the lips of many Romanists. This is the spirit of our country, and of the age. Instead of waning among Protestants here, it is caught by every Romanist who has resided twenty years in this land. If the Roman priests yield to this common feeling, then they leave their people to the influence of the Bible and of truth. If they resist it, they resist that spirit of the age, which in this country is controlling, and against which no ghostly authority affords protection. The Romish priests may exercise a religious despotism over recent emigrants from Germany and Ireland, but they do not, and *they dare not*, attempt thus to lord it over the native Catholics of this city, who know their rights, and dare maintain them.

The mass of mankind, in Christendom especially, have learned that they have certain inalienable rights, and among these they include unrestricted freedom of thought and action in religion. When once an impression of this kind is imbibed, it is a treasure never surrendered. It flatters the self-love, and protects the dearest interests of human nature. It is sustained and invigorated by the lessons of history, and rendered sacred by the authority of God.

This resolute demand for liberty of thought and action, is no where more prevalent than in our own

land. It is here nourished by our bold political discussions addressed to the people, assuming their right to scrutinise all manner of subjects, and the pretensions of every man to honour or office. It is fostered by our literature, which teems in every part with eulogies on the right of man to read, hear, and judge for himself, and thus make his investigations of truth, original in contempt of mere authority. It is nurtured by our history, which shows that our fathers laid the foundation of our national liberty and prosperity, not by servilely copying the past, but by boldly rising above the prejudices of years gone by. This demand for liberty of thought, is invigorated by all those new discoveries in science, and all inventions in the arts, which have characterised modern times. Every new discovery valuable to the world, inspires increased respect for original and free investigations of mind in the present age, and increased distrust of opinions, grounded on the mere authority of the past.

I may add, that this demand for liberty of thought is fostered by the religious conflicts of opposing Protestant sects, which, for near two hundred years, have here made their appeals by argument and persuasion, assuming always that all men have a right to study the Bible for themselves, and form their own opinions.

I might proceed in this strain, to notice a hundred other influences which strengthen in this great nation the Protestant claim to liberty of thought; but I pause, to inquire—Is it probable that 16,000,000, trained

under such impressions, are in imminent danger, under the teaching of 500 Roman priests, of plucking from their hearts sentiments wrought into the very framework of their nature? Are they in danger of *burning their Bibles* and surrendering their liberty of interpretation, humbly to learn, what they may believe, from the lips of Roman priests or from the conflicting decrees of Popish councils?

But it is said Protestantism in this country is diluted —that its various divisions break the unity and strength of the body, while a large mass having no fixed religious sentiments, are prepared to fall an easy prey to Roman zeal.

It is yet to be settled that the division of Protestants into sects, weakens their united strength against a common opponent. The energy of the individual often diminishes in direct proportion to the growth of his party. By the division of Protestants into sects, the principle of piety is aided by denominational zeal, while the strength finally accumulated by all, tends to unity in the presence of Romanism. It is the "*three-fold* cord which is not easily broken."

In the Roman controversy it has been assumed, that the great mass in our country who are not connected with any Protestant denomination, are in no sense with us. This to me is a most dangerous and false assumption. Whether a man read the Bible or not, if he asserts his *right* to read it, he is with us. Whether he go to the sanctuary or not, if he claims the *right* to

attend where he pleases, without responsibility to a priest, he is with us. Whether a man's religious opinions be or be not clearly defined, if he claim the right to decide for himself what shall be his creed and his mode of worship, he is with us. Thus it is true, that in this country, he that is not with Romanists, is, in social influence, with us. He that claims the great Protestant principle of the right of private judgment in matters of faith, be he Infidel, Mormon, or Jew, is opposed to the very foundation of the Roman creed, and ought never to be classed among her adherents.

But it may be urged, that one attribute of the American people is a love of novelty in religion, and that Romanism adapts itself to this characteristic of the country. To some extent this is true, but in a very important sense it is not true. To particular persons, trained in ignorance of all the past, and excluded from any vision of the world as it now is, Romanism may have the charm of novelty.

But to the mass of this nation it is no novelty. To those who have ordinary intelligence, Romanism presents the form which stalked in pride and cruelty amid the mists of the dark ages—a form gorgeously arrayed to catch the admiration of the ignorant and the timid, but ill adapted to our times and our land—a form scarred by deep wounds from the sword of truth, and crimsoned by the blood of martyred saints.

Such a form, however disguised and adorned, can have no claims either to novelty or loveliness. The

history of Romanism is familiar to our children. She has played too distinguished a part in the great drama of the past, to be now unknown. The middle ages, repulsive as they seem, give us light on the tendency of her doctrines, and furnish a deep shade, to render more conspicuous the glorious result of the Reformation.

There are few among us so ignorant, as not to know what Romanism was as it existed in the dark ages, and what it now is in many countries of the old world. Instead of bringing up pagans to the pure faith and morality of the Bible, it degraded Christianity to a level with pagan superstition. It brought back to Christian temples the idols which primitive Christianity had banished. It substituted the wood of the cross, fraudulently imposed on the world as such, for the exhibition of Jesus in the ministry of the sanctuary. It distributed the counterfeited teeth and hair of Peter, Paul, and John, instead of their epistles. It closed the Bible on the world, that all might hold their hope of Heaven at the beck of a corrupt priesthood, subject to a common impulse at Rome. It aimed to accumulate temporal dominion over the whole human race, by a chain on the universal conscience, held by a single hand at Rome. Romanism said to the kings of the earth: "Submit to our spiritual authority—let us control the consciences of your subjects, and reap our revenues in your dominions—give us the arm of civil power to extirpate heretics, and we will render your people submissive to your tyranny, by an appeal to their religious hopes and

fears." This unholy alliance of Church and State was consummated. It was a conspiracy of popes and kings to enslave a race. The popes held down the necks of men by a yoke fixed on the conscience. If any struggled for liberty, "they were met by the spear of kings, and the thunders of the Vatican. This was the double iron yoke under which mankind groaned for a thousand years."

This is matter of history familiar to this great people. As well might you expect to turn back the march of a mighty planet, as to bring the intelligence and independence of this nation to submit to influences tending to restore this mental and physical bondage.

It is also universally known, that Romanism claims immutability. She is not allowed to assume that the dark ages were characterised by mistaken policy. She claims to have been just *as infallible then as now*, and consequently approaches our people under all the guilt and shame of her past history. If to gain influence in the present, she surrenders to infamy the past, then her infallibility is gone. She introduces a new religion; and what she surrenders she can never regain. She stands helpless before the world. If she hold to her past infallibility, then her own dark history gives to us and the world warning to avoid her influence. This is the dilemma of Romanism in this land, and it constitutes a mountain obstacle, over which she cannot climb to spiritual dominion. Our children will say as they do now say,—if this church has once adopted plans which

marked her track with the blood of martyred innocents —if the Inquisition, with its instruments of torture, its gloomy and sepulchral dungeons, its unheeded shrieks and tears, its slow wasting agonies, once rose under its impulse, and was cheered by its smiles—if with all this infamy, she still claim infallibility, then what pledge have we that the same scenes may not be enacted again? If with all this, she "wipe her mouth and say, I have done no wickedness," who so infatuated as to seek her embraces? Protestantism has in the Bible a constitution which controls laity and clergy. In Protestantism, laws govern. Romanism robs human nature of this charter of Heaven, to introduce the government of man; and if her popes, cardinals, councils, bishops, and priests, have once conspired to crush human liberty, intelligence, and happiness, this church must repent, before this nation will receive her overtures. If she repent, and acknowledge that for ages upon ages she has usurped an authority never delegated by God or men—that she has employed her power to mislead and betray the millions whom she had robbed of the Bible, by which they might have detected her errors, then she may take her place with other denominations of this country, in seeking converts to her religious doctrines. But to do this, would be an abandonment of her vital principles. She would no longer be *Roman* Catholic. Thus, in this country, the element of her defeat is imbeded in her arrogant pretensions. She is compelled to be immutably wrong.

But even if all the past could be obliterated, how can she escape responsibility for her present influence?

The progress of light has made this nation familiar with the relative condition of Roman Catholic and Protestant countries. Our children can and do compare the United States with South America, Scotland with Ireland, England with Spain. Our children can trace the march of the Bible, by the broad train of light and blessedness which it has left on the nations under its influence. Every ignorant and illiterate Romanist from Europe, the victim of superstition, stands a reluctant and pitiable, but truthful witness for Protestant Christianity before this great people. Every mariner and traveller, drawn by business or pleasure to Cuba, Ireland, Spain, or Italy, returns to bear testimony to the debasing influence of a creed which robs man of the Bible. The ignorance, superstition, and beggary of modern Italy, more hateful than the malaria which girds the Imperial city, present to our youth the true tendencies of Romanism in its very citadel. Romanism then is no novelty. Its history is known. Its tendencies are known—and so well known, that I have and can have no fears of its extensive adoption.

But it is urged that the doctrines of Romanism are so adapted to the natural heart, that they will be likely to prevail over truth. This argument proves too much. It would prove that truth has never prevailed over Romanism—that there has been no Reformation. But we know that Protestant truth, under every disadvan-

tage, triumphed over Romish error and prejudice in the days of Luther. And why may not the same truth, invested with every advantage, now hold the ground it has gained?

Romanism is and must be essentially what it has been. But there has been among Protestants a constant accumulation of light. The arguments which it required the giant intellects of the reformers, aided by God, to strike out, have now become familiar to all our clergy. We have schools, academies, colleges, Bibles, tracts, religious periodicals, pulpits, liberty of speech, and glorious revivals, denoting the presence of God. If, with all these agencies and all the advantage of first impression, we are liable to fail,—tell me, where is the power of truth over error? Where is the covenanted presence of Jesus with his church? Where the promise of God that "one shall chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight?" Away with this craven spirit, so dishonourable to truth, so distrustful of Almighty God.

Let us point the timid, as Elisha did his servant, to the mountains filled with tokens of God's presence, and say, "Fear not: for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them."

To my mind it is clear, that Romanism in its doctrines, though most skilfully fitted to human nature in certain conditions, is not and cannot be adapted to meet an enlightened community, where the Bible has made a first impression. Truth is the only instrument which

can permanently sway cultivated mind. Truth is the great agent with which God harmonises and controls a moral universe. Where the Bible has gone, it has created a spiritual perception, and a conscience, that repel alike the dogmas and the usages of Romanism.

It is not easy to make a Protestant, however ignorant, believe that he ought to burn his father's Bible—that the Deity intended to make a revelation to the world, but so failed, that his book is dangerous to men, and must therefore be hid away for interpretation by Romish priests—that the Virgin, instead of Jesus, is "a mediator between God and men"—that while the body of Jesus was all unbroken, he divided his literal flesh and blood among his disciples—that the humble confession of a penitent, like the Publican, to God, is now unavailing, unless breathed first privately into the ears of a Romish priest from France or Ireland—that the dead are not only subjects of prayer, but that they can be so deified by canonization at Rome, as to be objects of prayer—that images so rebuked among God's ancient people, are very safe and salutary among Christians—that the probability of a man's escape from purgatory, is graduated by the amount of money which his wife and children are willing to pay for masses to be said in Latin for his soul—and that the eternal and immutable law of God, which sweeps over a universe and an eternity, the embodied transcript of Divine purity and glory, is so accommodating that it can be safely dispensed with, if the pope sees fit to grant, as he has often granted,

a plenary indulgence to sin! When and where do we live, that we apprehend the prevalence of such a creed?

I contend that it is an impeachment of the religious intelligence of the American people, to imply, that such a creed is adapted to mind in this country. Among our Catholic friends, are many persons of great intelligence and moral worth, who not being able to escape the prejudices of education, can be made to believe such absurdities—but to the mass of this great nation, these doctrines must be regarded as the wildest chimeras of misty ages long gone by. Their very extravagance renders them relatively powerless. This is confirmed by the fact, that no nation which has once emerged from Romish superstition, into the light which radiates from the oracles of God, has ever yet returned except through persecution to its control.

Before I dismiss this argument, it may be proper to say, that some persons fear the prevalence of Romanism in this land, because they suppose the prophecies imply it. I distrust modern prophets. The past is strown with the wrecks of fine spun theories, built on prophecies yet to be fulfilled. "The thing that has been will be."

When the Bible for the first time is being translated into all languages, for universal circulation, so that we have the permanent "gift of tongues" with which to proclaim the glorious gospel—when new channels are opening every where, through which truth is flowing out to heathen nations, and bringing back a reflex action,

to stimulate our piety and our zeal—when a thousand eyes are turned to gaze at the apparent dawn of millenial glory,—there are some among us who cover the whole scene with sackcloth—"hang their harps on the willows," look for the "slaying of the witnesses," and raise their lamentations over evils which are to desolate the church. Such persons may be consoled by the fact that other men as wise as themselves, have applied those prophecies to past events, which they hang in clouds over the future. If obvious causes furnish no ground to fear the prevalence of Romanism in this land, we have no reason to infer such danger from prophecies concerning Anti-Christ and the man of sin. We are instructed to watch the "signs of the times." The current of events as it rolls onward, shows the course of Heaven's legislation. It is more truthful than modern prophecy. The providences of God do not contradict his predictions, and when, as we have shown, the train of these providences inspires hope and courage, we are not to palsy the energies of Zion by morbid fears, which may have their foundation in our own ignorant presumption. Those who have regarded the hand of God in our past history as a nation, will be the last to believe, "that we have been led out of Egypt to fall by the Amorites."

I here close the argument "to show that existing causes furnish no ground to fear that Romanism can ever become the prevailing religion of this land." To do justice to the subject would require a volume. I

have glanced at principles which your own reflections may amplify. You may not entirely adopt the speaker's views, but I trust that in "our walk about Zion," you have all been gratified to perceive "how strong are her bulwarks"—how safely she is entrenched by the providence and grace of Almighty God. In Him, is our hope. The agents which protect us are the instruments of His hand, and only efficient when sustained by His power. It becomes us to be humble while we rejoice. We are highly exalted by His favour. We can be ruined only by the sins which bring over us His frown. Let us as a Protestant nation fear God, and we have nothing else to fear.

From the whole subject as now presented, we are not to conclude, that because there is no occasion for panic, we should therefore sleep over the efforts which Romanists are making to gain this country. Because a steady hold of the helm, a stout heart, and well trimmed sails, will cause our spiritual vessel by the favour of Heaven safely to outride the storm,—we are not thence to unship the rudder, and let her roll on the turbulent sea. "We are to be saved by hope," in the power of God and truth—a hope which inspires courage, energy, prayer, and benevolence.

Believing the train of thought in this discourse to be substantially correct, you are prepared to admit,

1. *That if there be no imminent danger, we should be careful not to give the Romanists the benefit of such an assumption.*

Agitation and excitement are the very atmosphere which innovators covet. The element of a majority conservative in its purpose, is calmness, deliberation, and steady adaptation of its resources to appropriate ends. We have the first possession of the country. We have with us generally its wealth, intelligence, and social influence. We have with us the spirit of our institutions, and of the age. We have with us the truth, the spirit, and covenanted favour of the Head of the Church. We can afford then to be calm under the assaults of the Romish press. As years are but the days of generations, we can be as patient as benevolent, in our efforts to soften the prejudices and instruct the spiritual ignorance of foreign emigrants to our shores.

With us, fear and feverish and violent action, imply a consciousness of weakness, which no Protestant has a right to cherish. It is a finesse of every aggressive minority, to encourage followers by a boast of success, present or prospective. The tears of Protestant alarmists are bottled for exportation. Our cries of fear are published in Rome and Austria, to stimulate Catholic missions to this country. If this country be Protestant to the core, and be destined so to abide, let it be known in Europe, and it will hush the shout of triumph which Romanists are there raising over our anticipated fall.

The same panic which inspires Romanism with new zeal, weakens the courage and faith of our Protestant population. Men are prone to bow to the rising rather than the setting sun. It is the army marching to

victory, which finds the recruiting service easy. Prone as men are to reconcile themselves to evils which are unavoidable, the announcement that Romanism is about to triumph, is a direct means to hasten such a result. It leads the trimming and time serving to court a party moving to victory, and even stumbles the faith of the pious in God.

Let us be more just to truth and the promises. Let us stand forth in the panoply of the gospel, and trusting in God, believe "that truth is mighty and will prevail." "No weapon that is formed against Zion shall prosper."

2. *If there be no cause of fear, then it is unwise as well as unkind, to employ our influence in denouncing the Romanists.* Were our Protestant institutions in real and imminent danger, we might be justified in rousing the whole public mind by appeals to their fears. But nothing short of this will compensate for the evils inflicted in exciting the antipathies of one class of our fellow citizens against another.

It is worthy of remark, that so long as *Romanism* was scripturally discussed as a religious system, the Reformation moved over Europe. But when Protestants began to discuss *Romanists*—that is, to represent Catholics as public enemies, and to stir up against them public hatred, the march of Protestant truth was arrested. Let us take counsel of the past. The spirit of denunciation unfits us and our people "for speaking the truth in love" to the victims of error. It drives the Romanists for sympathy to their priests, and constitutes an external

chain of iron to bind them closer and still closer to their superstitions and their creed.

With some, Christianity is always a warrior poising her spear, ready to do battle, not "against principalities and powers," but "against flesh and blood." She is more amiable and more in her native element, when in imitation of her great founder, she meekly, humbly, and persuasively, beseeches the wandering from truth, to return to the fold of the Great Shepherd. The spirit of denunciation draws into its train the unsanctified tendencies of our nature, and so embitters the temper, that while we have great zeal, we often make religion itself most repulsive, so far as it is made responsible for our violence. To aim and endeavour, in the spirit of Jesus, "to instruct those that oppose themselves," is mercy twice blessed. It exercises our own Christian graces, and creates around us an atmosphere of benevolence, adapted to melt the prejudices, soften the hearts, and open the ears of those whom we would convert to Protestant Christianity. If Jesus could humble himself for our sake to the cross—if Paul in the name of Christ could "*beseech* sinners to be reconciled to God"—have we not noble examples to encourage our patient, humble, and self-denying efforts, to lead the most bigoted devotees of error to the light of truth!

And if there be no danger of the controlling prevalence of Romanism in this land, then we may safely welcome the poor Irish and German emigrants to our shores. I love the pathos of an Irish heart, and the sterling hon-

esty of the German character. I love these emigrants no less because they are faithful to their own views of religion. They show a religious firmness that Protestants may well imitate. While we are sending missionaries to labour under great embarrassments for the conversion of Romanists in France, let us be willing that God should send some Romanists to our own land, to be under our more direct and easy influence.

There may be in the future, as there have been in the past, dangers which so jeopard our national liberty, as to require clergymen to enter the arena as guardians of our civil and religious freedom; but it seems to me that the true dignity and end of our high office, will at present be best promoted by concentrating our energies on the conversion of men to Christ. To assume that all of a certain creed are public enemies, and to rouse against them suspicion and aversion, only throws them beyond our influence, without lessening their number or their power. It is only obstructing the poisonous stream, to accumulate more weight, and finally to break out with more disastrous results. But cleanse the rivulets which feed this stream, and train them to flow in proper channels, and they will add beauty and fertility to the landscape. It is not wise in the agriculturist to spend all his strength in "plucking up tares." This is only a means to an end. The great object is, by sowing the seed to supplant the tares, that the rich harvest may wave over hill and valley. It is well when the Church is able to stand uninjured in the prèsence

of her foes. It is better still, when her truth, her example, and her prayers, have by the grace of God transformed her enemies into friends. We must protect the Protestant community from Romish error; and for this purpose, those means are most efficient, which sanctify our own hearts in their use, and in their end aim at the conversion of Romanists to the true faith.

Ancient Rome, in the dying agonies of empire, imparted the blessings of Christianity and civilization to the northern hordes, under whose hands she fell. May not our own free, intelligent, and happy land, be so imbued with the spirit of light, benevolence, and prayer, that the myriads of emigrants rushing to our shores, shall be unable to resist the power of Protestant truth, wielded as it may be by the energies of the Holy Ghost? It will then be said of them in a noble sense,

"They touch our country, and their shackles fall."

Poor Catholics from Europe are men as we are men. They have the same depravity—were bought by the same blood—share the same invitations and promises, and are bound with us to the same eternity. If they have been so misled that they are sunk in superstition, and are strong in bigotry, then so much the more are they to be pitied—so much the more do they demand kindness from us, that we may disarm prejudice, and let in upon their minds the glorious light of the Bible. It is the command of God in Leviticus xix. 33: "If a stranger dwell with you in the land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be as one

born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself." How sublime over low prejudice is the word of God! How well is the spirit which it breathes, adapted to soften the heart, and prepare us to speak the truth in love to foreigners who have sought among us a home!

In Scotland and Ireland, Protestants have been accustomed to treat Romanists as enemies—personal, social, religious, and political. And hence, they have excited a prejudice through which the truth cannot penetrate. It is possible to innoculate this nation with the same spirit. But I ask you to beware of its influence. I beseech you to treat Romanists as erring men, and endeavour by kindness, to lead them into the paths of salvation.

It is easy to excite masses to hate the poor emigrants, but it is a more difficult, as well as a more gracious work, to engage our churches to labour and pray for their conversion. Bitterness unfits us to do good, and them to receive it. Let us speak more to them and less of them. Let us treat them as friends, and we may make them the friends of Christ. We are ambassadors of peace from the Prince of Peace. "They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever!"

NOTE.—The author, in the preceding Discourse, has modified its estimate of comparative numbers, &c., to adapt it to the present time. In other respects, it must be read with reference to the state of the Catholic controversy in 1841.