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F. T. Brown

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BLESSINGS OF THE FIG-TREE AND VINE:

THANKSGIVING SERMON,

BY THE

REV. FREDERICK T. BROWN,

NOVEMBER 25, 1852.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE  
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

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MADISON:

PRINTED AT THE COURIER JOB OFFICE.

1852.

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REV. FREDERICK T. BROWN,

*Pastor 1<sup>st</sup> Pres. Church  
Madison Ind.*

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

MADISON, November 26th, 1852.

REV. F. T. BROWN—DEAR SIR:

At a meeting of the members of your congregation, held this evening, the undersigned were appointed a committee to request a copy of the sermon delivered by you on the 25th instant (Thanksgiving day) for publication.

C. BARNES,  
L. J. ADAMS.  
WM. CLOUGH.

MADISON, Saturday afternoon, }  
November 27th, 1852. }

MESSRS. BARNES, ADAMS AND CLOUGH—

GENTLEMEN: Your kind and complimentary note, requesting a copy of my Thanksgiving Sermon, for publication, came to hand this morning.

My first impression was to decline complying with your request—sincerely believing that the discourse was not worthy of the honor. But, upon second thought, I concluded that perhaps the judgment of modesty itself should be to let you and the congregation, in behalf of which you act, be the judges of that. Accordingly I place it at your disposal.

Very sincerely, your friend and pastor,  
FREDERICK T. BROWN.

## SERMON.

“And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba.”—1st KINGS, 4: 25.

To say that any people dwell safely under their own vines and fig-trees, is to say nearly everything that need be said of their prosperity and happiness. Neither the vine nor the fig are emblematic trees under our sky, but we very well understand the allusion, and the emblems could hardly have been more expressive to the Jew than they are to us. But it has occurred to us that perhaps each of the symbols used had its separate and particular meaning. The fig tree symbolizing all the blessings of the state, not purely religious in their character. The vine symbolizing all the purely religious blessings of life. This may be mere fancy, but it strikes us pleasantly, and serves the good purpose of classifying our blessings. To say that we dwell under the fig tree, is to say that we are well, wisely and happily governed, and that *we are not governed too much*. The great evil of most governments is that, they govern the people too much. Some government is necessary, and government itself is of divine authority, but the very least under which any people will thrive, and be strong and happy, is the best government for them. To say that we dwell under the vine, is to say that we have religious light and religious liberty: that every man who will may read the Bible, and is free to worship God after the dictates of his own conscience. Whether fanciful or not, this is the view of our text that we propose to take on the present occasion. For it is true that, from Dan to Beer-sheba in these United States, our annual thanksgiving day finds us dwelling under our own fig-tree—well, wisely and happily governed, and not governed too much:—with one solitary exception, *the odious Fugitive Slave Law*, which not one person of all this audience, as we suppose, ever expects to obey. We will suffer its penalties, if need be, like good citizens, but to obey it is out of the question.—And dwelling under our own vine: with the fullest religious liberty and religious light, free, every one of us, to read the Bible, and to worship God after the dictates of our own consciences. For these blessings of the fig-tree and the vine, we meet together to-day in this house, to give solemn thanks to God.

The idea of true representative liberty has been of very slow

growth in the world. It is a familiar truth to us, but it has not been many hundred years since its birth, and it was born into the world an infant, and at the present day not exceeding one third of the inhabitants of the earth have ever heard of it by the hearing of the ear: and, of the thousand millions of our fellow men, not fifty millions, perhaps, have any just conceptions of what it is. It is perhaps not too much, nor too little to say, that the State prisons of Paris would hold all the Frenchmen in France who have any correct notion of what true representative liberty is. It takes *the man* as well as the mind—and more than the mind—to comprehend some truths. The same statement might be made respecting Italy, respecting Spain and Portugal, respecting Austria, respecting Sardinia, Belgium, Russia. The State prisons of their capitals would hold all the people in these respective countries who comprehend and love true representative liberty. In Prussia, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland, a few faint streaks of the dawn are seen. In Hungary and in Switzerland the light shines more clearly, but not with the clear, steady light of perfect day. In Great Britain the large and powerful middle class—the intelligent, industrious, enterprising middle class of the people—understand representative liberty nearly as it is understood among us. But pass out of Europe into Asia, and where, among her five hundred millions, will we find five hundred free men? Africa has one bright spot—the Liberian Republic—a *bright spot*, but no bigger than the tip of one's finger to the whole country, and what shall we say of the one hundred and fifty millions of blacks out of Liberia, her other inhabitants? What do the Canadians know of representative liberty? What do the Mexicans know of it? or the Central Americans? or the people of the Republics and Empires of South America? A careful inspection of the position and condition of the world will, we think, convince the most sceptical that, of the thousand millions of earth's inhabitants, not exceeding fifty millions have any just conception of what true representative liberty is.

A like examination of the Republics, and other of the best governments of the ancient world, will reveal a similar truth. Egypt, in her day, was the centre of intelligence and power, but the mass of the Egyptians were unrepresented slaves. Babylonia and Assyria grew to be mighty kingdoms, stretching out their arms like seas, and trampling, with the haughty pride of conquerors, over all the immediately surrounding nations; but, in their palmiest days, the mass of the Assyrians and Babylonians were unrepresented slaves. In the early iron age of Greece there was some sort of rude indepen-

dence and freedom, but it was very far from being elevated intellectual representative liberty; and, in the boasted silver and golden ages of the Republics, the mass of the Greeks were unrepresented slaves. Roman liberty was an advance on Grecian liberty, and there were some noble things about the stern, old Roman Republic; but Roman liberty was still not pure representative liberty; and, in the days of her most glorious renown, the mass of the Romans were unrepresented slaves.

This brings us down to the advent of Jesus Christ, and leads us to say that the germ of true representative liberty is to be found only in the Gospel of the Son of God. The politics of every people springs from their religion. True representative liberty, wherever it is found, is an indiginous growth from the Gospel of the Son of God. Search through all the old heathen philosophies and religions, and there is never a truth to be found which, planted as a seed, will make a whole people, governors and the governed, a free people. Search through all the heavy tomes of modern infidelity, and there is never a truth to be found — unless perhaps here and there a truth stolen from God's word, as the slave trader steals slaves and sells them into bondage — which, planted as a seed, will make a whole people, a free people. Where is that laboured production of the French Encyclopædists of the Révolution, that was to be a new and most sweet and winning Evangel to the other benighted nations of the earth? France ate the books, and they were in her mouth sweet as honey, but since then her belly has been bitter. We repeat it. The politics of every people springs from their religion; and true representative liberty, wherever it is found, is an indiginous growth from the Gospel of the Son of God. The germ of liberty was in the Gospel from the beginning, but because of the political ascendancy of heathenism till the church grew corrupt, and because of the leaden sleep of the dark ages that followed, the germ was not quickened till at the Reformation.

The Gospel reveals to us one God, who is the common Father of us all: one Lord Jesus Christ, who is the common Saviour of us all: one Divine Spirit, who is the common Regenerator of us all. The Gospel places all men on one common level, so far as rights are concerned. The Gospel says indeed give honor to whom honor is due: give fear to whom fear is due: give reverence to whom reverence is due: but this very law puts into every man's hand — into the hand of the humblest — a claim to be represented according to his rights. No man is to be overlooked. No man is too insignificant to be free, or to hold up in the sight of his rulers his vested rights, and claim

for them the respect that is their due. "Render to all their dues," is one law of the Gospel. "Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you," is another law of the Gospel. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God," is another law of the Gospel. Plant these principles as seeds, and the growth will as certainly be free representative liberty, as it is certain that the acorn will grow the oak.

Government, we have said, is of divine authority. This is the teaching of God's word. But no particular form of government is of divine authority. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath—a radical distinction. So government is intended for man, not man for the government. Citizens, without power, in a tyrannical, oppressive government, must submit, be good citizens, and take the penalties of whatever laws they cannot in conscience obey. This is according to the word of God. But citizens, with power, in a tyrannical, oppressive government, must overthrow it, change it, and make for themselves wholesome laws. This is according to the word of God. The government is for the people, and not the people for the government. The government—of whatever sort it be, a monarchy, an aristocracy, a republic—is always responsible to God for the highest good of the people. The highest possible form of government, as we conceive, is a Republic, every citizen of which is a *represented freeman*. Of such a Republic as this God has made us citizens; and there is no other government comparable to it on the face of the earth. This we say not in the spirit of boastful braggadocio, but as being devoutly thankful to God.

Just twelve months ago this day, in a thanksgiving sermon on a different topic from this we are discussing in the present discourse, we had occasion to run some parallels between our own and some other republics. Of the French Republic we used this language; "Who so debased as to do reverence to that scorn of all patriotic and good men, the Republic of France!" Some of you, perhaps, then thought this strong language, too strong in condemnation of a powerful sister Republic. But have not events since then justified every word? France is no longer a Republic, but an Empire. Her chief ruler is no longer a President, but an Emperor. The people themselves made this change. They prayed their President to consent to be their Emperor, and do with them just what might be his pleasure. The mayor of one of the departments paraphrased the Lord's prayer, and blasphemously addressed it to Louis Napoleon, and it was very graciously received. The French, as a people, were not fit to be freemen, and they were fit to be just what they this day are, *slaves*.

*It takes men* as well as mind — and more than mind — to comprehend the idea of true representative liberty.

It is the fashion in this country to deery Great Britain, and more particularly England. We confess to no sympathy with any such detraction and enmity. On the contrary, we confess to great love and great admiration for the English people. Not to such love or admiration as we give to our own countrymen, but they have our second-best affections. The splendid elegance and profuseness in which the upper classes live in England has no parallel in the world. The squalid poverty and wretchedness in which the lower classes live there has no parallel in the world. The lower classes have no true representative liberty. The higher classes have, and have more than of right belongs to them. These two features of the British government we greatly dislike. Between the higher and lower classes is the great middle class—the intelligent, industrial class—the bone and sinew of the country. These, for the most part, are freemen, fully represented. The Queen — or the King, as it may be — is a mere *caput mortuum*, without anything like the power that we republicans have put into the hands of our Presidents. But the aristocracy of titles of nobility and great estates overshadows the land, and under a perpetual shade, nor trees nor plants ever come to perfection. We hate this shadow that the English nobility cast upon their poor brethren. God made the sunshine for all. Every man should be permitted to live in the sunshine, and cast his own shadow. We hate, moreover, the enormous taxation there is to keep the government alive and moving, organized on these costly aristocratic principles. Above all, we hate the Church-and-State religion of England, that lays a ban upon the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free. The dissenters of England have no representative liberty in matters of religion. Still, when looking in any other direction than across the Atlantic, the English people may lay claim to be a nation of represented freemen. There is more liberty of speech and liberty of thought and liberty of action in that little island than in the whole of continental Europe. Nay, more than in all the rest of the world besides — these United States alone excepted. And for learning and generosity and deep, still-flowing, constant affections, the people of Great Britain are surpassed by no people on whom the sun shines. They have our second-best affections. And we give it as our opinion that, though there are some things which cry loudly for reform, the English people are better governed as they are than they would be under a Republic. They love the ruts of their ancient highways better than the smoothest roads\* of democracy. The time has not yet

come there when the highest good of the largest number of people demands that the hoary institutions of hundreds of years should be overthrown, to make way for a Republic—even just such an one as our own. “Institutions are not created, but grow.”

So of other countries in Europe. Europe all over is now in a state of fierce effervescence, and Republican bubbles every few years will rise to the surface, and will just as certainly burst. When the masses become thoughtful, and intelligent, and constant, and reverential, and serious-minded, a God-fearing people, then we will have hopes for France and Italy and Germany, and not before. It has been said that, “To write an epic, a man must be a great epic poem himself.” Homer was a greater epic than the *Iliad*, Virgil than the *Æneid*, Milton than the *Paradise Lost*. So to make a great Republic the people must be greater than the Republic they make. The stream cannot rise higher than its fountain. The germ must have its existence in the earth, hidden from sight, else it cannot sprout above ground, and grow into the stately tree. To illustrate exactly what we mean, we call your attention to two facts—well-known, and, without their key, most surprising historical facts.

After the revolution of 1848 in France, the *elite* of French wisdom and intelligence—their philosophers, their statesmen, their poets, their divines—were gathered into Paris, and agglomerated into a most imposing convention, to frame a Constitution for a great Republic. They deliberated, they debated, they vociferated, they gesticulated for months, and at length the model Constitution was given to the world with a most sonorous flourish of trumpets. And now what was it? *Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus*. It was such a school-boy performance as might have disgraced the pupils of any first-class academy in our land.

About this same time gold was discovered in California. Immediately, across the continent, by the Isthmus, and round Cape Horn there was a rush of people to the gold mines. They were people from every class of society known to us, but most of them were from the very worst classes—gamblers, desperadoes, seedy adventurers, broken-down hacks; many of them were very young men; a very small percentage had ever been in public life, or ever would have been had they remained at home. They were men who went to make money, and not laws. They were men who went to search for gold, and not for precedents. They were men who went to frame their fortunes, and not constitutions. But presently the whisper passed round, “We must have laws; we must frame a constitution; we must be a State.” No sooner said than done. A convention was called,

and the convention met: and such a convention never sat before beneath the broad heavens, and such another never will sit perhaps again. Some were from the wet-diggings, and some were from the dry-diggings, and some were from the gold-bearing quartz mines. Some had been cattle-drivers. Some had trundled wheelbarrows. Some had served as porters or hotel waiters—the most menial employments turned up their man. They were dressed, moreover, as men were never dressed before: and whiskered and “bearded like the pard.”

Well, these men met in haste—for they had no time to spare from the great business for which they had forsaken country and home—deliberated in haste, made hasty speeches, and only to the point; and after a very few weeks dispersed again to their several employments, quietly: but leaving behind them, in the way of a State Constitution, one of the most astonishing productions of legislative wisdom that the world has ever seen,—all things considered: a most admirable Constitution for representative freemen and republicans. The Frenchmen conducted their water along, with great ceremony, in silver and golden pipes; but, do what they would, the stream could not be induced to rise higher than its fountain, and that unfortunately was extremely low. The Californians conducted their water along in hastily-made troughs of rough-hewn logs, and without any ceremony, but it sparkled and foamed, and rose higher and higher, till the stream swelled into a river, and the river into a lake of clear, sweet, never-failing waters. That anomalous convention had—as old divines, speaking of another subject would say—“the root of the matter in them:” its members thought and spoke and acted such constitutions every day of their lives, unconsciously, just as naturally as they breathed atmospheric air.

What, then, must be the condition of that people whose most reckless, venturous, turbulent citizens—to use no stronger expressions—*habitually think constitutions* teeming with the very clearest ideas of true representative liberty? Never before, as we believe, were our peculiar institutions held up so high to the gaze of a wondering world as by that astonishing convention of reckless, constitution-making gold-seekers on the shores of the Pacific. If the superfluous sprouts, the excrescences of the tree, as it were, bear such fruits, any season, and under whatever sky, what may we not look for from the parent tree herself in her own native soil, and under her own sky?

The truth is, thanks be to God, our fig-tree is bountiful beyond all other fig-trees to other people, in shade and generous fruits. We can think of no better government that we could pray Almighty God

to give us than this, of which, in his infinite mercy, he hath made us citizens. It protects us, and does not oppress us. It secures to us our rights without adding any wrongs. It encourages us to all good, and discourages us from evil. It frowns upon ignorance and smiles upon knowledge. It delights to bless and abhors to curse. It recognizes every man *as a man* in the sight of God and man. It does not hinder, but it gives a helping hand to every man's proper and highest development. A late English writer has described the American citizen, and written of our institutions in a singularly happy manner for a foreigner. The picture is slightly caricatured, but is substantially true to nature. Mr. Casey says: "Vieing with the Parisian in dress—the Englishman in energy—cautious as a Dutchman—impulsive as an Irishman—patriotic as Tell—brave as Wallace—cool as Wellington—and royal as Alexander, there goes—the American citizen! In answering your questions, or speaking commonly, his style is that of the ancient Spartan; but put him on the stump and he becomes a fountain of eloquence, passion, sentiment, sarcasm, logic and drollery, altogether different from anything known or imagined in the Old World." In the street, "walking right on, as if it were life against time, with the glass at fever-heat, yet taking it cool in the most serious and pressing matter—a compound of the Red Man, Brummel and Franklin—statesman and laborer as he goes—divided and subdivided in politics and religion—professionally opposed with a keenness of competition in vain looked for even in England; yet, let but the national rights or liberty be threatened, and that vast nation stands as a pyramid of resolve, united as one man, with heart, head, hand and purse burning with a Roman zeal to defend inviolate the cause of the Commonwealth.

"To him who has lived among the Americans, and looked largely at the theory and practice of their government and its executive, there remains no possible doubt that the greatest amount of personal security and freedom has been produced from the least amount of cost of any nation in the world. Culling its principles and wisdom from the history of all empires—he should have said, from the Bible, and particularly from the free Gospel of the Son of God—it stands the nearest of all earthly systems to perfection, because it is built on, and embodies those principles which God hath proclaimed in his attributes." Such is the fig-tree under which we dwell, and such are some of the fruits it generously ripens and then drops into our laps. For our fig-tree we give here this day, humble, hearty, solemn thanks to Almighty God.

We come now to consider the blessings of the vine. "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba."

The vine is one of the common emblems of the church. It is no forced construction, therefore, to classify under the vine the common religious blessings of life.

Give us your attention, dear friends, for a few minutes, to some considerations of a few first principles in Ecclesiology. Christ told the Pharisees that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. We also showed you, in the previous part of this discourse, that government is for the people, and not the people for the government. We now say to you that the church is made for the christian, and not the christian for the church. These all are radical distinctions. You know the interpretation the Jews put on the Sabbath—how they made the man for the day, rather than the day for the man. You know the interpretation that monarchists have put on government—how they have made the people for the king, rather than the king for the people. And you know the interpretation that prelatisists have put on the church—how they have made the christian for the church, rather than the church for the christian. We need not carry any further forward than this the illustration of the Sabbath: we have a sufficient and pertinent illustration in government. As government is of divine authority, so, the church is of divine authority. As government is for the happiness and good of the people, so, the church is for the happiness and good of christians. As no particular form of government is of divine authority, so, no particular form of the church is of divine authority. As whatever form of government will best promote the welfare, the happiness, and the most symmetrical and highest development of the people, is the best government for them; so, whatever form of the church will best promote the welfare, the happiness, and the most symmetrical and highest development of christians, is the best church for them. Both are open questions, and left to be decided in the responsible court of every individual man's mind. These we hold to be first truths on government and on the church. Accordingly, we have of governments, scattered over the world, absolute monarchies, limited monarchies, aristocracies, and republics—it being an admitted principle that every nation has a perfect right to choose its own form of government for itself, responsible to God only for its choice. And accordingly, we have of churches, scattered over the world, absolute monarchies, as the Romish church; limited monarchies, as the prelatical church of England, and the Episcopal church in the United

States; aristocracies, as the Methodist Episcopal church; and republics, such as are all the other churches—of all of which, the purest representative republic, without contradiction, is, our own Presbyterian Church—it being a principle that cannot be successfully gainsaid, that every church has a perfect right to choose its own form of government for itself, responsible only to God.

But where do we find this last principle—the principle that every man shall be permitted to worship God after the dictates of his own conscience—fully recognized, saving only in the United States? We give to Rome the fullest liberty, in this Republic, to teach, to preach, to build churches, to make proselytes. At Rome we have one American chapel, *because we would have it*; but the stripes and stars wave over it, or its doors would be nailed up to-morrow. In other parts of Italy, and in other Catholic countries of Europe, Protestants dare not even read the Bible, except under the flag of some foreign power. Do you know that, within the last few months, a Protestant gentleman and his wife, of irreproachable life, have been sentenced to five years of separate imprisonment, by the great Duke of Tuscany, for the crime of reading the Bible? And do you know that, though christians of Switzerland and France and England and Holland and Prussia—and some of them high in rank—have interceded for them, they have failed to procure their release? In France, Protestant churches exist by sufferance only, and under heavy and irksome disabilities? In England, Dissenters—though numerous, and well educated, and refined, and men and women, of most devoted piety—are heartily despised by the dominant church. Not the most gifted and accomplished young English gentleman in England, if a Dissenter, could receive a degree at Oxford or Cambridge. All sorts of obstructions and annoyances strew the paths of those who do not adhere to the national church. They are forced—if they run at all in competition for the prizes—to run a hurdle race, 'low side of a clear track.

None of these things can be said, blessed be God! of these United States. We have no church-and-State religion. Our government is built upon the Bible: but since the Bible does not prescribe any particular form of church government, neither does the State. Our first President, Washington, was a Presbyterian—at least, it is known that he communed with that church, and it is not known that he ever communed with any other American church.\* Our second

\* This statement, since the sermon was delivered, has been the occasion of much local and fruitless discussion. It must be judged—as all similar statements are—by its qualifying clause.

The facts in the case are these: Before the breaking out of the Revolutionary

President was a Congregationalist. Our third called himself a Unitarian, but he was an Infidel. Our fourth and fifth were, we believe, Episcopalians. Our sixth, J. Q. Adams, has been claimed by both Congregationalists and Unitarians. Our seventh, Jackson, was a Presbyterian. Our eighth was and is nothing, so far as we know. Our ninth was an Episcopalian. President Tyler also, if he is anything, is an Episcopalian. Our eleventh was a Presbyterian. General Taylor we suppose to have been inclined to Episcopacy. President Fillmore is a Unitarian. President Pierce is a Congregationalist. So much diversity as this there has been in the religious tenets of our Presidents. Among our other great men, and among the mass of the people, the diversity is still greater. Religion is honorable in all, but we give no preference to any particular form of religion. Every man is free—absolutely free, even in public sentiment—to worship God after the dictates of his own conscience. Churches of different denominations stand side by side in the city and in the village, and the worshippers commingle on the street without one jarring sentiment. Members of the same household may belong to as many different churches, and yet they all walk together, hand in hand, toward the same blessed home. In essentials they all agree; in non-essentials, they wisely agree to differ. God has so constituted the human mind that men must differ in their judgments, their sentiments and their tastes. No two men living hold precisely the same opinions. The attempt to enforce uniformity has always been attended with the worst consequences. The things

War, Washington was a member of the Church of England. At the Declaration of Independence, that Church ceased to have any existence in the United States. Its place was taken by the Protestant Episcopal Church. With the Episcopal Church Washington never connected himself, though he regularly sat under the ministrations of Bishop White, and other Episcopal clergymen. The only American church with which he was ever known to commune, from the commencement of the War to the day of his death, was the Presbyterian church. Out of New England, the church that took the strongest and most determined stand on the side of the Colonies against Great Britain—as we have authorities in abundance to prove—was the Presbyterian Church. Generals Morgan and Pickens were both Presbyterian Elders. Colonels Campbell, James Williams, Cleveland, Shelby, Bretton and Sevier were all Presbyterian Elders. Major Dickson and Major Samuel Morrow were both Presbyterian Elders. Presidents Witherspoon, Graham and Smith participated largely in the war; the two latter gentlemen raised companies and marched against the enemy. To the Rev'ds Hall, Houston, Caldwell, McCaule, etc., we can only allude. The celebrated Mecklinberg Declaration of Independence was put forth by the Rev. Hezekiah Balch and nine Presbyterian Elders, with other citizens of Mecklinberg. In all the thirteen States, the church that took the weakest and least determined stand—to say the very least—on the side of freedom, was the disintegrated Church of England, just then, by the elective affinity of its particles, solidifying into the Episcopal Church. Washington was not blind to these facts; and what influence they may have had in leading him to make a large donation to the Presbyterian College at Lexington, Va., and to seek communion with the Presbyterian Church, and to persistently refuse to commune with the Episcopal Church—the loving daughter of a tory mother—every thoughtful man must decide for himself.

essential to our happiness here, and to our happiness hereafter, God has clearly revealed. On other things we are left free to exercise our judgments, and, to some extent also, to follow our preferences—still, however, accountable to God for the thoughts we think, the opinions we form, and the words we speak. In this way, and in this way only, can man receive his most intelligent, moral development. What range of thought on the great questions of morals is allowed the Catholic outside the *dicta* of his own church? What range of thought on the great questions of morals, churches and church governments, do the adherents to all national churches allow themselves outside the *dicta* of their own church? None whatever. Dissenters of all sorts are to them little, if any, better than Infidels. Indeed, it is no uncommon thing to find them contemptuously flinging Dissenters and Infidels promiscuously into one common purgatory of public opinion. The State has settled the great question of religion, and whoever will not believe with the State, at the very least, *deserves to be damned*. From such narrow-minded bigotry we may all devoutly pray, “Good Lord deliver us!” Dwelling under our vine we know nothing of this evil. God puts the Bible into our hands, tells us to read it for ourselves, to look to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, to search the scriptures, to prove all things, and hold fast that which is true. The Bible prescribes the church for us, but it prescribes no particular form of the church for us: and it is sheer folly, or madness, or wickedness for any man to assert that it does. That is left an open question. So, moreover, the constitution of these States regards it. Here all the churches stand on one common level: and every man is free—absolutely free, even in public sentiment—to worship God after the dictates of his own conscience.

This is our vine, under which we dwell: and now what are the clusters of grapes it bears? They are clusters larger and more luscious than those that grew of old in the Valley of Eschol.

In the first place, the Church in this Republic *is purer* than it is any where else beneath the sun—both as to its ministry and its laity. A distinguished ecclesiastic of the Church of Rome, who not long since left her communion, declared that of a thousand priests whom he had examined preparatory to admitting them into the priesthood, he did not know one pure man. It is notorious that nine-tenths of the priests, in all Catholic countries, keep their mistresses, or otherwise lead immoral lives, and that they practice other enormities and abominations that should banish them from respectable society. Almost the lowest and worst class of the people in Catholic countries is, the Catholic priests. It would be merest folly to look for any

high-toned morality among the people when such things can be said in truth of their spiritual instructors. This is one extreme.

One of the purest of national churches, on the other extreme, is the English Establishment. But it is notorious that not half the ministers in that splendid establishment have any sort of claim to be considered as converted men. Many of them are younger sons of persons who have livings in their gifts, and to whom these livings are given for their support in life. Church livings and advowsons are advertised in the newspapers in England, and are sometimes sold at auction; and the people of the parish, in such instances, get as their pastor the man who was the highest bidder for the living, or the man whom he chooses to present to it. Others of them are men who have turned to the church to get bread to put in their mouths, just as they would turn to any other profession, and without a thought of the solemn responsibilities they were taking on themselves. And it is notorious that to get drunk and swear, and frequent immoral houses does not debar a man from taking priests' orders in the English National Church. Here again the proverb holds true, "Like priest, like people." On the other hand, it is not too much to say that our American Churches are pure, pastors and people. Here and there an exception may be found. But such gross immortality as we have been speaking of would not be tolerated among us a moment.

In the second place. The Churches of this Republic are purer in doctrine than any other Churches of a whole country under the sun. Roman Catholicism has degenerated to Paganism. The English National Church has degenerated to formalism and puseyism. The Scotch National Church is hardly any better. The French National Church has become infidel. The Genevan National Church has become socinian. The German Protestant National Church has become rationalistic. The Churches of this Republic, however, free from the malign influence of the State, and watchful over themselves and over each other, have, by the grace of God, in the essentials of religion, kept themselves pure in doctrine.

In the third place. The Churches of this Republic are benevolent and generous to a degree known no where else, except among the Dissenters of England, France and Switzerland, and in the Free Church in Scotland. One of the incomprehensible things—a constant wonder—to the people of the miserable governments of the old world, who pay tithes, is, that the people here will *voluntarily* give money for the support of religion—to build churches and to pay for the preaching of the Gospel. In the greatest wonderment we have been asked, "How can you support religion in America

without assistance from the State?" It is just as hard — and just as easy — to answer that question as it is to answer another question forever on their lips, "How can you govern yourselves without a King?" Men left to themselves as representative freemen, intelligent and with the open Scriptures in their hand, will very well know how to govern themselves. And such intelligent, Bible-reading representative freemen will very well know how to support religion, and support it liberally, without any assistance from the State.

There are other clusters from our vine that we might pluck, but you remember that we compared them to the grapes of Eschol, *one* cluster of which was so large that the spies carried it on a staff between two. We have shown you three such clusters, and our vine bears many such, but we cannot now pluck any more.

Dear friends, it is this day true that, from Dan to Beer-sheba, every American citizen dwells safely under his fig-tree, and under his vine. We have many things — innumerable-many and great things — for which to thank God. He has made the lines to fall to us in pleasant places, and has given us goodly heritages. He has crowned our lives with loving kindnesses and tender mercies. He has blessed us, and blessed our families, and blessed many that are very dear to us. He has touched the hearts of some of our dear friends that did not love him, and melted them down at the feet of the Saviour. He has continued to others of us every one of his covenant mercies. He is inclining others to consider their ways, and apply their hearts unto wisdom. He is encircling all of us, through the day and through the silent night, in the arms of his infinite love. Some, indeed, have had bitter cups given them to drink — and we sympathized with them — but they were needful medicines — let us not doubt — from a loving hand. Through all the past year, God has certainly not forgotten one of us, and we are all here to-day to testify of his goodness. Judah and Israel dwell safely, every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba. While, therefore, we mingle with our friends, and rejoice and are glad, let us remember that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

