

# CHRISTIANITY:

THE ONLY

## BASIS OF FREE INSTITUTIONS.

### A DISCOURSE.

DELIVERED IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, TRENTON, NEW JERSEY,

ON THANKSGIVING DAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1854.

BY  
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## CORRESPONDENCE.

TRENTON, November 25, 1854.

REV. DR. HOPE.

DEAR SIR:—Having heard with much gratification your sermon, preached in the First Presbyterian Church of Trenton, on Thanksgiving Day, and believing that its publication and wider circulation would be productive of good, we respectfully solicit a copy for publication.

Respectfully yours,

LUCIUS Q. C. ELMER,	JOHN HALL,
THOMAS S. ALLISON,	JOSEPH F. RANDOLPH,
CALEB S. GREEN,	THOMAS J. STRYKER,
FRANCIS A. EWING,	SAMUEL EVANS,
SAMUEL R. HAMILTON,	WILLIAM G. COOK,
GEORGE S. GREEN,	ISAAC W. LANNING,
CHARLES MOORE,	A. R. TITUS,
BENJAMIN FISH,	MARTIN RYERSON,
STACY G. POTTS,	HENRY W. GREEN.

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PRINCETON, N. J., November 27, 1855.

GENTLEMEN :—Your note of the 25th inst., conveying the unexpected request for a copy of the Discourse, delivered in the First Presbyterian Church of Trenton, on Thanksgiving Day, for publication, is before me.

It has always been my settled conviction that printed sermons were feeble instruments of usefulness at best; but as you have expressed the opinion that the publication of the Discourse delivered on Thursday last would be productive of good, it is hereby submitted to your judgment, to do with it as you deem best. On the great subject discussed, I do not feel at liberty to withhold any instrumentality, however feeble, which, in your view, may in any degree promote the ends of that discussion.

Yours, respectfully,

M. B. HOPE.

To Hon. LUCIUS Q. C. ELMER,

Rev. DR. HALL.

Hon. HENRY W. GREEN,

and others.

## DISCOURSE.

If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

JOHN 8 : 36.

THESE appointments, by our chief magistrates, are always welcome to us, not only because they call us to appropriate and solemn acts of worship to Almighty God; but also because we regard them as a formal and national acknowledgment of the Christian character of our institutions. While, therefore, we mingle our gratitude before the throne of Heaven, as a nation, the occasion appropriately invites us to the consideration of topics of public interest, which the pressing urgencies of the pulpit, very properly exclude from its ordinary range of discussion.

It is characteristic of the Divine arrangements for the good of man, that the means of instruction, and the lessons of wisdom, are multiplied in number, and diversified in kind, to a degree proportionate to their importance; and we may not wisely stop our ears to their admonitions. Our own internal nature and the world around us, alike, are filled with voices. The blindest and dullest among us, cannot fail to be instructed, if they will open their eyes to see, and their ears to hear. The very lapse of time is not

a noiseless and unbroken flow of duration. The simple alternation of day and night, and the perpetual succession of months, and years, and generations, serve to wake our attention to the fact, that the law of history involves progression and development, as well as succession, and that the life of nations, as well as individuals, is flowing on visibly to some ulterior end. It is also characteristic of the Divine plan, that the law of historic progress, like that of falling bodies, acts with constant, and therefore, ever accelerating, force. It might well startle and amaze any human spectator, intelligent of its issues, but for the understanding we get from God's own revelation, of its source and its drift.

We seem, therefore, to be called upon, not simply as a matter of propriety and prudence, but of imperative duty, to study the current phenomena of human history, as a revelation of the Divine purpose with reference to man; in order to comprehend, as far as we may, the law of their occurrence, and thus intelligently co-operate in the ulterior end of the whole.

When we cast our eyes over the vast extent of this great Confederacy of United States, ranking already among the first powers of the earth, while its birthday is yet fresh in the memory of some among us, when we contemplate its prodigious and unparalleled strides, in all that constitutes a great and happy people, while we may well exclaim in exulting thanksgiving, "It hath not been so with any other

nation," the thoughtful mind will be irresistibly led to inquire into the human causes of these remarkable results.

We have, it is true, an extent of territory which, for all practical purposes, may be said to be unbounded; a soil of uncommon and most varied fertility; agricultural and mineral resources which seem literally exhaustless:—in a word, we have within ourselves facilities for productive industry and commercial exchange, on the most gigantic scale. But these have all existed before, and exist now, in other parts of the world, without producing a type of prosperity at all proportioned to that, over which we are this day called to give thanks. The special causes of our gratitude must therefore be sought for elsewhere: and the inquiry returns upon us unanswered, what is the special lesson, which our national prosperity is designed to supply to the history of man? what is our contribution to the complete and final form of human civilization? No question of deeper moment, or of livelier interest, could engage our attention.

If we may be allowed to anticipate at the outset, for the sake of the clearness and convenience of the argument, the results of our inductive inquiry, we would venture to say, that the causes of these results, so far as they are peculiar to us, are to be found, mainly, if not wholly, in the truer development and wiser application of the principles and power of the Gospel, as the social life of the nation. If there were time to trace the successive stages of develop-

ment, in the true religious civilization of the world, it would be found that the great work of the early ages of Christianity was essentially preparatory; when Rome held the peace of the world under the absolutism of the Empire, in league with absolutism in the Church, and the Christian Revelation proceeded to assume logical form and certainty, first in the hands of the great apologists of the first five centuries, and with still more elaborate and exhaustive statement, in the dialectic schools of the middle ages. The Reformation, which closed that memorable era, had poured a new infusion of life, like fire from heaven, into the collapsed circulation of the scholastic theology: and now, transplanted to a new world, and as preparatory to the final mission of Christianity, in the establishment of a complete civilization, for the benefit of the race, our American dispensation seems to be, first, to leaven the masses throughout the whole scale of society with the true life-power of a practical and individual Christianity; and then, to blend and fuse that power into the form of an organic government, in which *the people* shall be at once the source, the depository, the executive, and the end, of all necessary social power, and the law of Christian morality, as unfolded in the New Testament, the fundamental and accepted law of society.

In other words, the great problem given us to solve, for the benefit of the race, is to find the equation which will express the relation between the rights and duties of

a people in their *organic character* as a government, and the rights and duties which inhere inalienably, and by divine right, in them *as individuals*; whether separately, or in the several divinely appointed relationships of human life. To determine this, is to solve the final problem of social Christianity, and to organize the principle and power of the Gospel into a form of government, that shall perform all the high functions of a government, and yet leave every individual in full possession of all the rights, privileges, and powers, with which God has invested him as a moral and immortal man.

The solution of this problem is obviously one of the highest difficulty; and yet its true and exact solution must as obviously precede, the diffusion and establishment of Christianity as the one great ruling power of the world—the complete, majestic, final consummation of human history. For the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

We hold no proposition more certain, than that the real living germ of all true freedom, political or social, in the world, originates in that charter of personal rights, wherewith God has endowed every individual soul that wears his image; and the highest form of that personal freedom, and which is the germ of every other, is to be found in that liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free

indeed. The common character of all slavery, political or social, consists in the infringement of the inalienable personal rights of individuals or of classes, by other individuals or classes, whose personal, social, or political position may happen to confer upon them accidental superiority. Now it is plain that the complete enfranchisement of the individual, in which all true freedom essentially consists, would inevitably produce new collisions between the conflicting claims of individuals, leading directly to new forms of servitude, by the inevitable subjugation of the weaker to the stronger, unless some common principle can be found, to which all will bow with absolute and final submission, and which all,—the powerful as well as the weak,—will voluntarily accept, as the subjective rule of their life. These are the indispensable conditions of all possible individual freedom: and you will at once perceive, that they are conditions theoretically impossible, and never realized in fact, except under the dominant influence of the principles and power of Christianity; for the simple reason, that they are the principles of absolute equity and moral justice, the certain knowledge of which is due exclusively to the Bible, and the only power adequate to enforce them is the moral omnipotence of God.

If it should be objected, first, that these are impossible conditions in any human society, and second, that if realized, there would be no further necessity for any government whatever; we reply, first, that true freedom is

rendered actually impossible, precisely in the same sense, and to the same extent, in which there is a failure to realize these conditions in the prevailing moral tone of the people; this, in fact, being the precise difficulty in achieving free institutions. And second, the difference of opinion in regard to the conflicting claims of individual and social rights, liable to arise in the best forms of human society, whether with honest or unholy purpose, will always demand a common government, armed with adequate judicial, and executive authority; for ultimate recourse, and final adjudication. But any such government, it must never be forgotten, will be efficient for its purpose, only so long as it represents the collective moral force of the individuals who compose it, to whom it owes its whole power, and is responsible for the exercise of that power. It is impossible for any government on earth, however free its constitution may be in theory, to transcend, in the perfection of its actual freedom, the limits fixed by the true moral elevation of its component individual members; for the same reason, that it is impossible for any stream to rise higher than the true level of its fountain.

Liberty, of course, is not exemption from the obligation of law. This were licentiousness. True liberty supposes, on the contrary, the existence of law, armed with penalties strong enough to enforce obedience. In other words, it supposes organic government, to protect and guarantee our fundamental personal rights and prerogatives, against the

assumptions of others. To be secured in the full possession of all the individual privileges and immunities with which God has endowed us, and to be protected against the encroachments of all other beings besides: this is liberty. It is the power to use freely our faculties and means of every sort, for our own good and the good of others, according to the dictates of our moral nature: and it necessarily implies the prohibition to use them, in violation of the corresponding rights of others; for this plain reason, that if our liberty should be allowed to intrude upon the rights of another, that other may in turn intrude upon ours, and the question of right, in such case, becomes simply a question of might.

The slightest reflection, therefore, must render it clear, that true liberty can only exist where there is intelligence and moral principle enough in society to cause men, first to recognize, and then to respect, the equal rights of their fellow-men. The question, therefore, whether a nation is capable of enjoying the blessings of freedom, resolves itself into the question of the prevalence of intelligence and moral principle among the people. National freedom is but the aggregate of individual freedom, exercised by each, and allowed by all: and the competency of a people to govern themselves, depends upon that of the individuals who compose the nation in question, or at least of a sufficient number of them, to control the body as a whole.

If these principles be sound; and we are sure they can-

not be overthrown; we may advance another step, and lay down the proposition, that the edifice of human liberty can stand secure, only when it rests upon the Bible; for this conclusive reason, that the intelligence, and still more the moral principle, which we have seen to be essential, cannot in the nature of the case exist, and in point of fact never have existed, permanently, except under the illuminating, renovating, and commanding influence of the Christian revelation.

In the first place we are undoubtedly indebted to the Bible for that great fundamental truth of human freedom, first distinctly defined and incorporated as an element of organic constitutional law, in our own immortal Declaration of Independence; that all men are born free and equal as regards their personal prerogatives; with its necessary corollary, that political power vests in the body of the people, and not in a privileged class appointed to rule by divine right, without the assent or consent of the ruled.

“Placing, as the Bible does, the whole race upon the same platform of absolute demerit, recognizing no distinction between the meanest slave and the mightiest monarch, except that which was made in the counsels of eternity, by mysterious and sovereign grace; and admitting no patent of peculiar privileges, except that which is stamped with the broad seal of heaven, whose flaming motto is ‘the Lord knoweth them that are his,’ it at once overlooks and overshadows all temporary and factitious distinctions

in society. It breathes into the humblest and obscurest man, the grandeur of an eternal destiny from the past, which starting from the present, shall only fully unfold its magnificent heritage in the eternal destiny of the future; and showing him by this grand and mighty induction from two eternities, his dignity as a man, an immortal predestinated being, the pedigree of whose illustrious birthright is more ancient and imperial than that of kings, we can well see how its influence on the common mind and heart of the people, from the highest to the lowest, must be such as to render a usurped, and much more an oppressive and tyrannical rule, on the part of a fellow worm of the dust, an impossible thing. Let any community become thoroughly imbued with this twofold doctrine of the Bible,—the equality of all men in nothingness and guilt in the sight of God, on the one hand, and their equal dignity through divine creative and redeeming grace, as sons of God, and joint heirs to an inheritance of infinite and eternal glory, on the other hand, and who does not see, that that community can never be subjected to the slavery of any human despot. ‘If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.’ ”

But, in the second place, the influence of the Bible, as a spiritual living power in society, is equally essential in its bearing upon the legislators, and the rulers of a people, who are constitutionally free. The real tyrants of the world, are the unsanctified passions of men. Where these

rule, men are unavoidably slaves, no matter what may be the form of their institutions. These, the religion of the Bible, and nothing else but that, can grapple with and subdue. Its sanctions go to supplant, and where it is practically embraced, its actual effect is to supplant, the law of selfishness, which is the great tyrant of the world, by the law of love, which commands us “to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us.” This is the last and highest generalization, in the establishment of a true and universal liberty. The embodiment and realization of this law, found alone in the Gospel, coupled with a power that is able to enforce it, as the life-principle of our free institutions, is the absolute condition of their permanence; and to effect such embodiment is an achievement to which nothing is competent, but the indwelling of that divine and almighty Spirit, to which Christianity owes both its origin, and its power. In saying this we have no eye to the establishment of any one form of Christian doctrine, or to any one ritual of Christian worship. It is Christianity in its great general Protestant characteristics, as the living, individual, impersonation of the law of love,—not the Church in its external form, of whatever denomination, of which we speak. It is the spiritual life and power of Christianity, moulding our institutions, actuating our rulers and law-givers, and controlling the moral principles of our people, in virtue of their personal subjection to its sway, and nothing else, that can successfully counteract the evils

which are ever rising up to threaten the life of our national freedom.

It may well be questioned, whether pure patriotism can exist, except in the breast of a Christian. The love of applause, the desire of immortality, ambition to rule, and a thousand other motives, may make men patriots, at the expense of narrow personal interests; but after all, is it anything but a more refined and far-reaching species of self-interest, by which they are actuated? Can any man but a true Christian love his neighbor as himself; and is anything short of this, capable of producing true patriotism?

If there be any force in these inquiries, they throw a strong light upon the policy which determines the selection of candidates for office among us. And though retribution may be slow in overtaking us, we may rest assured that the settled conviction of the great Christian public, has been gradually loosening itself from the fastenings of party, and is preparing to descend like an avalanche, and bury a thousand feet deep, the intrigue and corruption which form in so many cases, the rotten causeways, over which unprincipled politicians have managed to creep into office. It is a cruel injury to the interests of humanity, an absurdity in morals, and an insult to Heaven, to intrust our legislation, our judiciary, our executive, or even our police, to men who are not under the influence of sound personal integrity, and still less of incorruptible Christian principles.

This leads us to say, in the third place, that the intelli-

gence and integrity which are essential to the proper working, and consequent success of free institutions, are never found apart from the diffusion of the Bible, and the culture of the spirit of practical Christianity, among the masses of the people. Education in the proper sense of the word, the education of freemen, the education of the moral and intellectual man, is impossible, without the aid of Divine truth, either direct from the Scriptures, or reflected and broken in the traditions of men. Look, for example, at the state of education and liberty in all Pagan and Mohammedan countries. In Pagan Greece and Rome, there were for a time some elements of freedom, and a certain form of literature, which have been the theme of poetry and declamation, till many have come to imagine, that freedom, and even the highest human culture, are independent of the true religion. But it must not be forgotten that the brilliancy of these examples, is due, in no small degree, to contrast with the surrounding darkness. How exceedingly imperfect, for example, must have been the best Greek conceptions of freedom, when Socrates, the wisest and best philosopher the world had ever seen, was poisoned in prison as a felon by the voice of the nation; and the purest statesmen, and ablest warriors, after achieving the very victories that have covered her with glory, were driven away to die in exile.

The glory of Greece was her art, itself the offspring and embodiment of her profound religious convictions; and

yet, the palmiest period of her art, was contemporaneous with the age of her deepest social oppression. And as for Rome, whose conquests are at once the glory and shame of the race, though called by her remarkable place in history, to lay down the platform of Statute law, on which the Christian civilization of the world was to stand, yet it must not be overlooked, and cannot be denied, that these great collects of written law, made by Justinian, owe every leading precept, and every solitary principle of equity, to the Divine code of the great Jewish Lawgiver. Some of them, it is true, exist there only in rudimentary form; but many of them, also, are developed with a degree of fulness, and an exquisite regard to delicacy of application, on which modern science has been unable to improve.

While such is the state of the general indebtedness of the world to the formal legislation of the Bible, it is matter of record, that the peculiar institutions of American freedom, are little else, and were designed to be little else, than a reproduction of those originally founded by God himself, subject only to such modifications as the free spirit of Christianity would necessarily require.

It did not escape the keen eye of the great modern jurist,\* who came to study our institutions, that the original Jewish constitution had established a republic of independent confederated states, essentially like our own. So

\* De Tocqueville.

thoroughly, in fact, were the Puritan founders of the original States of the Union, imbued with the spirit of that primitive theocracy, that they not only modelled their constitutions upon the scriptural type, but it is a curious fact, not generally known, that the legislators of Massachusetts and Connecticut, borrowed the very language of their penal code, from the text of Holy Writ. "Whoever," says the preamble of the code, "shall worship any other God than the Lord, shall surely be put to death." This is followed by a series of enactments, copied verbatim from the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. So true is it that the very framework of our institutions was originally reared upon the Scriptures; and it is equally true, that they can never stand secure on any other foundation.

I proceed to remark, in the fourth place, that we are not to suppose that liberty can be secured to a people merely by framing and establishing among them constitutional institutions, *theoretically free*. Here it is that mere statesmen have so often stumbled. Experience has taught us that a constitution is but the skeleton of liberty. Its flesh and blood—its breath and life—are the enfranchisement and ennoblement of the mind and soul of the people. The former is comparatively an easy thing; though as we have seen, never produced in a single instance, without the aid of revealed religion: the latter is the great problem upon which the race has been engaged for four thousand years; and which it yet remains for practical Christianity to

exemplify, in the final and only possible form, of a complete Christian civilization.

Obvious as the distinction is between free institutions, and a free people, our politicians seem strangely blind to its importance. Hence the attempt to establish a free government in Greece, which all Europe has labored to effect, is rapidly hastening to a failure. Hence the countless revolutions of South America have failed, and always must fail, to produce a single free state. Mexico, for example, may have the identical constitution, and laws, and form of government with the United States; but she cannot become, like us, either a free or a prosperous nation. Hence, too, the present attempt by the combined powers of Europe, to preserve the nationality of Turkey, and the *status quo* of Europe, which has initiated what can hardly fail to become the most formidable war of the century—an attempt with which the deepest instincts of our sense of justice prompt us to sympathize so keenly, seems to us inevitably foredoomed to a failure. Diplomacy may busy herself in preparing sweet spices to embalm the lifeless remains of her *protegé*; and by the crooked arts of what is called statesmanship, she may manage to keep Europe fighting over those remains for a generation or two: but it will turn out, at best, to be merely a quarrel as to who shall exercise the protectorate over the estate of the departed nationality;—a quarrel, which, like so many others, will probably be settled in the

end, by the successful party pocketing the estate, on the ground of services rendered.

Questions of nationality and freedom turn on vastly deeper issues, than the arbitrary will of statesmen. That the present is a war of liberty, we cannot doubt. It is our view of its momentous and fated issues, that gives us our sense of its magnitude. It looks to us like the beginning of the fulfilment of the remarkable prediction of the great political seer of St. Helena;—the war, namely, which is to settle the question, whether Europe shall be democratic or Cossack. In other words, the question pending on its issue, is not the nationality of Turkey, which, despite of our sympathies, is already dead, and awaiting only the rites of sepulture; but the far deeper question, whether Europe is ready for her final enfranchisement, under the liberty of the Gospel. If she is not, her expectant peoples must be content to wait, under the bondage of the Slave, till the day of her moral redemption has dawned.

The possibility of human enfranchisement, we repeat, turns essentially and always, upon the question of enlightenment and religious principle among the people, rather than upon questions of constitutional forms, and political administrations. It interpenetrates and blends itself with, the great substratum of national Christian character. If the history of human freedom has one solitary lesson for the world, it is this. The Middle Ages were the midnight of human freedom. The world has agreed to call them

the dark ages of its history: and if we look for the causes of that darkness, we shall find them, not in political constitutions, so much as in the moral condition of the people. Christianity, becoming gradually corrupt, had first degenerated into absolutism in the Church: and the nations of Europe, humbled and crushed by spiritual domination, had then bowed their neck to the yoke of the Feudal System, that masterpiece of civil despotism; while the redeeming power of the Bible, was excluded, with diabolic cunning, from both church and state alike.

The decay of personal Christianity, and the unavoidable substitution of absolutism, both in church and state, kept equal pace, till the dark and cruel work was done. The monstrous assumptions of priestcraft and feudalism, or in other words, of ecclesiastical and social despotism, had completely bridged over and buried out of sight, the stream of sacred, life-giving truth. There spread in every direction, one vast, burning, moral desert, exhibiting no vestige of human freedom, or even of intellectual life.

At this juncture, Luther, under the impulses of his spiritual nature, attempted to sink a shaft into these dry sands of scholastic *debris*, in search of intellectual treasures; guided by Providence, he struck upon the long-buried fountain of free and saving truth,—the Bible. Its waters, pent up for ages, gushed forth, and spread their life-giving influence over the world. From that source we trace the broad stream of human liberty—of enfranchisement of spirit,

and mind, and body. By the side of that same stream we dwell, and from its bright and sparkling waters quench, this day, our thirst for freedom, and all its allied blessings. On its well-watered banks, our tree of liberty lifts its stately form, and invites the weary and famished victims of the despotisms of the world, to rest beneath its shade, and feed upon its living fruits.

Thus, we find the first great fact in the history of the restoration of human freedom, after the long despotism of the middle ages, was the discovery of the Bible by Luther, in the library of the Convent of Erfurth; and the true germ of all the free institutions which have blessed the world since, is to be found in the soul of Luther, quickened, enfranchised, expanded, and ennobled, by the truth first taught him in that Bible. It was not Luther, as the world is apt to think, but the truth of Christ, energized and dwelt in by the Spirit of Christianity, according to the promise of the Saviour,—the truth of Christ, not as doctrine merely, but as life and spirit to the soul of Luther, to which we owe the enfranchisement of the world, by the glorious Reformation.

Never was there a more devoted slave of the crushing tyranny of the Romish system, than was Luther before his knowledge of the truth; and never was there a nobler specimen of a freeman, than Luther disenthralled by saving truth. Behold him, for example, while in the former con-

dition, abjectly crawling up the sacred stairway at Rome, on his naked knees, to procure an indulgence from the Pope; and then behold him four years later, erect and undaunted before Charles V., and his magnificent court, at the Diet of Worms, refusing the smallest concession that would compromise the interests of human freedom,—when a passage was cut for him by the imperial guards, through the countless thousands, who thronged the streets and house-tops, eager to catch a sight of the Saxon Monk, whose trump of Christian freedom had shaken the world,—when ushered into the audience-chamber of the greatest emperor of Christendom, surrounded by one of the most august and imposing assemblages the world had ever seen, and there commanded, and solicited, with dark threats and brilliant promises, to retract and bow his neck to the yoke of Rome; he stood up, the champion of the liberties of the world, and in the spirit of a ransomed freeman, refused to retract a single word, unless convicted of error from the sacred Scriptures. Thus, planting himself in moral sublimity on the Bible, as the sole charter of human liberty, he closed his memorable speech with the heroic words, “Here I stand: I cannot change: God help me. Amen.”

Here, you see a living example of what the truth of Christ can do, in converting the cringing slave of despotism, into the unconquerable hero of freedom. The power which wrought this mighty change in the soul of

Luther, is the only power which can make a nation free; and under the influence of that power, it cannot be otherwise than free. If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

The spirit of the Reformation, which we have thus seen to be simply the spirit of a free Gospel, as opposed to religious absolutism in every form, spread over Europe. But it was in Geneva, under the hand of Calvin, that the Bible was permitted to develop its own social institutions, and exhibit its own characteristic fruits, with the least interference from other, and older social usages.

What then, I ask, was the characteristic feature of the ecclesiastical and political institutions of Geneva? In the face of the prestige of despotism, and springing from the very soil of absolutism, in both church and state; in the terse and graphic language of another, which Protestant America will not allow to die, and for the first time in the political history of the world, it was “A CHURCH WITHOUT A BISHOP, AND A STATE WITHOUT A KING.” In other words, for the first time, in the history of human freedom, we find asserted and established on constitutional foundations, never again to be overthrown, the characteristic doctrine of the Bible, that the power to govern belongs to the people, and not to a privileged class, of rulers by divine right. The great primary element of freedom was there developed in its social form; the first and spontaneous product of the human mind, when the light of Christian truth had

quicken, and fructify the germ of moral freedom, which God has planted in the human soul.

True, as we shall not fail to be reminded, Geneva did not all at once repudiate all the bloody doctrines and usages, in which she had been trained; and, therefore, even Geneva, in Calvin's own day, and with his knowledge, and perhaps approval (though not at his instigation), burned Servetus. But for this act, the last evidence of her despotic training, in the school of Rome, while we offer no justification of the act, we maintain that the responsibility of its guilt, rests, not so much upon Protestant Geneva as upon Rome herself, who had trained her, on principle, in the school of persecution, while the Bible was banished. The evidence of this is, that Geneva never burned but one Servetus; and that avowedly and expressly on the ground that he was an atheist; and as such, not merely a heretic, but a dangerous enemy to public morals; while Rome, her school-mistress in this act of inhumanity, continued for centuries drunk with the blood of the saints of the most high God.

Thus, in Geneva, that fundamental doctrine of despots, the native supremacy and divine right of rulers as a class, was stripped of its kingly sceptre in the state, after the revived spirit of a free Christianity had first stripped it of its priestly mitre in the church; and the true element of human liberty, the divinely awakened consciousness of equal rights, springing from an origin and destiny

equally divine in all, was enthroned in the hearts of the people, the first and spontaneous product of a restored Gospel. From Geneva we inherit, by unbroken succession, the same priceless principles of freedom, by a line of descent reaching through the Puritans of England, the Presbyterians of Scotland, and the Pilgrims of New England. The refugees who fled from the fiery persecutions of the bloody Mary,—a legitimate and highly honored daughter of Rome,—were schooled in the doctrines of liberty at Geneva; and from thence carried back on their return to England, that living spark of holy fire, which first lighted the torch of true English freedom. The Puritans, it will be conceded by all, were scholars of Geneva, in the great lessons of liberty; and to the Puritans, even Hume, with all his bitter hostility to them and their religion, concedes, "the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution." "They," in the language of their late historian,\* "roused the people to resistance, directed their measures through a long series of eventful years, formed out of the most unpromising materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen, trampled down king, church, and aristocracy, and in short intervals of domestic sedition and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation of the earth." But notwithstanding their free constitution, founded upon the everlasting truth of a free Christianity, and expounded

\* Hon. T. B. Macaulay.

and administered with such vigor and results, the mass of the English nation was not yet sufficiently leavened by the enfranchising truth of the Bible; and the rude and unpolished reign of the Puritans fell. The dynasty of the Stuarts was restored for a little season, and the attempt was made to re-establish the doctrine of oppression, by an ignorant hierarchy in league with a tyrannical and licentious court. "All the ancient embankments of prescriptive authority were once more piled upwards, with frantic and desperate energy, to resist and roll back the tide that was setting in favor of freedom. Yet it continued to swell and rise in resistless might and majesty, till it swept away these bootless barriers like straws upon the cataract's plunge. But meantime when pursued by a bigotry, dark, bloody, and relentless, the spirit of religion and liberty, like the nymph Arethusa in the Grecian fable, plunging beneath the dark waves of the ocean, gurgled up in life and beauty, at the rock of Plymouth."

We are thus brought, in this hasty review of the history of modern freedom, to its last and grandest epoch, in the consolidation of our own free institutions. The experimental work was done, the remarkable Providence of God had now furnished a new and fit field for its final consummation, the fulness of time had come, and the last achievement of a free Christianity was entered upon, in the organizing of a social constitution for the race, the formative principle of which, should be the great law of

Christianity: thus solving the final problem of human freedom, by finding the true equation for the inalienable rights of individuals, and the duties of society, in its organic capacity as a government.

Upon this investigation the present time forbids us to enter. It is something to have it fairly raised; and more still, to be put upon its solution, under the responsibilities which cannot fail to hang upon its determination. Such we fully believe to be the magnificent heritage of the American people: a trust delegated to them, not for themselves alone, as indeed no human trust ever is, but for the welfare of the human race, and the glory of God.

No problem of higher theoretic difficulty, or grander practical results, could possibly be set before us: and from its true solution, involving the whole future destiny of humanity upon earth, there is no possible escape.

All that the conclusion of this discourse will now permit, is to indicate, in the most general way, some of the points of obvious danger, in the solution we are hastening to furnish.

1. It will not do for us to fall back on the mechanical laws which political economy has sought to draw forth, from a study of dead nature; and ignore the living moral and immortal nature of man. The so-called laws of supply and demand, in reference to the physical necessities of men, may not be left to regulate, of themselves, the social relations of human beings. In consulting our own money-

interests, we may not ignore the moral well-being of our fellow-man. The accumulation of wealth is not the chief end of man, even socially considered: nor will society permit any man, or set of men, to act as if it were. We owe the laborer something more than food, wages, and clothing, even though he may be legally our slave; or, which amounts to the same thing, under a social necessity to work for us, on pain of want: and whatever that "something more," may be, it is our duty, and I may add it is our interest, to pay it. He will find some way to let the life out of our gains, from his unrequited industry, as well as out of our peace, if we do not. The Gospel, especially in the form of the golden rule, is an essential element, as well as "the law of supply and demand," in so simple and common a question, as the wages we shall pay a domestic. We may not even treat a horse or a dog, with exclusive reference to the money we can make out of them. The law of God, in prescribing our rule of life, careth even for oxen: and much more does the law of humanity, exact treatment on higher grounds, in the case of our brethren of the same race.

To determine the true principles that should regulate the intercourse of society in its multiform social relations, so as to insure the prosperity of its individual members, is the great problem with which the mind of the race has been struggling from the beginning; and, it must be acknowledged, with no very flattering results. History

tells us how the pendulum of public sentiment and practical usage, has swung from the one extreme, of a hereditary class aristocracy, supported in idleness and pampered in vice, on the sweat and marrow of the working classes; to the equally fruitless and impracticable extreme, of the "let alone," "no government" doctrines, which are held by some to be the consummation of all political and social freedom under the sun. These oscillations begin, we think, to show some signs of settling down in the true middle point, by blending the compatible doctrines, of a civil and social government, radicating in the Christian power of the people, limited by constitutional restrictions, and administered by a true aristocracy of mental superiority and moral worth, with the absolute freedom of individual action,—subject to a divine responsibility,—in everything not incompatible with the equal freedom of other individuals:—the peace to be kept, in all disputed cases, by a just, steady, over-mastering, elective, and therefore responsible, executive.

The theory of such constitutional institutions, is easy enough, but who shall guarantee their faithful administration? The worst forms of tyranny the world has ever seen, have been perpetrated in the name of democracy, and under cover of written charters of freedom. The history of oppression has taught us that there may be thirty tyrants, or thirty thousand, as really as one. True freedom, social or political, we repeat, is a thing of personal enfranchise-

ment; and personal enfranchisement, is incompatible with personal wrong-doing. Bad men cannot make good citizens. The rights of inferiors cannot be conserved, in such case, without protection of some sort. And if men are compelled to choose, for the sake of protection, between one master and many, they will do wisely to choose one. France is not the only nation which has fled from the impossible freedom of an irreligious nation, under the form of a constitutional Republic; to the shelter of a single despot, armed with military power sufficient to protect her industry, and keep her peace, from the worse despotism of popular anarchy and misrule. The choice was undoubtedly wise; and will be repeated so long as true freedom is impossible, for the want of its only guarantee, viz., the Christian principle, and religious character of the people.

The perpetuity of our American liberty is a question of the purity and power of Christianity, far more than of formal constitutional institutions. Such institutions as ours are, in fact, themselves impossible, under any other auspices, than those of a broad, unselfish, love of justice and truth, between man and man. All we hold dear is at stake, therefore, upon the single question of the prevalence of Christianity; not as a hierarchy, or as a form of absolutism, but as the principle of a free personal Christian life among the people.

As to the source of the necessary organic, or executive power, we take for granted, that the age is past never to

return, when the accident of birth, or hereditary wealth, will be accepted, by the waking consciousness of the human soul, as a sufficient testimony of a divine right to rule over it, without its consent. Our danger is all from the other side. Those who have risen in the conscious dignity and might of an equal humanity, and emancipated themselves from hereditary fealty to merit and ability no better than their own,—who have trampled upon the weakness and worthlessness of a sham aristocracy, having no necessary virtue beyond the stars and garters with which their clothes are decorated, or beyond pockets full of money gotten by robbery, and kept by unequal justice to their own offspring, are in danger of refusing allegiance, equally, to the true aristocracy of talents and virtue, and the true divine warrant to rule, by reason of a divine gift of the power to rule well. It is the strong tendency to swing from a just contempt of a false, hereditary, and usurping, governing class, clear over to the opposite extreme, of denying a governing class of any sort, which makes the spread of radical democracy so full of peril to us. To suppose a people to have the power to rule themselves, without a constitutional organic government, or in any other sense, or by any other means, than by the medium of a true elective aristocracy of ability and Christian virtue, is to suppose them not to need organic government at all.

2. The question of our prosperity and permanence as a nation, is not so much, I had almost said is not at all, a ques-

tion between the conflicting views of our proper national policy, as laid down in the platforms of our several parties. It is not, as we bring ourselves to fancy, in the heat of an election struggle, when the fire of our patriotism flames hottest, because it is then fed by its proper fuel, the love of official honors, and emoluments; it is not a question between Whigs and Democrats, and still less between the warring elements of these once great and significant, but now neither great nor significant, national and sectional divisions, and subdivisions;—between Free Soilers and Silver Grays, between Hards and Softs, between foreigners and Know Nothings. If our political salvation depended on the intelligent comprehension of the present relations of the parties and fragments of parties, all laboring with such disinterested patriotic zeal, for the welfare of the country, and their own, and much more, if it depended on any intelligent public action, in view of these conflicting interests, some of us would be in a dangerous way. It seems to me that the present state of our political parties, furnishes the completest example of the old Greek conception of chaos, which the world has ever seen,—a wild conflict of inorganic atoms, whose only common property is that of mutual repulsion. We have often wondered at the extraordinary mythology of that remarkable people, foreshadowing, and in some sense symbolizing, by their deep intuitions of nature, all that has happened since, in literature and history; but in nothing has this profound insight been more re-

markably exemplified, than in the historical attempt to construct out of the conflicting self-repelling elements of human freedom, an organic government, possessing the essential characters of power, freedom, and permanence.

The real question which concerns us as a people, is one of vastly greater simplicity and potency, than the conflicting interests of party politics would seem to imply. We should be quite willing to take the platform of either party; if, indeed, there be any real difference between them, but in name, and build upon it the solid and abiding structure of national prosperity and freedom, if you will give us the agency of sound moral virtue in the people to do it with.

3. We have sought, throughout this discussion, to keep before you the broad and palpable distinction, between Christianity as a creed, and Christianity as the source of a moral and spiritual life to the people; and also the analogous distinction between Christianity as a power in social and civil society, in virtue of its individual prevalence in the membership of such society, and Christianity as organized into a hierarchy in the Church. It is not that we undervalue, or desire to depreciate theology, in its proper place, as a logical statement of religious belief; nor yet the organic power of Christianity in its proper sphere of authority in the Church. Both are indispensable to any complete exhibition of the nature and functions of the Gospel. But it is not in these relations, that it stands connected with the office of the State. The great feature of

our American institutions, in reference to religion, is, that they are Christian, but not ecclesiastical: and their power in society, is that of Christians in their individual capacity, not in their organic and consolidated character as a religious hierarchy. In other words, we are a Christian state, and not a national church. Civil government is a function of the state, as made up of individual Christians, and Christian societies—recognizing the great laws of Christian morality, and under Christian sanctions;—but not a function of ecclesiastical power, as it exists for the spiritual government of the Church. In this radical divorce of Church and State, or rather in this deep and fundamental *harmony* of consolidated constitutional power, joined with absolute individual freedom,—a harmony which is rendered perfect in the sphere of a common Christian life, underlying all our diversities of belief and of practice;—in this, it is, that we find the only and sure guarantee, at once of a complete organic union, coupled with complete individual freedom.

4. Not only does this view of the genius of our social and national freedom, inform us what we are to cherish; but it lays upon us the most solemn obligations to oppose, in every proper way, and if possible exterminate, those false views of religion and the Church, which, in their very nature, strike at the tap-root of our national freedom and prosperity.

I do not hesitate to say that I allude to those kindred systems—Popery, Puseyism, or by whatever name they

may be called, which identify Christianity with an outward organic church, and find the warrant for all government and all social power in society, vested in the divinely appointed rulers of the Church.

In thus linking Puseyism with Popery, as necessary enemies to our institutions, I wish to say expressly, that I should exceedingly regret to be understood to say or insinuate a syllable, against that great sisterhood in the Church, out of which it arose: because we rejoice in the belief that it has evangelical spirit enough, to counteract the tendency of some of its principles, from which we totally dissent. But Puseyism or Anglicanism, is a very different thing. It is in theory, and in fact, a consistent, compact, and powerful scheme of ecclesiastical power in the State: or rather, it is a logical, and if its premises be granted,—which happily for the interests of humanity, are directly in conflict with the Scriptures, and the deepest intuitions of the human soul,—an irrefragable argument, not simply for the union of Church and State, but for the identity of the two. It regards the ministry as a consecrated priesthood, clothed with the power of absolute government by divine right, as the vicegerents of God, unrestrained by any charter, human or divine, which would seek to guarantee free personal rights to the people; in no sense standing as the elected representatives of the people, or in any way whatever amenable to them for the use or abuse of their power. It first constitutes them lords

over the people, without allowing them an elective voice in the act: and then practically and in fact, enthrones their authority as supreme and absolute, by making the Church to consist of her ordained ministry, and then constituting her, or rather them, the sole judge in all questions of doctrine and discipline. It thus subjects to their ultimate and final decision, without appeal except at the hazard of revolution, all questions involving the individual rights of the people.

Who does not see that this system, call it by what name you will, inevitably subverts the fundamental principle of liberty, by subordinating the inalienable rights of individuals, to the higher official control of a divinely appointed class of rulers. Let it once be established in the Church, and impose the yoke of its ghostly power on the necks of the people there, and designing tyrants will not be slow to borrow its logic, and if need be league themselves with its power, so as to superadd the yoke of civil despotism in the State. It not only denies the natural rights of individuals, which are inalienable except by crime; but it degrades and crushes out, the very spirit and soul of the people. It has done so in Spain and Italy, and wherever else it has been received; and it will do so here, if it should ever get the power. Such a result is, in fact, the inevitable logical necessity of its premises.

Against this system, wherever we find it, we war to the death, not with carnal weapons, but in the power of truth,

and liberty, and love. American freedom will tolerate anything but treason; but it cannot wisely, and forever, offer a home to that which is destructive to itself. When we think of the vast extent of our territory, and its resources for developing wealth, its commanding position, and the influence it is destined to exert on the welfare of the race in giving final form to their social institutions, and then breathing into them the life of a free Gospel,—the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free; and when we remember that all this is the rightful home and heritage of freedom, the grand plateau on which a reformed Gospel, and redeemed humanity, are commissioned to establish a complete Christian civilization for the race, we cannot find language to express our sense of the crime of seeking to establish or perpetuate here, any system, religious or social, civil or ecclesiastical, which avows or even tolerates the fundamental principle of all human oppression, the denial of the native, inalienable rights of the individual man before God. It is treason not only against our own liberties as a people, but against the highest interests of humanity, treason against the religious and civil freedom of the world, treason against the redemption of man and the glory of God.

The truth and importance of these views, are rendered more commanding by the tide of emigration, which is setting to our shores with daily increasing volume. Let them come; but let us take care to see that the ecclesiastical

domination of the old world, shall not be transplanted along with them ; for, just so certainly as they remain slaves in the Church, they will never be free in the State.

The battle of human freedom, for the enfranchisement of the race, is soon to be fought. God forbid that this land should be used to train the craven bands of the oppressor, or send forth recruits to battle against the liberty of the world. All that can be done by artifice, fraud, and power combined, to construct among us the engines of war, and discipline the hosts of despotism, will be done. But we have no fear for the result, if we keep **THE BIBLE** in our families, our schools, and our churches. The pure religion of Jesus Christ, and the free ecclesiastical system of the Bible, and they alone, can make us permanently free, prosperous, and happy. **IF THE SON SHALL MAKE YOU FREE, YE SHALL BE FREE INDEED.**