

# RELIGION IN POLITICS:

## A SERMON

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# RELIGION IN POLITICS.

“RENDER TO CESAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CESAR’S.”—MARK XII. 17.

THESE words, you will remember, are part of our Lord’s answer to the Herodians, when they sought to entangle him in the political controversies of the times. I have not, of course, selected them as a theme of usual scriptural and Sabbath-day exposition. You have come here expecting to have your meditations turned into channels befitting the occasion. That occasion, owing to the agreement of so many of our United States, to celebrate it simultaneously, *is a great National Thanksgiving*. And to turn from its *national* or *political* aspects, and confine ourselves to what are called technically, “*religious*” considerations, were to do evident violence to the proprieties of time and occasion.

And yet, here, at the very outset, are we met with the outcry of the whole howling pack of Infidelity and Irreligion, as they hunt in couples for Christian inconsistencies; claiming meanwhile for themselves, the whole

body politic, as a carcass from the shambles, to be cast to their kennel. "Do not bring politics into the pulpit," say these men. "Do not desecrate God's sanctuary. A preacher's business is to minister to the gospel,—God's pure and peaceable gospel. And beware how you desecrate and pollute it by interfering in State matters." Verily, these be most wonderful men! Blaspheming, and reviling, and trampling under their foul feet, for the whole three hundred and sixty-five days of each year, this very gospel; and then overwhelmed with a holy awe, lest some preacher, once in a whole annual revolution, should happen, in their apprehension, to forget its high sacredness. Ah! most astonishing men! Most wonderful zeal for the gospel! Nevertheless, we agree with these men in the assertion that a preacher's business is with the Gospel of Christ, and its religion only. But, then, what is RELIGION? *Religion*, as revealed in the gospel! Is it an influence so ethereal and unearthly, as to require to be shut carefully from common life into Sabbath days and sanctuaries, lest its white garments should become soiled by a contact with worldliness?

So, indeed, these men tell us. And here we are at issue with them. Religion is not merely a *sentiment*, but a *life*. Not merely *affections God-ward*, but *activity man-ward*. It renders a man not merely a singer of

psalms, and a partaker of sacraments, but, indeed, renders him mainly a kind friend, an affectionate father, an estimable citizen, and an honest man. And, therefore, a religion that does not pass beyond the region of technical sacredness, and pervade the whole economy of the social and secular—entering as a living power into the commerce, and the literature, and the magistracy, and the politics of a man—is a mutilated and a monstrous religion, make the best of it.

In the text, our Lord sets forth one great part of Christian duty. It is not only "*Rendering unto God the things that are God's*," but, as well, "*Rendering unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's*;"—a principle taking as vital an interest in a *human*, as in the *Divine government*. And, if you will remember, that in Christ's time the form of civil governments, and their practical administration, were as imperfect as they ever have been; and that the Cesars were, with few exceptions, the veriest of tyrants, you will perceive how emphatically we are taught in the text—that a man's religious duties are not only unto his God, but as well unto his country; or, more simply stated—that a man should carry his Christianity heartily and wholly into the politics of his country.

And this, then, is the theme of our present meditation. *The duty of every Christian man to go forth in the face of all this infidel outcry, and carry his religion into his politics.*

But, then, what do we mean by *Politics*? Do we mean the paltry chicanery of placemen for power? A working out the low artifices of party in pursuit of offices and spoils? Would we have a Christian minister, or a Christian man, go down to the shameless and undisguised corruption which pervades what is called the peculiar moral code of politics? Would we have such a man sit face to face with the brutal ignorance and ruffian vice, which, hidden from the face of honest men, distribute the parts of the great play, and shuffle, and cut, and deal the dirty cards wherewith partisan gamblers are to play a game, whose great stake is our civil and national welfare? Oh no, no. By *Politics*, as we would have them mingled in by Christian men, we mean—"The science of government; that part of ethics which consists in the regulation and government of a state or nation, for the preservation of its peace and prosperity; comprehending the defence of its existence and rights against foreign control or conquest; the augmentation of its strength and resources; the protection of its citizens in all their rights; and the preservation and improvement of their manners and morals;"—and involving therefore every religious, patriotic, and domestic interest that is near and dear to us. And in such—as the only grand and just idea of *Politics*—we would have every Christian and good man mingle religiously and wholly. And this, for several reasons, we will now go on to consider.

And this, first of all: *Because such political privileges and blessings as we enjoy, deserve at our hands, as God's great gift, such a public, religious consecration.*

This is indeed the very "*sacrifice of thanksgiving*" we are met in God's house to offer this morning. In all times have religious offerings been *discriminative and appropriate*. The "*husbandman*" has brought of the "*fruits of the ground*." The "*shepherd*" has brought the "*firstling of his flocks*." And one *appropriate* sacrifice of thanksgiving for national and political blessings, is not a mere expression of gratitude in hallelujahs, but a consecration to God of our powers, in a service which shall perpetuate unto children's children our great social, and political, and national privileges.

And surely such privileges as ours deserve such an offering. Truly, a goodly and glorious gift is our American birthright! I know men tell us it is grandiloquent, and in bad taste, and savors of arrogance and vanity, and is wanting in national courtesy and good breeding, to be everlastingly glorying in our "*Eagles*" and "*Star-Spangled Banners*," and exulting in our national consciousness of political superiority, and our national hope of a sure, and limitless, and magnificent future. But for our very lives we cannot help it. "*How can the children of the bride chamber mourn, while the bridegroom is with them?*" We look at the nations

of the old world—gigantic, if you please, but manifestly in the wrinkle and decay of a hoary age; and we look at our own land, just springing in glorious and gigantic youth, with flashing eye and iron sinews, to run such a race of honor and power as the world never saw. And we cannot—shame on us if we could—repress the thrill of pride from the heart, and the exulting words from the tongue, as we think of our own matchless land as it is now and shall be.

Oh! I see it! I see it! A nation that shall be unto all other nations as blessed old Israel was to the Amorite and the Philistine. A nation stretching from ocean to ocean across this whole continent. A nation of free-men, self governed; governed by simple law, without a police or a soldiery. A nation of five hundred millions of people, covering the sea with their fleets, and the land with great cities. First in learning, and science, and arts, and every great product of industry and genius. Ay, and better and higher and holier,—a virtuous and godly people; bound together in one tender and beautiful brotherhood; and luxuriant with fruit and flower, in the bloom and aroma of all Christian graces. The refuge of the oppressed. The protector of the downtrodden. The home of the exile. The terror of despotism. The victorious champion of earth's wronged tribes, against tyranny and outrage. The almoner of God's great grace

to the wounded spirit and bleeding heart of a redeemed humanity. I see this, and more than this, in our safe, and dazzling, and limitless future. And my tongue would cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I thought to check the joyous words that swell up in hallelujahs.

We have—we have a magnificent birthright. And what is it all, but God's gift—God's gift through the Gospel? All it is—all it shall be—A RESULT OF CHRISTIANITY—and so all it is, and all it shall be, but *an ascension gift of my Lord* unto his disciples as Christians. And are we then as Christians—as the very men for whom it was projected and for whom it is conserved—are we, as religious and Christian men, to stand back from this glorious nationality, and let fools and ruffians—the filth, and pollution, and offscouring of moral life,—creatures bought and sold for a price, as cattle for the shambles—the wrecks and the rotten-wood that float with every shifting tide of infidel and irresponsible political opinion,—are we to stand altogether aloof, and let creatures like these mar and mutilate this great national machinery? Shall the insane fanaticism of the North, and Southern sham-chivalry, bluster about the dissolution of the Union, and hew with a fool's axe at the root of the tree of our Liberty? And must I, as a Christian man and minister, not smite them with all the strength God has given me, lest I should pollute my Christianity by a contact with worldliness?

Away with such shallow and hypocritical reverence for Christianity. I owe it to my Gospel and my God, as all the return I can make for a birthright so glorious, to fling myself as a Christian man, into the defence of that birthright, and bare my bosom, as a religious being, to the infidel and accursed tide, that would sweep all those good and glorious things away, as wrecks upon a deluge. And we have come up this day as a rejoicing people, not merely to praise God, but to consecrate ourselves to this very work in a sacrifice of thanksgiving. And go forth in the performance of our Christian work, "*Rendering,*" not only "*to God the things that are God's,*" but as well *rendering unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's.*"

Now this leads me to remark, *Secondly*, That as Christian men, we are bound to this duty; *because our nation needs this day for her own preservation, the mingling in her politics of this religious element.*

She needs it, indeed, at all times. On all principles of national and governmental policy. There never has existed—and never can exist a nation, without this pervading element of religious influence. Even the heathen and unenlightened rulers of the elder world, all perceived and acted on this common-sense maxim. History has no record of a single legislator, who attempted

to enforce obedience to law on the sole ground of its *civil* sanctions, and its *temporal* penalties. They universally perceived the insufficiency of all such motives, if unstrengthened by the higher motives drawn from *religious* principles. And if they were strangers to *Divine Revelation*, they found a substitute in their *Mythology*, and applied it as skilfully as might be, to the prejudices of the people. Lycurgus, Solon, Numa Pompilius, Mohammed, and indeed, every legislator at all famed for the wisdom of his institutions; were compelled to have recourse to religion: and in fact, derived therefrom their mightiest motives to enforce obedience. And in all this, they acted on an accurate and extensive knowledge of human nature; and with a wisdom that will remain true, so long as sinful passions and affections have such an influence on mankind. For whenever, as in France, the attempt has been made to loose all religious restraints from the minds of a people; then have the whirlwind and the storm, and the great waves dashing into shipwreck, made eloquent proclamation that for the preservation of every great national and political interest, there is need of a God, to ride upon the whirlwind and direct the storm.

Now, if all this be evidently true, even of nations held in check by the armed power of despotism, how emphatically must it be true of a free and a self-governing

people. Our free institutions were created, and are conserved by the Christian religion. The two grand pillars whereon the whole edifice rests, are—*The Equality of Human Rights*—and—*Brotherly Love equal to Self-Love*. And these great truths we have learned from *the Gospel*. Take them away, and our peculiar nationality is destroyed in a moment. We may still exist, indeed, as a power on the earth. We may exist still *united* under an armed aristocracy, or a great military despotism. Or we may exist a *fragmentary* and *dissevered* power, as a hundred petty and belligerent principalities. And *this* Continent may be parcelled out like the old, unto rival conquerors. And our miserable descendants “increase and multiply, and vegetate and rot,” in ignorance and bondage. And go forth in fierce feuds, marshalled under rival banners of the Bear, and the Lion, and the Lilies, over the very fields where their fathers marched united and triumphant, and free, under their one glorious Eagle. But sure I am, that if the religious element be taken from our politics, our *Republicanism* is gone, at a stroke, and for ever.

I have not the limits here, to enter into the argument of the manifold advantages to a free people of Gospel piety. Time would fail me, to tell you how it increases national wealth, by diminishing the popular tendency to luxury and extravagance, and by inculcating tempe-

rance, and industry, and frugality. How it operates as a mighty check on all those corruptions which weaken a free people. How it educates into truth and tenderness the popular conscience, without which, just laws must remain dead letters in the statute book, unenforced, and without influence. How it destroys all those selfish and sectional animosities, whereunto demagogues always appeal when they would break in pieces great governments. How, in short, by restraining in the human heart the vices that weaken, and regenerating into nobler life the virtues that strengthen, it makes ever manifest the great truth, that free, and prosperous, and united, and “*blessed is that people whose God is the Lord.*”

This, and all this, we take in our argument for granted. And based upon it, our plea is, that we are called on as religious men to rise up, and cast more of this salt of godliness into our national character. We are this very day, in God’s sight, going backward from our old moral landmarks. We are even now as a nation swarming with drunkards, and Sabbath-breakers, and profane swearers. The emissaries of the old foreign Ecclesiastical despotism—the tool and the mainspring of all European despotism—are among us, foul and frequent as locusts of the Nile on the green things of God’s husbandry. Fanatics at both ends of the Union are toiling might

and main at their fiendish work of dismemberment. Our national compact itself, founded on the compromise of local interests, exposes us more and more to sectional jealousies and competition, and to the heartless assaults of ambitious agitators of popular passions. We are entering confessedly on stormy times. New forms of infidelity, and political atheism, and false philanthropy, are rising in strength in the midst of us. While Christian men stand aloof, fools are heaving at the pillars of our great national temple. And the whole tribe of the Philistines are twisting at the cords, while God's Samson sleeps in the lap of the Enchantress. It is time, high time, then, for Christian championship to awake. By the men of the present generation is the great question to be settled, whether there can be maintained in the midst of us, enough of an enlightened and tender moral sense to keep us a virtuous, and free, and united people, in face of all these assaults of infamy and irreligion. By the Christian men that now worship in God's temples is the uncertain problem to be solved,—Whether the light of liberty that shines on us this day, is of a sun bounding gloriously from the Orient, or already sinking sadly and slowly to the sepulchral clouds of the west. And, therefore, the call comes to us loud as the voice of prophets in the glorious days of Israel of Judah, to stand forth against the enemies of hearthstone and

altar for our God and our country; casting religious salt into the polluted fountains of our national conscience; pouring religious light along the troubled seas of our national politics; “*rendering unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's, as surely as unto God the things that are God's.*”

And by all this are we brought to remark, *Thirdly*: That we are urged to this duty *by our regard for all the great interests of the Race and the World.*

Disastrous as would be the destruction of our peculiar nationality in regard of ourselves—more disastrous and appalling still would it prove in regard of the human race everywhere. Speaking only *civilly* and *politically*, and there is no sign of hope for a world's popular liberties, if our republicanism fail us. Unto America are turned this day the regards of all nations, as the last practical experiment of popular self-government. From America goes forth this day the only light of hope to fall on the heart of an oppressed race as a joy and a consolation. *For* this great work were we raised up, and this great work *are we doing*. Talk as men will about the sanctity of international law, as preventing on our part with the old world, interference and intervention; yet spite of it all, with the whole power that is given us *we are interfering and intervening*. As

surely and constantly as the blazing sun interferes with the prowling night-beasts, are we interfering with the oppressions and despotisms of the world's farthest nations. There is not a Cabinet in Europe that does not look upon this great Republic as the real author of all the revolutionary movements on that whole broad continent; that does not plot and pray for our ruin, as the mighty disturber of the peace of their haggard and hoary oppressions, and the only formidable and gigantic obstacle to the perpetuity of their foul despotisms hereafter and for ever. The grand and simple principle that unites us as a free people, is a principle actively and essentially at war with the whole spirit of European nationality. And we are this very morning, by the never-ceasing and omnipresent influences of our free institutions, more powerfully and offensively interfering with the despotic policy of those European Empires, than if a hundred thousand armed men stood marshalled under the American Eagle on the banks of the Danube, and our whole naval power, three times told, were cruising on those European seas, sweeping a despot's fleets from the waters, or thundering with a thousand guns against the bulwarks of a despot's capital.

*We are interfering*, and, what is more, *we are bound to be interfered with!* We may let European despotisms alone—and, doubtless, we shall let them alone, as to all

armed aggression—but then the plain and simple fact is, *they will not let us alone.* It is a mistake altogether to imagine that the whole popular sympathies of the old world are with popular freedom; or that the masses of those oppressed nations are prepared for, or ambitious of, our free institutions. The political movement of the whole East is backward manifestly to feudalism. Those favored empires; that with a constitution limiting the monarch, we have rejoiced over as already half free; and gloried in as marching in the van of advancing civilization; are already in the wane and wrinkle of dotage and decrepitude. Great Britain is tottering already under the hideous burden of a bloated aristocracy; and the Lion that once roused itself to shake the world with its roar, if a breath of offence stirred the folds of its banner, now crouches tamed and spaniel-like at the tread of the great Eastern despotism. France, that looked unto the world so like a winged creature of liberty, by a monstrous recoil has gone back to a chrysalis, and is bound, as God lives, to come forth a worm again. Spain is already a dead thing in the grave; and Austria, that fouler thing than a despotism—the despotic tool of a despot. And if princes seem building for freedom and the race on the banks of the Rhine, and along the blue Italian seas, they build, alas, on a volcano—the crater already ablaze, and the whole mountain shaking.

Yonder continent has indeed this day but one united—one advancing and absorbing power; and that the great Northern, and naked, and unmitigated military despotism. A despotism, too, be it ever remembered, not resting in, and trusting to, popular ignorance, but where industry is stimulated; and the arts encouraged and fostered by all possible appliances; and commerce steadily and strenuously advanced in every possible direction; and where the subjects are not held in an unwilling bondage, but are the rejoicing and enthusiastic abettors of despotism. And thus firm on her foundations, and terrible in her might, is Russia aspiring and advancing to the conquest of the world. And prescient of the far future, she sees in the whole wide world to-day but one mighty obstacle in her path—this young Republic—the everlasting light of our popular freedom in the dark places of tyrants. And so the momentous signs of the times are now proclaiming a coming conflict, when amid such terrors of antagonism as the earth never saw, there shall go on under the rival banners of the Bear and the Eagle, the last great battle for freedom and the world! But if in all this we read not aright the programme of the struggle, sure we are, at least, that the great conflict of this and the coming generation will be of Freedom against Tyranny. And sure we are, therefore, as well, that in the preservation and perpetuity of our free insti-

tutions there rest the only hopes of oppressed humanity; and that in the terrible hour that is coming on all people, our own civil and religious liberty must furnish the only championship for man's heart and soul against the despotisms of the world.

Now, if to this thought of our *civil and political influence* upon the nations, you add the other thought, of the *religious AND EVANGELICAL influence* we are manifestly designed to exert upon a lost race, the thought under consideration will appear most impressive. Even if for the civil franchises of mankind there were to rise up other than American championship; yet whence, save from the American *Church*, can go forth the light of a redeeming gospel to the dark places of the earth? If there be any philosophic reading of a historic Providence, then from *God's past and present dealings with us as a peculiar people*, and from *the evident signs of the times*, as displaying the powerlessness of all other nations for evangelizing a world; from these, I say, is the truth as apparent as an oracle of Revelation, that unto us, as stewards of the grace of God, is awarded the magnificent service of sending forth a full and free gospel over all the benighted continents of our globe—that from our beloved land, glorious in its scenery, and its broad boundaries, and its new growth of civilization, and its loftier type of civil and religious manhood, the Angel that hath

the everlasting gospel to preach, is already pluming the wing for flight over the nations; and that the hopes of the race, therefore, not merely for *Time*, but for *Eternity*! Not merely for *Earthly Freedom*, but for *Immortal Glory*, do, under God, suspend themselves upon the perpetuity of our Union, and the permanent progress and development of our free institutions. So that to give up our national character to the spoiler, were not only to quench every light on the altars of Liberty, but to quench for the world the fires on God's altars—to shiver the great wheel in the mechanism of a triumphing Evangel—and so to cast the race back, not merely to the iron thralldom of despotism, but to the more monstrous bondage of superstition and infidelity.

And I say you have only to remember all this, and consider it, and you will get an impression of the unspeakable importance to a whole world of mankind, of the perpetuity and progress of our free institutions, which will make you jealous with an immortal jealousy of any stain upon our national character as a wisely-governed, and intellectual, and moral, and religious people; and send every man of us to stand proudly up in his place as an American Christian and patriot; carrying our piety as an inspiration into the duties of our citizenship, and lifting up in great faith Christ's redeeming Cross as a bulwark more powerful than all

else to roll back the tides of iniquity, and corruption, and infidel legislation, and the whole wild deluge of ruffian and irresponsible politics, which would sweep all these glad and glorious things away as wrecks upon the waters. For we shall perceive how God himself has linked all the great interests of our race with these American politics, so that in this whole matter, by "*rendering to Cesar the things that are Cesar's*," we are most surely, as well, "*rendering unto God the things that are God's*."

Now this leads me to remark, *Fourthly*,—and lest we should weary you,—*Finally*: That we are urged to this duty *by a due regard for our RELIGION itself*.

We have already said that it is a false notion of religion which supposes it to be polluted, and thus injured, by every contact and concern with merely worldly interests. And we now go further, and declare, that we should do very much to honor and magnify Christianity, were we to carry it forth as an energizing principle—yea, as a vital and controlling power—into our whole practical life as American citizens.

You are all of you familiar with the infidel clamor of the times—that *the Christianity of the Gospel has proved a great failure*. That while it did good service as a pioneer of civilization, and a rudimental teacher of the

alphabet in the great school of humanity, nevertheless, that *now*, when the race has progressed from its nomadic life, and the great man-child has flung off its swaddling bands, and mastered the rudiments of knowledge, and entered the higher forms of intellectual culture—that now Christianity must surrender its great charge to the higher teachings of Philosophy, and be flung aside as an effete engine, whose work has been accomplished, and whose day gone by. And we are fain to confess, that this outcry is not without plausible arguments—arguments drawn with irresistible force from the narrowness of the field, and the feebleness of the power, wherein professing Christians have themselves developed their Christianity. For we most frankly admit, that a religion that remains shut away from the common business of life, into the pure regions of spiritualism, as a thing of ecstasies, and sentiment, and psalm-singing: appearing stately on Sabbath days, and in sanctuaries, and seen no more abroad during the six days of the secular and the social—We confess, I say, that such a religion, be it Christian or Pagan, is altogether out of place, and imbecile amid the restless and earnest tides of an age and a life like our own.

But then quite as confident I am, that if Christianity have not hitherto acquitted herself to the full of all her secular and social duties; the secret lies not in her inade-

quacy to the work; but in the smallness of the sphere which Christians themselves have assigned her, and the class and kind of labor they have committed to her hands. Sure I am, at least, that as an intellectual and moral system, Christianity was designed for all nations and generations; and is divinely adapted to the exigencies of all nations and generations. Her credentials to our Race, are not merely as a fitting and tender nurse for its unsteady infancy; but more fittingly still, as the earnest tutor of its hot youth; and the glorious guide and guardian of its magnificent manhood.

Embodying, as Christianity does within itself, the mightiest and most practical moral influences to be found in God's universe. And revealed as the master contrivance of Infinite Wisdom, to restore man from his ruins, and bring back a wandering world to the light and the liberty of God's own children. It has only to be inaugurated in its place of rightful authority. Only to be brought forth from the cloisters of contemplation, and the chairs of academic speculation. Only to take hold in its strength, on the great practical questions of the race and the age,—and the scoffing world will acknowledge as they see, that an influence so long despised as a thing only busy with creeds, and ceremonies, and sacraments, can yet work gloriously and with a strong arm, as man's practical benefactor—that its fostering is of every influence which

makes up civilization—that its calling is unto the patronage of the arts, and sciences, and literature, and commerce, and trade—that its place is as truly in the cabinet as in the conventicle, in the senate-chamber, as at a sacrament—that it can acquit itself vigorously of all Social and Civil, in a word, of every secular duty; and is gloriously equal to all the exigencies of the times, and every possible emergency of the day and the generation.

And we say, such an inauguration to a high sway over things merely temporal, Christianity deserves to-day, at the hands of its disciples. It deserves to be justified openly from the suspicions of the world, that it is after all, but a low, and, paltry, and drivelling fanaticism. It deserves to be brought abroad from the closet and cloister, to enter as a living power into the philosophy, and speculation, and the earnest life, and all the high enterprise of an uprising Humanity, “*Rendering unto Cesar the things that are Cesar’s,*” as steadfastly, “*as unto God the things that are God’s.*”

Religion has, indeed, its most glorious place in the recesses of the redeemed spirit, and an honored throne in the Sanctuary, with its praises and sacraments. It is the joy and glory of its great prerogative, that it abides in the sanctities of the heart, and the household; and brings heavenly comfort and peace to the secluded hut of the poor child of want; and sits in seraphic love at

the hushed bedside of the dying. Nevertheless, it is its other prerogative, and should be its joy and glory as well, to take care of man’s *temporal* interests as wisely as his spiritual. And, walking abroad as the conserving spirit of the day and the age, to pour its divine light upon the speculations of philosophy; and to bathe with its heavenly dews man’s learning and genius; and to lay its strong hand on the energies of trade, and of commerce; and to lift up its heavenly, yet resistless voice, in the halls of legislation; and to stand in meek, yet mighty glory, in the haughtiest presence of monarch and noble; and to fling from its radiant loveliness a resistless moral power, that shall pervade the world’s arts, and sciences, and literature, and jurisprudence, and economy of politics, and machinery of government. “*Rendering as wisely and as well, unto Cesar the assisting tribute that is Cesar’s, as unto God the adoring worship that is God’s.*”

Christianity, I say, *deserves* this honor at our hands. What we are as a nation this day, we owe, under God, to its blessed influences. Our very *National existence* is a miracle of the Gospel. The Genoese navigator and the German reformer,—the one opening a new world; the other evolving a new Humanity to enter in and occupy,—were rocked in the same cradle, twin-children of Evangelism. The strong sifting of all nations for

God's chosen seed, to scatter in glorious husbandry on this virgin soil, was a Gospel winnowing. That almost heavenly refinement of taste and love; that found earth's noblest kingdoms but an intolerable wilderness, without a pure altar, and an open Bible; but could make a blessed home with the storm, and the sea-eagle, and a God to worship; was an inspiration of the Gospel. That patriotism and courage, and self-sacrificing toil, which battled fearlessly unto death for hearthstone and altars, were all upshoots from the Gospel. The matchless wisdom of a Constitution, whose great central truth of "*human equality*" was in direct antagonism to all principles of known governments, and startled the old despotisms of the world as the light of a coming judgment; was a direct revelation of the Gospel. Yes, and then all the subsequent beatitudes, which, as if flung from angel wings, have been scattered along all our path to national immortality—our accumulating wealth—our enlarging commerce—our vast increase of population—our progress in arts and manufactures—the magnificence of our practical charities—the increasing harmony and strength of our political machinery—the enticing beauty which our land bears to-day, to far away nations amid the sobbing agonies of their downtrodden children—and the glory, and honor, and power, which the world accords to-day, to the wing of the American

Eagle, in its flight through the skies. This, all this, and more than this—all, in short, which makes the American eye flash with pride; and the American heart beat with rapture; and gathers us this very hour in God's temples with loud hallelujahs of praise, an exulting and thanksgiving people; we owe under God to our glorious Christianity.

And, amid such results of magnificent accomplishment, CHRISTIANITY DESERVES *at our hands*, a justification from the slander of the infidel, that it is at best an imbecile and worn out and dreamy sentimentalism. It deserves to be lifted up as the conservator of the glories it has created; and since by the breath of its inspiration, life's great ocean has been roused from the dead calm of ages into billowy and exulting play; it deserves to be sent forth in a divine glory, visibly to ride upon the whirlwind and direct the storm. Christianity *claims*, AS A DIVINE RIGHT, the acknowledgment in the face of the universe, that "*while it renders carefully unto God the things that are God's, it renders as carefully unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's.*"

Such then, most imperfectly put, are some of the reasons why *American Christians should carry their religion with their duties of citizenship*. That they have not done so hitherto is a fact which needs no argument.

So manifestly devoid of all Christian principles is the whole moral code of American politics, that to prove a man positively religious or even severely and Puritanically a moral man, were to destroy all his chances of political popularity and preferment. And this, too, at a time when the great balance of power in this matter is confessedly in the hands of the virtuous and religious. But when, strange to tell, these virtuous and godly men; either from unfounded fear of dishonoring their religion by so earthly a contact; or, from an unutterable contempt of the whole business of such desecrated politics; have stood in their dignity aloof from it altogether. Leaving the matter of popular nominations for office, and the arrangement of platforms, and the projection of great national and state *policies*, and, in short, the whole real working of our great political machinery—(and mark me here—I am not speaking, nor will I be misunderstood as speaking evil of our Rulers, and Magistrates, and Representatives; in regard of whom religion itself enjoins reverence; and who, for aught we know, are models of all that is honest, and pure, and lovely, and of good report. But I am speaking of that ubiquitous class of irresponsible, yet efficient men, whose calling is to pull the wires of partisanship, and mingle the seething elements in the great political cauldron; and who virtually, at least, color if they do not control

our whole national politics)—leaving it all, I say, to the moral outcasts of our social system; to men, bankrupt of all virtuous reputation; to wily demagogues, who would flatter the foul fiend for the sake of his influence; to fawning menials, who would crouch at a despot's feet for the smile of his patronage; to blustering ruffians, whose only elements of moral power are blows and blasphemies; to vaporing patriots and brawling philanthropists who would freely barter their country and their race, and their own souls, for the profits of an office or the outfit of an embassy; to the blind fools of fanaticism, who would trample the Union and Constitution under their feet, and deluge this blessed heritage with flames and blood, and bring down upon their own wives and little ones a worse than Ethiopian bondage, for the sake of the phantom of an abstract and selfish principle, whose practical outworking were a cruelty and a curse. Leaving it, in short, I say, to such *things* as these—to the low, mercenary, Machiavelian herd that gather in the dens of darkness and sin—to project the programme and distribute the parts of that great play, whose sublime issues are; the glories of our country, and the welfare of a world.

This, and worse than this, is the sad truth about the matter. Pardon me, my brethren, that I feel constrained to stir up with so foul a picture your pure

minds by way of remembrance. I confess that to a refined taste it is coarse and revolting. But the *pitch was on the canvass! I but touched it and am defiled.*

Nevertheless, the picture is neither caricature nor exaggeration; but the sorrowful truth colored too faintly. And all this, too, at a time when as sincerely as ever before private virtue and morality are revered and honored throughout the land; when the great mass and majority of our population; north and south; east and west; of every party, and every state; are proverbially honest, and intelligent and law-abiding, and patriotic, and earnestly desiring the application of a pure and religious morality to the whole complex machinery of government. And when it needs only a religious courage and consecration, to take hold on those great interests; and this whole vampire brood, that fatten on the nation's heart would hide their heads in shame, as serpents from a sun-burst.

It is time, then, we say—high time that religious men roused themselves to a sense of their political responsibilities. Moralists, indeed, tell us—from the pulpit, sometimes—that Christianity claims no power over a State, and no official connexion with it. But what, I pray these men, is a State? *An abstraction—an idea!* No, indeed! Simply an aggregate of individual and immortal men; and with every one of these men Chris-

tianity should have an immortal connexion; and over them it has a claim, pre-eminent and eternal. It is time, then, that the precise bearing of Christian principles upon legislation, and the administration and general policy of our government, were understood and acted on. Not that Christianity may be established by law; but that our laws may be established by Christianity. Not that the Gospel asks alliance with the State, but that the State sorely needs the conserving influences of the Gospel. It is time that Christianity came abroad from its cloistered sanctity, to acquit itself of its great *civil* and *national* responsibilities. And spite of the whole howling herd of infidelity and irreligion, (who in this, are only true to their instincts, and do after their kind)—it is time for Christian men, and Christian ministers—now so busy with the minutiae of *private* and *minor* immoralities. Uttering fierce denunciations against slight heresies in a man's creed, and trifling inconsistencies in man's conduct. Seeing well to it, that a little child does not laugh loud on the Sabbath, and that a man's face does not graciously smile at any questionable amusement. Loud in the outcry of "heresy" and "hypocrisy" against men, honestly striving to walk in the ways of godliness. I say it is time for such Christian ministers and men, to walk forth to a broader field, and to a loftier stand-

point; to cast an indignant glance over our civil and national short-comings; to launch the fiery denunciations of our blessed Redeemer, as "serpents" and "vipers" against irresponsible placemen and their unprincipled tools; and to pour the glorious light of the Gospel of God, into the whole hideous den of political abominations.

And this, then, is our religious business this day, in this temple of Jehovah. We have come up, with one common thank-offering unto God, for our great national beatitudes. Beatitudes so wide and so wonderful, that the eye moistens and the heart bounds, as we contemplate our great birthright. God's great gift to us, not merely as men, but mainly as Christians. For, whatever we are, or may be, we owe to the Gospel. All our social and national influences—all the canvass of our commerce—all the enterprise of our market-places—all the breadth and wealth of our husbandry—all the machinery of our trade, and the pomp of our great cities. All! all! have grown up to us under the shadow of this Cross, and owe all their goodness, and glory, and power, to the sprinkled Blood from Mount Calvary. And coming with some sense of the greatness of our blessings—God claims at our hands, as the only fit "*sacrifice of thanksgiving*," such a consecration of ourselves to his service, as shall send us abroad in our strongest endeavors to keep the blest fires of liberty bright on these

altars;—and transmit, undimmed of one glory, our free institutions to an hundred generations that shall come after us.

Such a religious consecration can, and can alone, save us from the tides of infidelity, and corruption, and moral death, that are rolling in upon us. Let Christian men go bravely forth, carrying their religion as a light, and a power, and a conserving influence, into our political machinery, and nothing out of Heaven can impede or weaken us. Who speaks in fear of *foreign aggression*? Why, sirs, Gibraltar is not more steadfast and secure against the dash of its sea-surges, than we against the wildest assaults of the banded war-power of the world's every despot. Who talks about "*disunion*"—and the *severance of this great national confederacy*? Why, sirs! the fanatic and the fool who thinks to accomplish it, might better think to sever the mighty bond that unites the Solar system, and blow with his foul breath those glorious stars away that march in God's great law of gravitation round the blaze of the sun.

Ay! ay! If borne radiantly abroad as the light and the savor of our earnest lives, along the vales, and by the streams, and athwart the great hills of our blessed land, this heavenly Gospel have free course and be glorified; then, spite of every storm upon the seas, and every cloud upon the firmament, are our foundations as the everlasting mountains, and our blessedness as the

immutable love of our Heavenly Father. And so, upon the sincerity of our religious consecration on such festal days as this, depend, under God, these momentous issues.

Oh ! we are here to-day, not merely to unite in a great national hallelujah, but to work out a great prophetic problem in the face of the universe. To bring forth the data for the solving the solemn question.—Whether this national hallelujah of thanksgiving hath to God the character of a *birthday gratulation* over our luxuriant youth—or a *funeral wail* over our already smitten and departing glories.—Whether these shadows that brood to-day along our national landscapes, are passing away from a *rising*, or lengthening and deepening with a *descending* sun.—Whether the giant Babe which God's hand, amid tempests and storms, has rocked into majestic strength in this great cradle of the West : imbued with the gentle spirit of the Gospel ; and filled, as to its great heart, with Divine Love ; shall come forth to its earnest manhood, sandalled to walk the round world as a deliverer ; and safe, therefore, under God's own shield, to mount to the loftiest summit of national glory. Or, alas ! alas ! whether, with the madness of a fool's atheism within it, shall leap from that cradle like a roused giant, to rush in mad strength on the bosses of God's buckler, and perish as a reed in the crashing fire of God's thunderbolt.