

US
379
40

WIDENER LIBRARY




HX 4K1F 4

Spear - The Politico - Social Foundations
of our Republic - 1845

U5379.40



HARVARD
COLLEGE
LIBRARY



The Politico-Social Foundations of our Republic.

A S E R M O N,

PREACHED BY THE

REV. SAMUEL T. SPEAR,

PASTOR OF THE SOUTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

OF BROOKLYN, N. Y.

ON THANKSGIVING DAY, DECEMBER 12, 1844.

AND

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF HIS CONGREGATION.

NEW-YORK:
SAXTON & MILES, PUBLISHERS, &c.
No. 205 Broadway.
1845.

The Politico-Social Foundations of our Republic.

A S E R M O N ,

PREACHED BY THE

REV. SAMUEL T. SPEAR,

PASTOR OF THE SOUTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

OF BROOKLYN, N. Y.

ON THANKSGIVING DAY, DECEMBER 12, 1844.

AND

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF HIS CONGREGATION.

NEW-YORK:

SAXTON & MILES, PUBLISHERS, &c.

No. 205 Broadway.

1845.

us 379.40
✓



w

THE

POLITICO-SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF OUR REPUBLIC.



“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”—*Psalms* 11: 3.

THE word, “foundations,” may be used in either of the following relations, viz: *physical, moral and religious, philosophical, or social* relations. Some of these are so connected, that they run into each other. In which of these applications the term is employed in the text, is a matter of inference. I am constrained to think, that the *social* application is the one, that prevailed in the mind of the writer. It is generally supposed, that he penned this Psalm, while he was suffering under the unjust and unprovoked persecution of Saul. Compelled to seek protection in the wild abodes of nature, and conscious of his innocence, he looks back upon the scene he had left, exclaiming: “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” His inquiry does not seem to respect their *duty*, so much as their *safety*, at a time, when social order is destroyed, when violence takes the place of justice, when even government itself becomes the great organ of cruelty and oppression. He relieves the agitation of his own spirit by confident calculations upon the providence and power of God: “In the Lord put I my trust.”

How extensive were the views of the author, in regard to the relations of this passage, I do not propose even to guess; the question is not material to the purposes of this discussion. The region of inquiry, however, is fixed by the preceding view of the circumstances, which gave birth to the language. “If the founda-

tions be destroyed"—what foundations?—the foundations of good, justice, and human security, which ought to exist in every social system; if these "be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"—what protection is then granted to the innocent against the depredations of the wicked; where on earth shall they look for the vindication of their rights, and the safety of their persons?

Assuming this view of the language, I proceed to remark, that the social system is based upon the nature and necessities of man. Its existence is not left to the *conventional* arrangements of human beings. Men commence their being under the dominion of such a system. To escape it, they must leave this world; even then, the effort would not be successful, since it would be changing one system for another. No man in his senses will regret this feature in the plan of God. Who would wish to be an insulated unit in the moral system of the universe? That system is the best, which makes this world purest and happiest; which gives to all the greatest liberty of action with the greatest protection of their rights. In becoming members of it, we are subjected to certain restraints, on account of certain privileges. The value of the latter is more than sufficient to compensate for any alledged inconveniences, growing out of the former. He, that is willing to bear no restraints, is an universal outlaw—fit to live nowhere; his attitude is one of rebellion against the most primary laws and wants of humanity.

By a process, which it is the function of history to record, nearly all the nations of antiquity have acted upon the principle of subjecting the *many* to the *few*. The same is true, to a great extent, in modern times. This is the principle, which has distinguished all the monarchies, aristocracies, oligarchies, and ecclesiastical hierarchies, of all ages. It began with conquest, and it has never been relinquished, except at the expense of blood. Men once in power, soon hasten to the conclusion, that their right to rule is not to be questioned. They fortify their position with the argument, that the many are competent to judge, neither of their rights nor their wants. Hence, it is a mercy in the *few*, not to consult them, but to make a system for them, requiring them to receive it, asking no questions. Some claim their power by the absolute delegation of the Deity; hence, to resist them, is to make war up-

on Heaven. These doctrines, reduced to practice, generate a social system, to be sustained by bayonets and bullets. And it is not a little remarkable, that those, who must bear its heaviest burdens, have been the men, first to mould these bullets, then to shoot them and kill each other; while those, for whom they work, have been reposing in ease, and playing their games upon the chess-board of nations. The fact shows, in a striking manner, the doctrine, that intelligence is power. You let the so-called peasantry of Europe understand this subject; let them concur in view, and harmonize in action, so as to avoid anarchy and mutual self-destruction; and there is not a government of the whole congeries, that could survive an hour. There would at once be a bloodless revolution, since there would be nobody to fight. You let the standing army of England—the men that fill her navy—the tillers of the soil—the merchants and mechanics of her cities,—agree to dispense with hereditary privileges and distinctions; and these things would be no more. They exist by the force of two causes, viz: ignorance and disunion among the people. While these causes act, an effort to remove monarchy by violence, generally results in anarchy, and finally goes back to the very thing sought to be destroyed.

The *antagonist* principle to the one just described, is that which we have adopted in this country. Its true title is Democratic Republicanism. The history of its rise and progress, upon this soil, is exceedingly interesting. It began with religion; it has been conducted by religion. Its essential features lie in the Declaration of American Independence, especially in two of its principles, viz: *that all men are created free and equal, and that all just governments derive their existence from the consent of the governed.* Its details are evolved in the Constitution of the United States, and the Constitutions of the several States, entering into the national compact. Government, by the proper representation of the people, is its grand feature, its great recommendation. In prosecution of this principle, all incumbents relinquish their offices, at stated periods, so that the people may as often proclaim their preference, in regard both to men and measures. Judges of law are in several instances made exceptions to this rule, for wise reasons. They however may be removed from office by impeachment; and

when impeached, they are to be tried by men of the people's choice. So that, without an exception in our plan of government, every representative is either directly, or indirectly, responsible to his constituents. If, in their judgment, he fail to do his duty, they have a constitutional remedy, of which they can avail themselves without shedding a single drop of blood.

Such in brief terms is the *Politico-social* system of this country. Its wide distinction from that of Europe must be apparent to every eye. That it is more perfect than any other, which has yet been devised, is the firm conviction of the speaker. That in all instances its application has been the wisest and best that could be, it would be folly, if not arrogance, to assume. Its fundamental position, viz: *the primary equality of all mankind*, can not be improved, because it is an eternal truth. It elevates man, as *man*, and proposes to give him a candid hearing in reference to the system under which he lives. It places all the power in the hands of the people; and it can never fail to operate benignly, except by their fault. Although not made by this generation, yet we have adopted it; we glory in it. It is our duty to protect and preserve it, correcting any defects which may exist, so as to present our theory in its purest form; and then hand it on for the benediction of future ages.

Having made these prefatory remarks, I shall avail myself of the present opportunity to express some opinion upon the merits of the following question: *What are some of the foundations necessary to the continuance and healthy action of our Politico-social System?* We are assembled at the recommendation of our Chief Magistrate to acknowledge God, as the Providential Author and Preserver of our liberties—as the Dispenser of those blessings and comforts which we have enjoyed. It is a fit occasion for us, as Christian patriots, to look at our system, and inquire for our duty. To subserve this exercise will be my present aim.

I. In the first place, I name the sacred preservation and sound integrity of the Elective Franchise.

To be a *voter* in a country like ours, is to occupy a very responsible position. Every measure of government is thereby brought directly to the bar of the public will. The policy of the country, as well as the character of the men who represent the people, must be determined by the popular preference. An ad-

ministration that should disregard this preference, would speedily write its own doom. Hence, all the evils of unjust or unwise government are created by the people, or subsist by their consent; they can apply the remedy, if they will.

The *voting element*, having undergone slight changes at different times, has generally either assumed the form of *universal suffrage*, or it is rapidly advancing to this point; and whether it be for weal or wo, I shall leave for others to decide. In its application this feature resolves itself into another question, viz: *Who are citizens in the political or voting sense?* The answer of the laws embraces the following particulars: That in most of the States every free white male, born in this country, and twenty-one years of age, being a legal resident where he proposes to vote, is a voter: That in some of the States a property qualification is superadded, or the payment of taxes, or the performance of military duty:— That free colored males in some of the States are excluded altogether from voting, while in most, if not all, of the others, a property qualification is demanded:—That aliens, being free white males, after a continuous residence of five years in this country, may be naturalized and thus become voters. These propositions define who are citizens in the *political* sense, and what is the extent of universal suffrage. In addition to this, it is proper to remark, that in an evil hour a strange anomaly was introduced into the Constitution of the United States, viz: *that of the legislative representation of slaves in Congress through the medium of their masters.* The Constitution makes every five slaves equal to three white persons in fixing the ratio of representation in Congress. This gives to the slave States between twenty and thirty members in Congress more than they would otherwise have. It deserves to be noticed, that the slaves do not cast the votes by which these members are elected; this is done by their masters. As I am making laws for no body, but simply expressing honest opinions, I shall ask the privilege of pausing at this point for a moment, to make three remarks:

I have never been able to see the soundness of that political philosophy, which reduces nearly three millions of human beings to the condition of property, and then confers upon the owners of the same, privileges not enjoyed by their political brethren. The

two things are irreconcilably at war; they symbolize better with the feudal system of the dark ages, than the republicanism of a popular government. If these slaves be property, both in fact and in right, as is alledged, there can be no good reason why they should be represented through their owners, any more than the articles of a jeweler's shop. The principle is an improper concession to the slave power; it has operated unhappily in the history of this country. By increasing Congressional representation from the slave States beyond the proper limit, it has given to them an amount of national influence, which they have never deserved. A man in Virginia owning a thousand slaves is equal to six hundred voters in this State; and eighty such men are equal to forty-eight thousand voters. If it be said, that this is a feature of the Constitution and must be respected, I reply; certainly, so long as it exists. But whether it be just and equitable, whether it harmonizes with the genius of our system, is another question. Excellent as is the Constitution, it is not perfect, and in no particular more defective than the one now under review. When it shall be corrected, we know not; while it remains, we must bear the evil. This does not commit us to its approval, or preclude the right of a moral protest.

Again, where is the justice of subjecting the free colored people of this country to any political disabilities, simply on account of their color? We may answer this question under the influence of feeling and prejudice; but I believe, that an enlightened philanthropy and an elevated Christian patriotism will reject the principle for its inequality and manifest injustice. This class of persons lent their aid in the struggle which achieved our liberties, and is this the appropriate reward for their labors? Do they not suffer sufficiently from social causes, which cannot be reached by human legislation, without having this ingredient added to the cup of their misfortunes? Is it because they are ignorant? Then let us have the candor to say so, and fix a given standard of knowledge that shall be attained, before any man shall be a voter. But let not the high-minded people of this country be so much unlike themselves, as to make the hue of a man's skin the criterion of his humanity, or his resulting rights. In our prosperity we may have forgotten the evils which we tolerate, simply because the calamity affects not our own persons. I confess I am able to fix upon no principle, upon which I should be willing to defend this proscrip-

tive treatment of the free colored people. The letter of the Hon. Luther Bradish on this subject, published some years since, was an honor, not less to his heart than his head. It is a sound document, worthy of the man who wrote it. I anticipate, that as we advance in legislative wisdom and moral justice, we shall correct the evil, which ought never to have had a place in our system.

Again, the facility with which aliens are naturalized, in connection with the gross frauds consequent upon defective laws, has become a great and crying evil in this country. I speak of this, not as a politician, but as an American; and in this capacity I trust that no one will question, either the propriety, or the right of alluding to this subject. Where do these aliens come from? From the monarchies of the old world. What has been their political and religious education? Generally, such as disqualifies them to have a speedy participation in the supreme council of this country. What class of foreigners usually emigrate to this country? With some exceptions, which we are happy to acknowledge, our foreign population is made up of the ignorant and degraded classes of Europe. I am sorry to be compelled to entertain the opinion, that it is the policy of some portions of Europe to favor the deportation of paupers and vagabonds to this soil; the one, to make a draft upon the charities of the American people, and the other, to furnish work for our courts of criminal jurisdiction. Again, why do we require our own sons to be twenty-one years of age, before they enjoy the privilege of voting? Simply, that they may be prepared for it, so as not to abuse it. Why not subject the foreigner to the same political quarantine, that in the mean time he may study the genius of our institutions, before he determines the policy of this nation by his vote? It certainly deprives him of no rights, for the right in question he never had; and when he shall come into its possession, if at all, he is not the proper man to determine. It is purely an American question; it is to be decided by the American people; and the reasons governing such decision ought to respect exclusively the best interests of this nation. If those interests require a change in the present system of naturalization, then it ought to meet with the most cordial acquiescence

on the part of our foreign population ; if it do not, the fact proves unanswerably that the change is demanded. What makes this an absorbing question at the present time, is the *immense emigration* to our shores, increasing every year, a large proportion of which is *Catholic*, strongly under the influence of the *priest*, who himself is but the servant of the Bishop and the Pope. Upon their peculiarity of faith I would not base a *proscriptive* argument ; I would not favor the slightest interference with their religious rights ; but we cannot and ought not to forget the stern facts of history, all of which show that Romanism, as a system, has always been at war with popular rights. In this respect it admits of no cure ; it must prevail as such, or be destroyed forever. Is it not then proper for us to consider, how far we may be favoring the introduction of an element, which in its *political* aspect has no sympathy with the operations of a popular government ? In doing so we do not propose to make a man's religious faith the criterion of citizenship ; but we do propose to employ the known tendencies of a great system, as an argument in determining what we ought to do for our own security. It is not against Romanism, viewed *religiously*, that I offer these thoughts ; but against it in its efforts to ally itself with the civil arm, and merge all the powers of earth and heaven in its own prerogatives. Abolish these, its known tendencies, and I will not say a word on the subject in this connection ; while they exist, the system ought not to claim an exemption from the due consideration of its *political* character, because it happens to have in other relations a *religious* aspect.— There is another circumstance which gives importance to this subject. In the divided condition of sentiment, and especially the corrupted state of political parties, there are strong inducements to hurry these foreigners through the *naturalizing mill*, and then regulate the policy of the country, so as to gain their votes. The history of the last twenty years contains facts in abundance to demonstrate the existence of both evils. And the time has fully come, when men of all parties should unite to correct the evil at its fountain ; by the force of public sentiment and the power of petition, seek and secure a change in the laws of naturalization.

There is not a country on earth, whose institutions may so easily be moulded by foreign influence as our own; and yet there is not another, where an alien may so readily become a citizen. We have the greatest amount of exposure, and the least amount of defence, of any nation on the globe.

I have spoken freely, and I trust, as honestly on the above topics. In so doing, I represent no one but myself, and above all, I have endeavored to avoid all reference to the political differences which divide the American people. Our system of elective franchise labors and groans under these evils. This fact is no secret; it must be admitted by all candid men. How they shall be corrected is a question, which belongs to other men than the speaker.

There is another point of some interest, which, before dismissing this subject, I should be glad to submit to your notice. *If we take the system of suffrage, as it is, and such it must be, until we can constitutionally make it better, what then is our duty?* Without doubt the true answer is, *that we are conscientiously to use and as sacredly to preserve it.* In discharging this high obligation of citizenship, several things are implied, to which I propose to make a brief allusion:

In the *first* place, that every one should make it a rule to cast his vote, especially at every important election. It is not only his *right* to do so, but his solemn *duty*. He has a great interest in the weal of his country, and as a patriot or a Christian, he can not do less than vote for its good. That is a mistaken delicacy in morals, which leads the good to withdraw their influence and become neutral, because political parties are corrupt. This is one way to make them more corrupt, and leave the destinies of the nation to the vicious.

In the *second* place, that every one should act according to the best light he can command in reference to the men and measures submitted for his suffrage—voting less under the mere influence of party drilling, and more for the good of his country. Voting viewed in a moral light is a *mixed* question; and in this imperfect world sometimes very difficult to be decided. It is a question upon which every man *ought* to be his own judge, holding himself

independent of the trammels of party, and at perfect liberty, first to discover the truth, and then to support it in the exercise of a good conscience. Were this the universal spirit of the people, politicians would have much less work to do, particularly of a *certain kind*; there would be an end to the system of *training* and *trimming* men for the ballot-box; and our elections would be under the sovereign jurisdiction of reason and truth. Party organization would then be less important than a good cause.

In the *third* place, that, since the public nomination of candidates usually precedes their election, good men should attend primary meetings, not leaving the work of nomination to vagabonds and political traders. There is a practical certainty, that some of the nominees will be elected, if the election shall result in the choice of any one. This preliminary machinery is designed to concentrate the public preferences: it always has this effect. How important is it then, that the influence of the good should be felt in the very earliest stage of political movement. Were it fully felt, all parties would see the necessity of presenting better candidates; and then men, who mean to be conscientious, would have less difficulty in determining their duty.

In the *fourth* place, that all should unite in hunting out every man, who casts an illegal vote, and bringing him to the sternest justice of the law. Let all parties frown upon such persons; let the community be so wakeful, that their escape shall be impossible;—and they will rapidly decrease in number; we shall hear less about frauds, and the ballot box will become more perfectly the exponent of the public will. I am persuaded, that this suggestion will commend itself to all, with the exception of those, who wish to make profit by their knavery.

In the *last* place, that for the good of their country all parties should agree to dispense with the present very objectionable method of conducting our political campaigns. What a scene precedes every presidential canvass? Rum, political songs, mass meetings, inflammatory rage, newspaper slanders, forgery, and an extensive system of bribery and betting have too much taken the place of calm discussion and sober thought. Were we to look at either

of the political parties of this country, through the representation of its opponents, we should think, that they carried with them Pandora's box. And I suspect the matter of fact is, they all have it in their possession. From what they say, you would suppose, that if success attended either, the country would be absolutely ruined; and yet in this respect, they have all proved to be false prophets. It is painful with a reflective eye to contemplate these things. Being realities, the solemn protest and vigorous influence of every good man should be directed against them. We need a purer state of morals in political action. The object is worth an effort to secure it; and it is perhaps not too much, to hope, that the effort may be somewhat successful.

II. As a second foundation of our Politico-Social System, I would name the Supremacy of the laws.

The necessities and condition of the American people, beyond all other nations, pre-eminently demand the most sacred regard for legal order. It is the Palladium of our liberty. The moment it is gone, we are reduced to the most frightful state of disorder. We rely for the support of our institutions, and the maintenance of public tranquility, not upon the power of standing armies, but the intelligence, the virtue, and law-abiding spirit of the people. When these shall be lost, then American Republicanism will be an exploded bubble, and the predictions of monarchical prophets, fully realized. If general anarchy shall ever reign in this country, it will be with a violence, unknown in the annals of human history. No government could be weaker than our own, in such a crisis; it would hardly possess a single element of concentration and strength; freedom would then become another name for barbarism, the more free, the more savage; universal carnage would fill the land with horror; and our far-famed glories would fade forever. As much as I love the institutions of my country, I would say, that, if we can not recognize and maintain the supremacy of the law, then give us a king, or even the Pope, with all his abominations and cruelties. There is no Pope so much to be dreaded as a mob; we are more secure in the hands of a tyrant, than in the midst of an infuriated populace.

This doctrine of the supremacy of the law is no abstraction ; it may be reduced to the most simple and accurate form of statement. It implies the following things : That the Constitution of the United States is to be the supreme law of the land : that all legislative assemblies are to make laws strictly within the limits of their legal powers : that all courts of justice shall interpret the laws, as they are created, and where the power is granted, decide upon their conformity to the Constitution, under which they were enacted : that all executive officers shall see, that the laws are duly and thoroughly executed : that then the people should abide by the result, and obey the powers that be, never seeking a remedy for alledged evils, except by those constitutional methods, which have been provided. These propositions present to you the machinery of our government, planned by wise heads and patriotic hearts. At a glance you will perceive, that its success depends on the general supremacy of the laws. You destroy this at any point, and the evil must be corrected, or destruction will be likely to spread through the whole system.

With some painful exceptions, local rather than general, I believe it to be true, that the American people are disposed to recognize this doctrine in their practice ; and I can not think, that the time will ever come, when a different spirit shall prevail over this nation. The exceptions, to which I allude, are the following, viz : *the attempted Nullification by South Carolina—the Dorr rebellion in Rhode Island—the so-called Indian war among the tenants of Van Rensselaer—mobs, anti-slavery, Catholic, bank and flour mobs—congressional disorders and fighting—the southern system of lynching—the repudiation of State debts, and in some instances the gross abuse of the pardoning power.* These evils, although somewhat different in their form, all agree in assailing the majesty of the law. In some instances the remedy has been seasonably applied, and in others it has been grossly neglected. The spirit of rioting, as an example, within the last few years, has had an awful prevalence in some of our larger cities. The empire State and city set the example, which was speedily imitated by others. How was it met ? In a way to encourage rather than repress it. How should it

have been met? In a way to create a standing warning to every man in this nation, that this is a country of law, and not of mobs. Promptly order out the military force—proclaim the riot law—command the dispersion of the rioters—and, if they fail to obey, treat them at once as insurgents and enemies. The remedy is dreadful; but the evil to be arrested, is far more so. If those in authority will not apply the remedy, then let the people bring them to a speedy retribution, at the ballot-box. And if the people will not do this, then we may as well give up the scheme of free government, for we shall come to this at last. The majesty of the law must be asserted, by argument, when this will answer;—by blood, when nothing else will avail. Rhode Island has done herself an honor and the nation a benefit, by the manner in which she has treated the recent efforts of rebellion within her own borders. I trust, also, that Philadelphia has learned a lesson on this subject, which she will not speedily forget. Omitting to do her duty, when the Pennsylvania Hall was burnt, she has paid dearly for the neglect, both in character and in blood. It may seem to be a very fine thing to a passionate and prejudiced man, to hand over an unpopular person or cause to the fury and summary justice of an excited and lawless populace; but let him know that in this very act the majesty of the law is assailed—that majesty, which secures his own person, or keeps from his dwelling the torch of an incendiary. When one State violates the provisions of the Constitution in her treatment of another, she aims a blow at the national safeguard; and while she puts others' in jeopardy, she equally jeopardizes her own interests. In such a case, the duty of the federal government is obvious, for there are no reserved rights in the State, which are paramount to the national Constitution. The terms of the compact bind all, or none; each item of it is sacred, and should be kept so, until we are prepared to dissolve the union. Away with that South Carolina chivalry, which obeys the Constitution, when it pleases, and enthrones State sovereignty, when it pleases. If a servile war were to overwhelm her gallant sons, she would claim the protection of her sister States under the Constitution. Let her learn, then, to respect this document. The principle I would seek to impress upon my hearers, is the supremacy of the laws, *any where, and every where*, no matter what be the particular merits of

any given issue. May we all appreciate its importance, and prove our estimate by our practice.

III. In the third place, I name the extensive diffusion of knowledge among the people.

It has sometimes been supposed, that the speculations of philosophers have very little to do with the practical and social interests of mankind. All history proves this to be a great mistake. It was a theory, that hung the Salem witches—another theory, that burned reputed heretics. A false position of Locke in regard to the origin of knowledge was converted into the infidelity of Hume, and then of France, which coming in contact with a senile papacy did much to generate the French Revolution. These speculations lie too deep for ordinary eyes; they are not the less powerful in the production of effects. They are indeed the great *slow-matches* of society, which it takes half a century to set on fire, and more than twice this period to put them out. It is important that they should be according to truth; if otherwise, they will work evil.

As important, and unquestionably far more so, is a sound state of general intelligence, spread through the whole community, and shared alike by all. It has been frequently remarked, *that an ignorant people are not capable of self-government*. I believe the remark to be a true one. They do not judge properly of their rights, or their wants. If they fight their way to freedom, they will as soon lose it. Look at the history of the South American Republics. They have been tottering and crumbling to ruin, simply for the want of intelligence among the people. How is it, that England holds within her grasp more than an hundred million of human beings in India? It is, because the people are not enlightened. The laws of slavery recognize the power of knowledge. The slave must not learn to read or write, lest he should find out that he is by nature a freeman, and devise means to assert the fact. You reduce three millions of the enlightened yeomanry of New England to the condition of abject slavery; and they would rock this land with a moral earthquake in the effort to be free. The reason is—they love the object; they know its value, and would rather die than lose it. Having it, and being enlightened, they know how to preserve it, and may bid defiance to all the machina-

tions of tyrants. They are of one mind on this subject, and prepared to watch the very beginnings of civil despotism, and then to arrest the evil, before it becomes formidable on account of its greatness.

Besides being essential to self-government, general knowledge among the common people derives a vast importance from the intimate relation, that exists between the *ballot-box* and the *legislation* of our country. Every man, who is a voter, is called upon to express his opinion by the act of voting, in reference to the measures of government. Suppose that he has no opinion—that he does not know enough to understand the merits of a single question in issue; then you might as well turn out the madmen of a lunatic asylum to elect a Governor or a President. He is then as well qualified to vote as the horse that carries him, and no better. In this country the common people are immensely in the majority; or rather, we are all common people. There is no power to resist the will of the many. Right or wrong, it is the law of the land. We make the laws; our representatives simply proclaim our verdicts. It would not be judged wise, to send a fool to Congress to be the senseless automaton of his constituents; vastly more wise, than to send an ignorant body of constituents to the ballot-box. Here all the functions of government merge together; and the will of the people becomes the supreme will of the nation. Hence, that which shall enlighten the people, is of much greater consequence than that, which shall simply make a few finished and polished scholars. The latter is certainly desirable—it erects here and there an intellectual pyramid for the admiration of mankind; but the former is indispensable to the well-being and prosperity of our country.

It has been frequently observed in my hearing, that our legislation has become so *unsteady and irregular*, that no calculations or investments of capital can be safely based upon it. I am disposed to think, that there is some truth in the remark. The reason is perfectly obvious, viz.; *the popular will is unsteady*. Intelligence and reason, elements always equal to themselves, do not sufficiently control this will; hence it is no wonder, that it cries one thing to-day, and another thing to-morrow. There is no way to give stability to our legislation, but to enlighten the people. In this

state they will fix upon a policy, that is good, that most effectually promotes the interests of all classes ; and then they will maintain it. They will not need the harangues of demagogues, for the simple reason, that they understand the subject themselves. Superadded to the want of information, the fact ought to be mentioned, that we have an immense foreign vote, which is annually crowding upon us—an *uninstructed* vote—one, that is at any time sufficient to decide the policy of this country. What shall we do? *Enlighten the people.* Without this our institutions can not be preserved in their purity, and transmitted for the blessing of future ages. Our hopes are not vested in the *State-papers* of politicians, many of which are constructed for party purposes, and are far from being such, as a great and prosperous nation should send down to posterity. Neither do our hopes lie in the *diplomacy* of cabinets ; but in the sound intelligence and firm integrity of the people. This is by no means a new thought ; yet, I trust, that it will not have lost any of its interest on account of its antiquity.

IV. In the last place, I name the prevalence of a sound Protestant Christianity.

In his Book on "Democracy in America," and in the chapter entitled, "Of the progress of Roman Catholicism in the United States," De Tocqueville expresses the opinion, that the democracy, developing in this country, will finally terminate in the prevalence of Romanism. He grants, that America is the most democratic country in the world ; and declares, also, that it is at the same time the country, in which the Roman Catholic belief is making the greatest progress. The latter position leads him to suppose, that there is some affinity between democracy and Romanism. He seeks to clinch his argument by assuming, that in democratic communities there is a necessity for dogmatic belief in matters of religion ; that the taste for unity requires this belief to radiate from some common centre ; that therefore to Rome, whose great unity attracts them, the democratic ages will finally return. In the American Biblical Repository for October, 1843, the hearer will find some exceedingly valuable strictures upon these views, from the pen of Truman M. Post, Professor of Languages in Illinois College. This reasoning may do very well for Catholic France ; it may serve to tickle the ears of the Pope ; it may cheer

on the Propagandists in their work ; but in this country, we neither admit his principal allegation, nor the main items of his philosophy. It is really a new kind of logic, that democracy should have a tendency to combine with Romanism, and civil liberty to connect itself with spiritual despotism ; that elements, known to be antagonistic in all the past history of the world, should on this side of the Atlantic proclaim a truce to their war, and become allies forever. It is not a little remarkable, that the infallibilities of St. Peter's Chair never made this discovery, and never gave to priest-ridden Europe even a better democracy, than that, which flourishes on this soil. How mistaken, then, was the foolish and unhappy Charles I, who, when urged to abolish Episcopacy in England, cried out, "*No Bishop, no King.*" The truth is, such is the spirit of Hierarchy, especially the Papal, that it is an enemy to free institutions. If we believed in its ultimate prevalence, we should do well to tremble for the future safety of this country.

Our hope, then, is in Protestant Christianity ; by which I mean Christianity, redeemed from the corruptions of Papacy ; drawn from the Bible ; and brought in burning contact with the consciences of men. Its great design has reference to the interests of immortality ; and yet it is a remarkable fact, that the Christian religion is of as much service to this world, as it could be, had it no higher purpose to answer. It is one of its striking features, that in order to secure its national, or personal benefits to the highest degree, the State must let it alone. Whatever may have been the motives of Constantine, in establishing Christianity throughout the Roman empire, the fruits of the act prove it to have been a most serious mistake. It has always flourished better amid the blaze of persecution, than under the patronage and favor of kings. Taught as we have been, by the experience of past ages, our recognition of the Christian religion in the laws of this country, is wisely *incidental* ; such, as leaves it to rest upon its own merits, and work its way through the public mind, by those causes, which God has devised. This is unquestionably the true position. It leads me to cherish two hopes in behalf of my country.—

The first is, that by the power of preaching, the press, and free discussion, we shall be able to preserve, on this soil, a pure Christianity. That many errors prevail among us ; that there are many

Romanists in this country ; that some professed Protestants seem to be taking the back track, and hastening their march to the Italian capitol ; that there is much infidelity in this land ; that there are some visionary enthusiasts proposing to get up a new religion and light the universe with a taper : these are propositions, which we admit and have reason to deplore. This however is but one view of the scene. In opposition to all this, is this great fact, that the controlling religious faith of this people is essentially that of the Apostles. It has been such from the first planting of these colonies. It was a religious enterprise which brought the Puritans to this soil ; and the institutions which they founded were distinguished for a highly religious character. It must be a revolution, such as shall transcend the ordinary range of second causes, that shall entirely dethrone and sweep away our national Christianity. There are no existing indications of such an event in the future ; and I can not believe, that it will ever be. Piety dwells in too many hearts ; there is too much intelligence in the ministry ; the Sabbath comes too often ; there is too much power in the press, and too much sense among the people, to permit the occurrence of so great a disaster. Politicians may seek to dissolve the union—to annex Texas ; the tide of western emigration may roll beyond the Rocky Mountains ; tariffs may rise and fall ; manufactures flourish to-day and die to-morrow ; foreign wars may rage ; ecclesiastical dismemberments may come ; slavery, that worst of our evils, may intermingle in national disputes : still, I believe, Christianity will rise above the flood, repose in the majesty of her strength, and hold the nation's weal in her hand.

My second hope is, that the prevalence of Protestant Christianity in all future ages will secure a sufficient amount of public virtue, to give permanency to free institutions. In the course of its progress, I suppose, that it will bury a capital estimated at \$1200,000,000, now vested in human beings, in the dust, and make the nation richer by more than twice this amount ; that by moral influence it will redeem the Sabbath from desecration ; that it will lessen the immense losses of property and life, consequent upon intemperance ; that it will make the legislation of the country more righteous and wise ; inspire the people with the love of honest labor, as well as the love of freedom ; lend its patronage to various systems for educating and instructing the young ; that it

will give efficiency and sacredness to all the relations and influences of domestic life; that it will provide for its own extension by associating men in great schemes of moral and national benevolence; that it will take up one generation after another—with hope cheer and bless the brief period of each—then send on its aggressive and conservative energies, unexhausted, down the stream of time, not ceasing till the day shall come, when Republics will be no more, and all human interests shall be swallowed up in eternity. These high ends define the mission of Christianity upon this soil; a mission, calculated to comfort the heart of the patriot, as he contemplates the destiny of unborn generations.

I have already detained you perhaps too long. I will therefore hasten to a speedy conclusion of these remarks. To the inquiry, what are the foundations of the Politico-social System of this Republic? four answers have been given, viz: *the sound and healthy exercise of the elective franchise, the supremacy of the laws, an extensive diffusion of knowledge among the people, and the prevalence of Protestant Christianity.* Other thoughts might have been suggested; these however were judged to be the most material points. Let our system rest upon these four great pillars, and it will stand as long as any thing stands. Our population may increase; the improvements of art may furnish facilities for new and remoter emigrations; the wilderness of the far west may be hewn down, till those millions of untrdden acres shall teem with all the emblems of civilized occupancy and active industry: yet, under the benign guidance of these principles, this infant people shall be forever centralized and consolidated into one great constitutional brotherhood—the greatest, the best, the most powerful the world ever saw—rejoicing in each other's weal, and sympathizing in each other's sorrow. Their greatness would be a warning to tyrants; their prosperity, a general lesson to mankind; their goodness and order, adequate grounds for internal security. You let these principles be destroyed, or so far perverted, as to cripple all their power, and in a single century history will be the only monument, that bears to posterity the intelligence of a once promising, but finally a wrecked and ruined people; "*E pluribus unum*" would be blotted from our flag, and the nation's sun go down in a long, a baleful, an eternal eclipse—which may God in his infinite mercy for ever avert.



