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ARTICLE I.

INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

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It is Christianity alone which can give the noblest freedom. In the language of its glorious Author, this wonderful truth was uttered: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." 4

Christianity comes to man like an angel of mercy, bearing in her hands the double gift of pardon and holiness. She brings to him a full and complete atonement for his sins, and secures the renovation of his soul. It reveals a Savior who suffered and bled on the Cross for our transgressions, and a Holy Spirit to renew and purify our hearts. How wonderful, and yet how simple! How simple, and yet how philosophical is the plan of salvation which the Gospel contains! What could be better adapted to the wants of humanity? What could better commend itself to enlightened reason, when revealed, although its discovery far surpasses all human intelligence? "Repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ," are the terms upon which salvation becomes ours. But what a repentance! Not only does it imply a confession of sins, but a heartfelt hatred and a sincere renunciation of them, together with a restoration of our affections to the ever-blessed God. And what a faith! Not simply an intellectual assent to the truth of the Gospel, but such a belief of it as "works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world."

Such is the religion of the Gospel,—presenting to our acceptance a Divine Victim, on which our faith may lay her hand in

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confidence and peace; and bringing to our help a Divine Spirit, who can regenerate our hearts, enlighten our understandings, and make our wills to coincide with the will of the infinitely wise, beneficent, and holy Ruler of the universe. What a religion! How gloriously does it exhibit the character of the ever-blessed God, whom it sets forth as a just God, and yet a Savior! And how admirably adapted to man, securing to him both the pardon of his sins, and the restitution of the image of God to his heart—saving him from hell, and fitting him for heaven! Well, indeed, does the Gospel deserve to be called a glorious Gospel. Compared with Christianity, how inadequate to the wants of man appear all other religions which the world has ever seen; how vain and worthless even!

But let us contemplate the influence of this blessed religion upon the character of the individual man: and here we scarcely know at what point to begin, or where to end.

1. The Gospel, when it is truly received into the heart, annihilates the guilt which binds the sinner to that eternal punishment due to his transgressions, and announces to him that there is “no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” It brings him into a state of favor with his Maker, and enables him to look with joy and confidence upon the face of his once offended Savior and Judge; it takes away the fear of hell, and fills the soul with the hope of heaven. O blessed liberation from the danger of being eternally lost! O blessed assurance of everlasting life! What but the Gospel can work such a transformation in the state and prospects of him who was before overwhelmed in condemnation!

2. The faith which saves, gives a blessed emancipation to “them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.” The fear of death! Next to the dread of the wrath of God, it is the most widely-spread and overwhelming of all the fears which mankind ever experience. Who has not trembled at the thought of death? Who has not shrunk from its cold embrace? What heart has not quailed before the mysterious gloom which hangs around the dying bed? Who has not dreaded to enter into the unseen and eternal world, of whose position, inhabitants, modes of existence, sources of joy or pain, we have no knowledge, and scarcely anything more than vague conceptions; for none, of all who have entered it, have returned to tell us anything about it. Ah, there is enough here to make the stoutest heart to fear, and cause the firmest knees to tremble, and smite one against another. But blessed be God, the glorious Gospel of His Son can overcome even this. Yea, it can not only overcome the dread of death, but it can make death itself the messenger, sent down by our Heavenly Father, to conduct the soul to the regions of everlasting blessedness. It can make those who

once trembled at the very name of death to exult with exceeding joy at its near approach. Is not this a disenthralment of the most glorious nature? And what but the Gospel can effect this?

3. The Gospel delivers man from the greatest of all slavery—that of subjection to his passions. It teaches him to restore to their proper objects those affections which had become alienated from those objects, and restrain and regulate those which had transcended the limits which God in His laws, as well as in our nature, has assigned them. It can reclaim the violent, the covetous, the malicious, the sensual, the debauched, the drunken,—in a word, those who are degraded by the most debasing and inveterate vices—from the evil of their ways, and transform them into the image of God. For the love and practice of sin it can implant in their hearts the love and pursuit of whatsoever is pure, whatsoever is lovely, whatsoever is of good report. What renovations has it not made in its blessed career in our world of sin and wretchedness? What miracles has it not wrought?—miracles which attest, and establish beyond refutation, its claims to a celestial origin.

4. The Gospel delivers man from the bondage of many degrading and vulgar superstitions. It reveals to him enough of the invisible world to make him know that he can never be alone. But it teaches him that, with a mind solemnly and affectionately pervaded by a belief and a sense of the unseen presence of his Heavenly Father, he should have no other fear. Christianity teaches him that not a hair of his head can fall to the ground without the permission of that Great Being who walks by his side from the cradle to the grave. Why then should he fear any of those subordinate beings, whatever they may be, who are but His servants? What can harm him, if the Infinite God be ever with him, to protect and to save him?

5. And lastly, Christianity emancipates from the thralldom of debasing and miserable ignorance. It spreads before man the volumes of God's works, God's providence, and God's grace, and invites, solicits, encourages, and even commands him to read and study them. The Gospel is the friend of knowledge and of science. For there is no true knowledge or science, which is not of God, and which does not lead to God, when pursued by a mind renewed by God's Spirit. That ignorance is favorable to piety,—or in other words, "the mother of devotion," as it is impiously expressed—is a dogma worthy of a Church whose origin is to be found in the dark ages, and not of one which is the habitation of that God "who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all."

And what fields are spread out for our contemplation, in which Christianity invites us to gather both rich and abundant sheaves of knowledge! The glorious heavens above us, the air we

breathe, the earth on which we tread, the seas,—what subjects for study, for research, for joyful discovery, do they not furnish! The shining orbs which adorn the sky, the atmosphere and the innumerable creatures which inhabit it, the rocks, the forests, the flowers, the waters,—all proclaim the wisdom, and power, and skill, and goodness of God; and the study of them tends to make us better acquainted with those glorious attributes.

In history, Christianity teaches us to see God in every event, and enables us to comprehend what, without its aid, would be a concatenation of the veriest enigmas. How rich a field is here for study; not merely in the political changes which have taken place in our world since the creation of man, but still more in the origin and propagation of religious and moral opinions, and their influence upon the human race! It is only in the Bible that we find the true key which enables us to explain what is mysterious in the history of mankind, and reconcile the events of this world with the existence and providence of an infinitely wise and benevolent God.

But if the book of Nature and the book of Providence be glorious to read and to study, how much more the book of grace, or that volume of Inspiration which reveals to us the character and attributes of God, our relations to Him, His laws, and that wonderful plan of salvation which heaven has devised for our recovery from the abyss of sin and misery into which we have plunged ourselves! Independently of the great message of mercy which it contains, how vast is the amount of invaluable history which it embraces! How replete with the best maxims for the conduct of life! How it abounds in striking apophthegms; in wisest aphorisms! And how it clothes its statements and relations in all the beauties of simple narrative, of appropriate simile, of admirable metaphor, of charming allegory! Never has the world seen a book which can be compared with it. The single book of Job contains more striking tropes, metaphors, similes, etc., than all the poems of Greece and Rome combined. Nor does the celebrated eulogy of the Bible by Sir William Jones, in the slightest degree approximate to hyperbole.

Look at the state of individual mind in countries where the Scriptures are most generally possessed, and most carefully read—as in Scotland and New England—and you will see how Christianity delivers from the double bondage of ignorance and vice. “The entrance of thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple.”

Let us now contemplate the influence of the Gospel upon society at large, or communities, and the blessed freedom which it there diffuses. Here Christianity has confessedly won many of its noblest laurels. We can, however, allude to but a few points.

1. The religion of Jesus Christ, wherever it goes, defines and establishes parental authority; and whilst it places this primal bond of human society on its proper basis, and surrounds it with all appropriate sanctions, wholly deprives it of that despotism which it assumes in countries where the light of the Gospel is unknown—a despotism which has in many parts of the Pagan world the power of life and death, and in all of them amounts to a severity and a hardness of treatment which may justly be termed cruel, and (were it not that sin has changed everything), even unnatural. It is one of the brightest glories of Christianity, and one of the most convincing proofs of its heavenly origin, that it “turns the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the hearts of the children unto their fathers.”

2. And woman—what does not Christianity accomplish for her? From being only the slave of man, and the mother of his children, it transforms her into his dearest and most faithful friend, the sharer of his joys as well as his sorrows, his companion, his equal, his wisest counsellor, the promoter of his purest happiness in times of prosperity, and the source of his greatest solace in those of adversity. What is woman in Pagan and Mohammedan countries? In some she is scarcely more than a brute, a beast of burden, a menial servant, or at best a thing of merest convenience, and hardly considered to be the possessor of an immortal soul. Oh, what a contrast is woman as a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother, in lands where the Gospel has shed its hallowed influence over all the relations of society and of life! What a contrast between a Christian family, with an affectionate and devoted pair at its head, surrounded by a band of dutiful and beloved children, the abode of peace and intelligence, purity and love, and those which unevangelized countries everywhere present to our view, with their polygamy, their incessant quarrels of wives with wives, and children with children, and of husband and father with all!

3. And how blessed is the influence of the Gospel on all the other relations of life! And how could it be otherwise, since Christianity teaches us to look upon all the members of the human race as our brethren, and requires us to consider every individual of that race, to whom we can do any good thing, as our neighbor? It tells us that every human being, whether rich or poor, high or low, learned or ignorant, bond or free, civilized or uncivilized, is descended from the same original pair with ourselves; is a child of the same Heavenly Father; and is equally an object of His paternal care. It teaches us that we must not despise any of the human family; no, not even any of the “little ones,” for they are the children of our Heavenly Father, and wards, if we may so speak, of those unseen celestial messengers, who, whilst they perform an humble ministry on earth, in their behalf, enjoy the privilege of beholding His face in heaven.

The devout and conscientious Jews, it is said, will not tread on a piece of paper on which anything is written, lest the name of God may be there! It is a beautiful superstition, if such it may be called. So Christianity permits us not to treat with contempt, or to tread under our feet a fellow-man, however degraded he may be, for he has the image of God in his soul. It may be that that image is sadly defaced; it may be, even, that it is almost effaced; but still it is the image of God!

It was a beautiful, though somewhat quaint remark, of a distinguished English writer of the 17th century, that "all men should be either loved or pitied; for God had made no man to be despised." Whenever the Gospel gains possession of their hearts, it leads men to be "kindly affectioned one toward another," to sympathize with each other, "to bear one another's burthens." It teaches them, in questions of honor, "to prefer one another;" it causes them to put away wrath, and strife, and all those evil passions which make men treat unjustly, or unkindly, their fellow-men. In other words, it supplants those passions with that blessed charity which "suffereth long, is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity (but rejoiceth in the truth), beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." It is this which fills not only families, but neighborhoods with peace and good will, and makes society the source of the highest earthly happiness; and the want of this heavenly principle will create a hell anywhere.

4. The blessed Gospel deprives slavery, wherever it exists, of half its curse, by teaching both master and slave to love one another, and faithfully to discharge their reciprocal duties, knowing that both have a "Master who is in heaven." This it does whilst it prepares both master and slave for the dissolution of that relation, which, it will one day inevitably effect. For the single command of the Savior, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them," must eventually lead to the overthrow of slavery in all lands where the Gospel gains that ascendancy which it is destined to attain.

On what side soever, therefore, we regard the influence of the Gospel upon men in the various relations of associated life, we find that it is eminently happy, and brings about the overthrow of that dreadful bondage which sin has so banefully diffused through all the ranks and positions of humanity.

Let us again consider the influence of Christianity on nations, and the way in which it operates to secure to mankind the enjoyment of those rights with which God has endowed them, and of which they may not, without cause, be deprived.

That a religion which enjoins upon both rulers and subjects their appropriate and correlative duties; which teaches the doc-

trine that God "has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth," and, therefore, that all men are brethren; that forbids all violence and oppression in the most emphatic language, should exert a salutary influence upon all classes—elevating and protecting the down-trodden masses; and restraining the arrogance of the great—is what might be expected. Accordingly we learn from history that, long before Christianity had produced any change in the character of the Emperors and other great functionaries at Rome, it often mitigated and subdued proconsular and pretorian pride and insolence in the distant provinces. And, in its onward and wide-spreading progress, it gradually brought about,—if not everywhere and in a uniform manner, at least in many parts of the Roman empire, and to a very considerable extent—most important ameliorations in the condition of the poor and oppressed. As it gained more foothold, it acquired more courage, and by the mouth of its faithful ministers, it often remonstrated, and successfully, with tyrants, great and small, on the injustice of their conduct. Many instances of this happened long before it ascended the throne of the Cesars, in the reign of Constantine.

And when the Roman empire was overthrown by the incursions of the powerful but barbarous heathen hordes from the North and East of Europe (aided by the co-operation of the oppressed in Asia and Africa), and Christianity was compelled to achieve another conquest on the same ground—not, indeed, of one consolidated and powerful state, but of its scattered fragments in the shape of provinces overrun by different tribes speaking different tongues—this boldness on the part of Christian priests and teachers was, perhaps, much more frequent, remarkable, and, we may add, effectual than in its earlier invasion of that empire itself. History makes mention of some notable instances of this, one only of which can we cite on this occasion. It was that of the visit of Leo I. to Attila, on the banks of the Po, whereby that bloody conqueror was diverted from his cruel intention of burning Rome, then the capital of Christendom, as it had been of the Roman empire.

And although before the discovery of the art of printing, and especially before the glorious Reformation, the Holy Scriptures were in the possession of but a very small portion of those who professed the Christian name,—of clerks, of the learned and privileged few, and even of most of them only in fragments—yet it is quite probable that the very limited and partial knowledge of the Bible which then existed had some influence in giving rise to the earliest attempts among the nations that planted themselves upon the ruins of Rome, to form something like written compacts, defining the powers of the rulers, and the duties of the ruled.

But when the Reformation broke upon Europe, a new era commenced. For the first time mankind received the Bible, the whole Bible, in their respective languages, and began to peruse that blessed volume, of which they had hitherto scarcely been able to get a glimpse. Then it was that not only the benevolent, sublime, and heart-touching precepts of the Savior and His Apostles began to be read with joy and astonishment, but also the wonderful laws and institutions which God Himself had given to man, began to be studied. And well might men be delighted and instructed by the study of the Hebrew commonwealth; for, take it as a whole, it was infinitely superior to the institutions of Minos, of Numa, of Lycurgus, and of Solon. In fact, their institutions were but a dim reflection of it, and whatever of good they contained can be shown to have been derived from those of Moses. Older by a thousand years than those of Solon, their superiority to his is as marked as is their antiquity. In the Jewish commonwealth, the world saw the first perfect model of a constitutional government. It was a republic, in which there was a most remarkable distribution of power, and the most admirable provision of checks and balances—in the influence of the priesthood and in the authority of the sanhedrim and of the judges—to restrain within proper and well-defined limits the action of the chief ruler, whether elected by the people, or chosen by God Himself to meet some extraordinary emergency.

We are not disposed to deny that the study of the Grecian and Roman political institutions—in other words, recurrence to the streams as well as to the fountains from which those streams flowed—has concurred to inspire the minds of those who have loved freedom in modern times with the idea of a constitutional form of government. For such a fact can detract nothing from the exalted position, but rather establish it, of the Hebrew commonwealth. One thing is most certain—there was very little constitutional liberty in the world when the Reformation of the 16th century dawned upon Europe, and gave to the people the sacred Scriptures—that blessed volume, which, if it may in the highest and best sense be called God's Book, is in another and most important acceptation, the People's Book, for it is the book which their Heavenly Father caused to be written for them, and which He intended should be theirs. Of this, the volume itself is the best evidence.

At the epoch to which we have just referred—the Reformation—with the exception of England, Sweden, the republics of Switzerland and Italy, together with the free cities of Germany, there was not a constitutional government in the world. And we need not tell those well acquainted with the history of the time of which we speak, that the constitutions of both England and Sweden were in an embryo state, and hardly worthy of the

name. They did, indeed, form something of a bulwark against the encroachments of the paramount prince; but they gave to the people but little influence in the government, and secured to them but few of their great political rights. Whilst, as to the republics of Italy and Switzerland, and the free cities of Germany, they were aristocracies, some of them mere oligarchies, in which the masses of the people had no sort of influence, and for whose welfare and elevation there seemed to be neither thought nor care. And, in fact, the republics of Greece and Rome were little more than aristocracies. The masses were little better than slaves. In those celebrated polities the poor man might be justly said to be servant of the rich. In fact, the "profane vulgar," as the people were contemptuously called, were considered proper objects of hatred, and little better than "accursed."

Such was the position of things when the pure Gospel was brought back to the world by Luther and the other reformers of glorious memory. But with its return commenced a new era in the history of mankind. Let us see how this happened.

To do this with effect we must go back to the consideration of the condition in which the Gospel, or that pure Christianity which the Reformers restored to the world, finds mankind, and of what it does for them.

Let us not forget, then, that the Gospel finds men—all men—in a state of sin and wretchedness. As to the condition of the masses where the Gospel has not diffused extensively its salutary influences, it is emphatically one of sin, ignorance, and misery. Now let us take an individual case, in order that we may have a clear conception of the transforming and elevating nature of true Christianity. Let us select a man out of the masses—the ignorant, depraved, and down-trodden masses, in any country where the Gospel is not known. Let us suppose, what, however, is almost universal in such circumstances, that the individual whose case we would contemplate, possesses a mind enshrouded in ignorance, a heart selfish, degraded, under the dominion of gross and sensual passions, alienated from God, and a stranger to all ennobling and elevating views of virtue, and of that happiness which is worthy of an immortal being. Such a man is only fit, in that state of mind and of heart, to be a slave. He is incapable of anything like those sentiments of self-respect, of honor, of duty to himself and his race, which alone can lead to the needed efforts to secure emancipation from the bondage in which he lives, and the attainment of that position in society, which belongs, of right, to humanity. Let us go further, and suppose him to be the prey of some debasing vice, either secretly or openly practised. Let us even suppose him, to make the case as strong as possible, to have become so vile that he is despised and rejected even by those of the same degraded caste to which he

belongs. He may have become a poor, miserable, and helpless drunkard. He may have committed crimes for which he has received the contempt and execration of his fellow men. What, let me ask, could philosophy do for such a man? I will tell you :—

When on a visit to one of the most distinguished universities in Europe, some five years ago, I occasionally attended the lectures of a celebrated Professor of Moral Philosophy, who is well known from one end of this country to the other by his light and popular writings. He is a man of the most brilliant imagination, of vast stores of knowledge, and of an admirable command of language. Withal, he has a person of most commanding appearance, a face of the finest mould, a forehead, an eye, such as a Vandyke might covet as a model for his pencil. As he stood before his class, his black gown hung carelessly from his noble shoulders, on which rested the long tresses of his auburn hair.

In the course of his lectures he was naturally led to treat of virtue, upon which he expatiated, very much as we may suppose that Plato would have done in similar circumstances. In the next lecture, which was an appropriate sequel, he discoursed on the resources of virtue; and first he developed the considerations which it furnishes to save men from falling into sin; or rather into vice, or the commission of wrong; for the learned Professor seemed to shrink from using the word sin. These topics he handled with consummate skill. After having dwelt with great eloquence upon the motives and arguments which philosophy may use to persuade men to pursue a virtuous life, he next took up those which she may employ to dissuade from a life of vicious indulgence. Among other things he depicted the poor sinner, hurried on by temptation to the commission of crime, as advancing rapidly to the verge of a vast precipice, at whose distant base lies a boundless, fathomless abyss, over which rest clouds of thickest darkness and impenetrable gloom. Above this awful gulf he represented death, hovering in mid-air with a javelin in his hand, and just ready to pierce the poor creature to the heart. The image was as appropriate as it was appalling.

At length, the eloquent Professor came to the question: "But suppose that temptation should prove too powerful, and all these considerations become insufficient to keep the man from falling into sin—into crime it may be, disgraceful crime—what is the wretched evil-doer to do? What can be done for his recovery?" Oh, thought I, when the Professor had reached that point, this is the question of questions! We shall now see what philosophy can do for a man in so deplorable a condition; and sure enough the Professor essayed to enter upon the task of suggesting those considerations which philosophy can make: Such as the "importance of not abandoning all hope; that bad as the case may be,

the fallen one may with suitable efforts rise again, at least to a partial recovery of the good opinion of the world. It is true that reputation, property, happiness, may all be lost; but still there is room for hope that amendment of life, and a long series of years virtuously spent, will do much towards re-instating him in the esteem of society." But alas! how insufficient are all such considerations to meet the exigencies of the case! How little success, humanly speaking, is likely to attend such means of alleviating misfortune! And how vain and little worth appeared all that philosophy can do in comparison with the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ. I could not but say within myself, whilst listening to all this splendid declamation, that one simple sermon, from a man however illiterate, who knows the Gospel by having experienced its power in his own soul, is worth a whole Alexandrian library of such lectures. The simple parable of the Prodigal Son, which is related in twenty-two verses of one of the Gospels, is infinitely better fitted to meet the case described. Let us consider this point for a moment.

The poor sinner has ruined himself, and feels that he is undone! He has pursued the course of vice and sin to such a length that property, reputation, friends, and hope are gone. It may even be, though blessed be God that does not often happen, that long-lingering affection for him has abandoned its last earthly abode—a mother's bosom! In this state the Gospel comes to him; perhaps it finds him in the gloomy walls of a dungeon! And it tells him that, deplorable as is his condition, there is yet hope for him; for there is one Being whose heart yearns over him, yea, even bleeds for him! And that Being is He whose favor is of greater importance than all the universe beside. It tells him that the infinite God, his Heavenly Father, still pities him, and invites him to return unto Him from whom he has all his life long been wandering. It informs him that he has the proof of this in the fact that he still lives, and is therefore a "prisoner of hope." It tells him that "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It exhorts him at once to arise and go to his Heavenly Father, fall down at his feet, confess his many and aggravated sins, and ask for the pardon of them all for the sake of the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

This is the way in which the Gospel meets the poor lost sinner. In the striking language of one of the prophets, his case is represented under the figure of one who is exposed in all her disgusting wretchedness and helplessness in the open field, where the infinitely merciful Jehovah passes by and has compassion upon her, and says, "Live!" O blessed news this, for the wretched and hitherto hopeless man! He listens; he wonders

whether this can be true. At length, through grace, he believes; he rises up and returns to his Heavenly Father; is received, is pardoned; is enfolded in the arms of heavenly love and mercy! O what a transition! He is renewed in his soul by the Holy Spirit. He becomes a new creature! How wonderful the change, both in his character and in the relations which he sustains to his Maker! He now has the heart, if I may so speak, to try to live a new life. He has now the courage to hope that, if God has forgiven him, he may, by a life of well-doing, re-instate himself in the good opinion of society, if he has lost it. He ventures to hope that, if God has forgiven him, his fellow-men may also be induced to forgive him.

But, if any should not be willing to forgive him, he has that within him, through God's grace, which can enable him to sustain their contempt and their hatred. And he will bear these things as long as they are endurable. He will bear even oppression, and perhaps for a long time, without a murmur. Yet there is a point beyond which endurance of wrong is impossible, even for a Christian man; for "oppression," long continued, will, we are told on the best authority, "make even a wise man mad."

In such circumstances, what is more natural than for one who has found the favor of God, to question the right of a fellow-man, be he who he may, to put his foot upon his neck. He cannot be persuaded to believe that God has given authority to any one, be he prince or common man, to tyrannize over him.

And this will be more readily his conviction if such tyranny interfere with the rights of his conscience, and prevent or hinder the discharge of his religious duties. For here a chord is touched which vibrates to his inmost soul. He might bear the loss of his goods, the loss of his political and civil rights, the loss of reputation. But he cannot long bear, in silence, the deprivation of his religious rights and privileges,—of the liberty to worship and serve God according to God's Word and his own conscience. Oh, no! This is too great a sacrifice for him to make, because it interferes with his duty to his God.

And when he thinks not only of his own eternal interests, but also of those of his children, which may not only be put in jeopardy by such tyranny, but even ruined, not all earth, not all hell, will be likely to make him acquiesce in it; for it concerns not this world only, but eternity; not the body only, which must in a short time perish, but the soul, which can never die.

Let us suppose that such a man is not alone; that others, perhaps many others, in the same village, city, neighborhood, district, country, have undergone the same blessed translation from the kingdom of darkness and of Satan, into the kingdom of light and of Christ. It may be that they had not sunk down into a state so degraded and abandoned as that which we have just de-

scribed. This matters not, so far as the object which we have in view is concerned. They all have been sinners, and in their own opinion, as well as in reality, great sinners. But they have become new men, have new hopes, are influenced by new and heavenly motives. Will it be possible for such men to suffer oppression long from their fellow-men, and not resist it, especially if that oppression interferes with the rights of conscience, and prevents the enjoyment of the means of grace? They may, indeed, as we have said, endure with patience much loss of their goods, and even of their civil and political rights; but if it "concern their God," and their duties to Him, they will not long hesitate to disobey the command even of a king, and suffer martyrdom rather than submit to such grievous wrong. They will not only refuse to obey, but they will take measures for self-protection, and for the maintenance of their rights; and they will have justice on their side in doing both.

And just here has begun almost every noble and successful resistance to tyranny which has illustrated the annals of Christendom since the dawn of the Reformation. That blessed movement of necessity became a double one, almost from the first; for it encountered a double despotism,—that of the Prince, and that of the Priest. Little, indeed, did Luther anticipate this at the outset of his noble mission; for he did not see the length to which his principles would carry those who adopted them. Very far was he from comprehending at first, or indeed at any time, the full effect which the reading of the Scriptures, and the reception in the heart of the glorious doctrine of Justification by Faith, would have upon the masses, and the length to which pressure from without would compel them to go. But it was soon found by those who embraced the Reformed Faith, that it was in vain to hope to overthrow the spiritual despotism and darkness beneath which mankind had for ages groaned, so long as the political tyranny continued to uphold it. To this it was owing that the Reformation soon became a political, as well as a religious movement—not of choice, but by the compulsion of its enemies.

Let us now seek for the illustration and confirmation of these positions in the facts of history.

We have spoken of the Reformation as giving an impulse to the struggle for liberty, and for proper guarantees in behalf of human rights,—especially the rights of conscience, and religious worship; and in so doing, we have spoken in accordance with truth. But, in fact, the partial resuscitation of evangelical faith had, in previous ages, been attended with similar, though partial, developments. Of this we have a notable instance in the case of the Waldenses. From the 11th to the 14th century, that martyr-race endured a harassing, and even, at times, a se-

vere persecution. To this they opposed a patient continuance in well-doing, and bore in meekness the spoiling of their goods, cruel indignities, and lingering imprisonments. Bloody persecution next followed. They then took up arms in defence of their rights and their lives, and through a period of three centuries and more, sustained thirty-four distinct wars with their enemies, and successfully maintained their religious liberties and rights, although in doing so they were oftener than once reduced almost to extirpation in their mountain abodes. The Proclamations, Addresses, and Treaties, which the Dukes of Savoy, the authors of these wars, were compelled to make in their behalf, were in some sense guarantees of their religious liberties and civil immunities, as they were enduring proofs, notwithstanding the faithless manner in which they were observed, of the reality and the vigor of the resistance which occasioned them.

In the history of the Hussites of the 15th century, we have another remarkable monument of the energy, courage, and perseverance which an evangelical faith can create and sustain, and whose fruits were long perpetuated in the heroic defence, on the part of Ziska and the Taborites, of their mountain-homes, as well as of their scriptural Religion, amidst the fastnesses which the God of nature and of grace had planted in Bohemia.

Even the early Capitulations of Charlemagne and his successors, as well as the Capitularies of the German Princes and Emperors of later days, were so many pacts in which defences for religious, as well as civil rights were sought; and though very imperfect, they were unquestionably the best bulwarks which could in those times be erected.

But it was, as we have remarked, the great Reformation of the 16th century that gave that grand impulse in behalf of popular liberty and constitutional government which the world has so extensively felt, and which has even yet expended but a small portion of its energies. Ten years did not elapse after Luther began to preach the doctrine of Justification by Faith, before its effects were widely felt throughout Germany, in inciting men to resist oppression. In the unfortunate "war of the Peasants," in the year 1525, we can see clearly that this principle had some share. The masses of laboring people had long groaned beneath the heavy burthens which their "Seigneurs" and "Princes" imposed upon them. Discontent had often manifested itself at various points, and even blood had flowed. Still, no general uprising of the people took place, till the principles of the Reformation had gained considerable diffusion in that country, and society at large had been agitated to its centre by open discussions and controversies, which had a tendency to unhinge and subvert men's minds, not only in regard to the Papal religion, but in some sense also to the just claims of the "powers that be." It is true that

the men who excited the peasants of Germany to resist by force, were most of them either ambitious demagogues or miserable fanatics. Yet among their followers, especially at the outset, there were not a few who were actuated by good motives, and hoped for the overthrow of the grinding despotism under which they had so long lived and suffered. Many of the demands which the revolted addressed to their princes were reasonable, and such as the Bible sanctions. And although Luther had good reason for denouncing the movement, because of the wretched spirit in which it was conducted, it is certain that in his manner of doing so, he makes it evident that he neither comprehended the full extent to which the glorious doctrines he was laboring to propagate would lead men, in seeking redress of evils and the protection of their rights, nor the just limits of obedience to unrighteous governments. Everything connected with this whole movement was unfortunate, and it ended in utter disaster. Yet it is certainly true that it gives us some faint and imperfect intimations of what an evangelical faith will lead men to do in opposing and overthrowing oppression when it transcends the boundaries of a proper endurance. But let us turn to efforts less abortive and more cheering; to efforts whose fruits endure to this day, and will endure to the end of time.

Of these, Holland is a memorable instance. Overcome in arms,—to which oppression and persecution had driven them,—those who had embraced the reformed doctrine in Flanders, were compelled to take refuge in the Low Countries, as Holland was then called. There they maintained a contest with Spain that is without a parallel, for its sacrifices, in the history of the world, during a period of almost an entire century. And although very many of the nobles and other great men who espoused the cause of Reformation in this struggle, were unquestionably actuated by a desire to obtain deliverance from a higher despotism which weighed heavily upon them, and some of them, perhaps, even by less worthy considerations; yet it is certain that Protestantism was the primitive occasion of the movement, and with many, not only among the ministers, but among the people of every rank, the chief source of its strength, and the true cause of its triumph. And what was the issue of this protracted and dreadful struggle? It was the establishment of a Commonwealth in which there was, for a long time, more religious and political liberty than in any other country in the world. Nor did the Dutch acquire liberty for themselves alone. Their country was an asylum for their persecuted Protestant brethren of all lands. And thither fled those from France, from Bohemia, from the Palatinate, from Italy, from Spain, and even from England and Scotland, who preferred exile with liberty of conscience, to conformity with what they

deemed to be error in doctrine and worship, in their native countries.

But the most remarkable developments of that religious freedom to which an evangelical faith gives origin, and the most wonderful results from struggles to secure that political liberty which naturally and legitimately flows from it, occurred in the Island of Great Britain. The Reformation overthrew, after a protracted and fierce conflict, the two-fold despotism with which the people of that land had long been cursed—that of the secular and ecclesiastical governments.

It was a conflict disastrous in its influence whilst it lasted, and for a long time doubtful as to its issue. In its alternations it shook not only the throne to its foundations, but agitated society also to its very inmost recesses. The struggle was at first between Protestantism and Popery; afterwards between Protestantism and a Semi-Romanism; and finally between evangelical worship and formalism. In the progress of that struggle, the southern portion of the island became involved with the northern, and the throne of the United Kingdom was overthrown, and the crown trampled in the dust.

During two centuries and more, it was the Protestant religion as embodied and represented by the Presbyterian Church, and especially through the energy, and wisdom, and heroic resistance of its General Assembly, that despotism, whether of Scottish or English origin, was kept at bay in the northern end of the island, and the liberties of the people in any measure protected. The contest was, indeed, and first of all, for Christ's kingdom and crown; but the interests of that kingdom, and the glory of that crown, involved the best interests and the dearest rights of the down-trodden people.

But it was in England, or the southern end of the island, that the development of an evangelical faith and life was followed by the most astonishing consequences.

The Reformation in that land, carried on mainly by royal counsels and royal hands, was,—like that which was effected under royal auspices in some countries on the continent,—exceedingly imperfect. So much of Romanism still cleaved to it, that it scarcely deserved the name of a spiritual movement, and was far from being adequate to the exigencies of the occasion. Hence a second Reformation, within the bosom of the first, was felt to be necessary. From this arose that tremendous struggle to emancipate England from a spiritual and temporal despotism, which for a while overthrew both prelacy and monarchy. And, although both arose again out of the dust and recovered their former place in the Church and the State, yet the British constitution received its present form, if not all its vitality and value, from the discussions and conflicts which took place during that

period. It is to those efforts of the Puritans, as Mr. Hume is forced to acknowledge, that England owes whatever of liberty she may now possess. In that struggle Algernon Sydney and Lord William Russell, those noble patriots, whose names, with that of another who earlier entered into the contest for liberty, John Hampden, will endure as long as English history remains, were called to lay their heads on the block. Of Lord Russell, a distinguished divine of that day (Dr. Calamy) remarks, "that an age would not repair the loss to the nation, and whose name should never be mentioned by Englishmen without singular respect." Even royalty itself speaks of him as "one whose name could never be forgotten, so long as men preserved any esteem for sanctity of manners, greatness of mind, and a love to their country, constant even unto death."

Such were some of the patriots and noble asserters of liberty whom Puritanism created for England, and not for England only, but for all mankind.

But who were the Puritans? and what were their principles? Let us devote a few paragraphs to the answer of these inquiries.

The rise of the Puritans dates from the reign of Edward VI. They embraced the portion of the Established Protestant Church of England that were dissatisfied with many things, both in the Liturgy and the articles of that Church as it was left by Henry VIII. They believed that the Reformation, as made under the auspices and guidance of that monarch, had not gone far enough. But they were not agreed among themselves as to the extent to which changes ought to be made. Cranmer and his friends desired to make as few as possible, hoping that the nation would thus be more easily divorced from Romanism, and sooner reconciled to the reformed religion. Others, who alone merited the epithet of Puritans—an epithet given at first by way of opprobrium—desired to free the Church as completely as possible from every vestige of Romanism. On this account they wished even the abolition of the use of the surplice and the square cap, as being the livery of superstition, and emblems of the triumph of prescription over the word of God. They have, indeed, been often ridiculed for what has been called their obstinacy in regard to things comparatively indifferent. But it has been well remarked by a distinguished writer of our own country, "that the wisdom of zeal for an object is not to be measured by the particular nature of that object, but by the nature of the principle which the circumstances of the times, or of society, have identified with such object."

Upon the accession of Queen Mary (in 1553), hundreds, and even thousands, of the most prominent men of both these classes

¹ Patent of William and Mary creating the Duke of Bedford Marquis of Tavistock, granted in May, 1694.

² President Quincy, in his Centennial Discourse, delivered at Boston.

of Protestants were compelled to fly to the continent, where they found refuge at Frankfort-on-the-Maine, at Emden, at Wessel, at Basle, at Marburg, at Strasburg, and at Geneva. At all these places they were received with open arms by their Protestant brethren; and at all, they found a much simpler ritual and worship than that to which they had been accustomed in England. In the last named place, in particular, they found "a Church without a Bishop, and a State without a king." It was in that same city of Geneva, that John Knox discovered the "pattern" of that Church which he and other worthy co-workers erected in Scotland, and which has endured to this day.

Under these circumstances, it is not wonderful that the friends and advocates of further reform in the Established Church of England returned, upon the death of Mary, from the continent, after a sojourn there of five years, more fully confirmed than ever in the opinions which they had previously held. The consequence was that the struggle between formalism, prelacy, and monarchy, on the one hand, and a purer faith, a simpler worship, and a constitutional government, on the other, was renewed with more vigor than ever—a struggle in which the throne and the altar were both, for a while, prostrated, somewhat less than a century later.

Long before that event occurred, however, there began to be formed in England a small but growing band of those who were resolved to come out of the Established Church, in which they despaired of seeing a further reformation. Finding no longer any protection in the land of their birth, several hundreds of them emigrated from the eastern counties of England to the opposite shores of Holland. Not finding such a home there as they desired, and preferring to live under the dominion, as they said, of their "natural prince," they removed to this continent, and settled amid the wilderness which then covered its shores. They planted at "New Plymouth," a Church without a bishop, and a commonwealth without a monarchy, save an almost nominal allegiance to one which was three thousand miles distant. Here was the cradle of American institutions and American liberty.

Genus unde Latinum,
Albanique patres, atque altæ mœnia Romæ.

For small as this colony was, never did another exert so great an influence. Those which followed, and settled in 1628 at Salem, and in 1630 at Boston, though both when they left England were composed of those who still rejoice to be called members of the Established Church, had scarcely touched the American shores before they threw off the Episcopal form of government, and became Independents, or Congregationalists,—both because they were pleased with the "pattern" which

they found at Plymouth, and because by so doing they created an impassable gulf between themselves and the Bishops of England, an escape from whose domination was one of the chief motives for seeking a home in the New World. England threatened to attempt to bring back these fleeing Israelites under the ecclesiastical tyranny from which they had escaped. The colonists prepared to resist. At this moment, the dispute between the government and the friends of reform in Church and State at home, took such a turn as to prevent the conflict between the mother country and her infant daughter. The first essay, therefore, on the part of the colonies in resisting the authority of England, was made in behalf of religious freedom.

Not only did the Puritans settle in New England, but men of like spirit, and actuated by similar motives, emigrated at a later day, from Scotland, from the north of Ireland, from Wales, from Germany, from Poland, from Bohemia, from France, and from the Valleys of Piedmont, to these shores, and spread themselves, with few exceptions, over what are now our middle and southern States. Of all the Protestants who emigrated to this country in the 17th and 18th centuries, and laid the foundation of this nation's greatness, by far the largest and best portion were driven hither by religious persecution, as well as by political oppression.

But, is the question still asked, who were the Puritans? Let me answer in the language of Britain's most eloquent modern essayist :

“The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being, for whose power nothing is too vast, for whose inspection nothing is too minute. To know Him, to serve Him, to enjoy Him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on the intolerable brightness, and commune with Him face to face. Hence originated their contempt of earthly distinctions. The difference between the greatest and meanest of mankind seemed to vanish when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from Him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognised no title to superiority but His favor; and confident of that, they despised all the accomplishments, and all the dignities of the world. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they felt assured that they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a

splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their diadems crowns of glory, which should never fade away. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt; for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language; nobles, by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged; on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest; who had been destined before the heavens and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events, which short-sighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes, had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty revealed His will by the pen of the Evangelist, and the harp of the Prophet. He had been rescued by no common deliverer, from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no common agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had arisen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God."

Wonderful men! By what visions cheered! By what hopes and motives conducted! The Duke of Wellington once asserted on the floor of the British House of Lords, that such was the perfection of discipline, such the *esprit du corps* of the army which he commanded in the Peninsula, that he believed it could have marched anywhere! In this respect, it was like the army of Hannibal, which for fourteen years bade defiance to all the attacks of the Romans, and during the latter part of that period, did not meet an enemy that had the courage to oppose it. In like manner it may be asserted, that men possessing the spirit and character, the exalted aims, the soul-sustaining hopes, the faith that fixes her eye on eternal things, which the Puritans had, are capable of doing anything that is great and glorious. And verily they did things that were both great and glorious. Those of them who remained in their father-land nobly contended for the rights of mankind, political and religious. They fought the battles of liberty over and over again, until through their exertions, and through the triumph of their principles, the British Constitution became firmly established. "The precious spark of liberty had been kindled and was preserved by the Puritans alone," says the great English historian to whom we have already referred—a historian who has been justly charged with lying in wait, through the whole course of his history for an opportunity of throwing

discredit upon the cause of both religion and liberty, and who bore a special dislike to the Puritans.

As to the Puritans who emigrated to this country, they carried out, to their legitimate extent, the great principles of civil and religious liberty which they had learned in England, in the school of oppression and fierce discussion. They went on gradually improving the forms of popular government which they had originally adopted, in the face of all the efforts of the Crown of England to destroy them. And although never were subjects more loyal to a Crown, or a people more sincerely attached to their father-land, they were at last compelled, as they believed, by the unkind and unnatural course pursued by that father-land, to sever the bonds that had bound them to it, and establish an independent government of their own, in which religious, as well as political liberty should be carried to its proper boundaries.

And what has been the effect of our example upon the world? Let the history of France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and Greece, in the Old World, and of the entire of South America, together with Mexico, Guatamala, and St. Domingo, in the New, answer that question. Let its answer be also read in the throes of poor Poland and of benighted Italy.

It is indeed but too true, that the revolutions which have occurred in the world within the last fifty years, have led to no results comparable to those which their great prototype and forerunner in our own country has produced. Nor is it difficult to discover the reason. They have not been the fruit of the pure Gospel; they have not been sustained by an evangelical faith; they have not occurred in nations which had been penetrated by a true Christianity; they have not taken place where the Bible is in the hands of almost every one, and its sanctions felt in millions of hearts. Therefore it is, that the governments which they have given rise to have been unstable and very imperfect.

But let us have hope. These revolutions have been necessary to break down the despotism of the prince and of the priest—which like Castor and Pollux, or to use a less classical comparison, like the Siamese Twins, are inseparable, and neither can be destroyed without sooner or later occasioning the death of the other. These revolutions are opening the way for the diffusion of the pure gospel. And the countries in which they have occurred will one day experience its renovating influence. Then, and not till then, will they be enabled to obtain and maintain those free governments which they desire, but for which they are at present so greatly unprepared.