

FOREIGN CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE LIBERTIES OF THE UNITED STATES.

CHAPTER IX



Samuel Morse

- Evidence enough of conspiracy adduced to create great alarm
- The cause of liberty universally demands that we should awake to a sense of danger
- An attack is made which is to try the moral strength of the republic
- The mode of defence that might be consistently recommended by Austrian Popery
- A mode now in actual operation in Europe
- Contrary to the entire spirit of American Protestantism
- True mode of defence-Popery must be opposed by antagonist institutions
- Ignorance must be dispelled-Popular ignorance of all Papal countries
- Popery the natural enemy of general education
- Popish efforts to spread education in the United States delusive

Is not the evidence I have exhibited in my previous numbers sufficiently strong to prove to my countrymen the existence of a foreign conspiracy against the liberties of the country? Does the nature of the case admit of stronger evidence? or must we wait for some positive, undisguised acts of oppression, before we will believe that we are attacked and in danger? Must we wait for a formal declaration of war? The serpent has already commenced his coil about our limbs, and the lethargy of his poison is creeping over us; shall we be more sensible of the torpor when it has fastened upon our vitals? The house is on fire; can we not believe it, till the flames have touched our flesh? Is not the enemy already organized in the land? Can we not perceive all around us the evidence of his presence? Have not the wily manœuverings of despotism already commenced? Is he not inveigling our children to his schools? Is he not intriguing with the press? Is he not usurping the police of the country, and showing his front in our political councils? Because no foe is on the sea, no hostile armies on our plains, may we sleep securely? Shall we watch only on the outer walls, while the sappers and miners of foreign despots are at work under our feet, and stealthily advancing beneath the very citadel? Where is that unwearying vigilance which the eloquent Burke proclaimed to be the characteristic of our fathers, who did not wait to feel oppression, but “augured misgovernment at a distance, and snuffed the approach of tyranny in every tainted breeze?” Are we their sons, and shall we sleep on our posts? We may sleep, but the enemy is awake; he is straining every nerve to possess himself of our fair land. We must awake, or we are lost. Foundations are attacked, fundamental principles are threatened, interests are put in jeopardy, which throw all the questions which now

agitate the councils of the country into the shade. It is Liberty itself that is in danger, not the liberty of a single state, no, nor of the United States, but the liberty of the world. Yes, it is the world that has its anxious eyes upon us; it is the world that cries to us in the agony of its struggles against despotism, THE WORLD EXPECTS AMERICA, REPUBLICAN AMERICA, TO DO HER DUTY.

Our institutions have already withstood many assaults from within and from without, but the war has now assumed a new shape.

An effort is now making that is to try the MORAL STRENGTH of the Republic. It is not a physical contest on the land, or on the water. The issue depends not on the strength of our armies or navies. How then shall we defend ourselves from this new, this subtle attack?

"Defend yourselves!" cries the Austrian papist, "you cannot defend yourselves;" your government, in its very nature, is not strong enough to protect you against foreign or domestic conspiracy.

You must here take a lesson from legitimate governments.

We alone can teach the effectual method of suppressing conspiracies.

You say you have a body of conspirators against your liberties, a body of foreigners who are spreading their pernicious heresies through your land, and endangering the state.

The weakness of republicanism is now manifest.

What constitutional or legal provision meets the difficulty?

Where are your laws prohibiting Catholics from preaching or teaching their doctrines, and erecting their chapels, churches, and schools?

Where is your Passport system, to enable you to know the movements of every man of them in the land?

Where is your Gens d'armes, your armed police, those useful agents, whose domiciliary visits could ferret out every Catholic, seize and examine his papers, and keep him from further mischief in the dungeons of the state?

Where are your laws that can terrify, by the penalty of imprisonment, any man that dares to utter an opinion against the government?

Where is your judicious censorship of the press, to silence the Catholic journals, and stifle any Catholic sentiments in other journals?

Where is your Index expurgatorius, to denounce all unsafe books, that no Catholic book may be printed or admitted into the country?

Where is your system of espionage, that no Protestant may read a Catholic publication, or express in conversation a single sentiment unfavorable to Protestantism, without being overlooked, and overheard by some faithful spy,

and reported to the government?

Where are the officers in your post-office department for the secret examination of letters, so that even the most confidential correspondence may be purified from dangerous heresy?

Where is your secret Inquisitorial Court for the trial and condemnation of apostate Protestants?

Without these changes in the constitution and laws of your government, you can oppose no efficient obstacle to the success of this conspiracy.

And what shall I reply to this consistent Papist?

The methods he would prescribe have the sanction of successful experiment for some centuries.

They are in sober truth the very means that Popery employs at this very day, in the countries where it is dominant, to prevent the spread of opinions contrary to its own dogmas.

But are these the methods that commend themselves to American Protestants? Does not such a cumbrous machinery of chains, and bolts, and bayonets, and soldiers, to hold the mind in bondage, seem rather a dream of the dark ages, than a real system, now in actual operation in the nineteenth century? Away with Austrian and Popish precedent. American Protestantism is of a different school. It needs none of the aids which are indispensable to the crumbling despotisms of Europe; no soldiers, no restrictive enactments, no index expurgatorius, no Inquisition. This war is the war of principles; it is on the open field of free discussion; and the victory is to be won by the exercise of moral energy, by the force of Religious and Political Truth. But still it is a war, and all true patriots must wake to the cry of danger. They must up, and gird themselves for battle. It is no false alarm. Our liberties are in danger. The Philistines are upon us. Their bonds are prepared, and they intend, if they can, to fasten them upon our limbs. We must shake off our lethargy, and like the giant awaking from his sleep, snap these shackles asunder. We are attacked in vulnerable points by foreign enemies to all liberty. We must no longer indulge a quiet complacency in our institutions, as if there were a charm in the simple name of American liberty sufficiently potent to repel all invasion. For what constitutes the life of our justly cherished institutions? Where is the living principle that sustains them? Is it in the air we breathe? Is it in the soil we cultivate? Is our air or our soil more congenial to liberty than the air and soil of Austria, or Italy, or Spain? No! The life of our institutions! It is a moral and intellectual life; it lies in the culture of the human mind and heart, of the reason and conscience; it is bound up in principles which must be taught by father to son, from generation to generation, with care, with toil, with sacrifice. Hide the Bible for fifty years-(we will not ask for the hundred years so graciously granted by the autocrat to stifle liberty)-hide the Bible for fifty years, and let our children be under the guidance of men, whose first exercise upon the youthful mind is to teach that lesson of old school sophistry, which distorts it forever, and binds it through life in bonds of

error to the dictation of a man; a man whom, in the same exercise of distorted reason, he is persuaded to believe infallible; let these Jesuit doctors take the place of our Protestant instructors, and where will be the political institutions of the country? Fifty years would amply suffice to give the victory to the despotic principle, and realize the most sanguine wishes of the tyrants of Europe.

The first thing to be done to secure safety, is to open our eyes at once to the reality and the extent of the danger. We must not walk on blindly, crying "all's well." The enemy is in all our borders. He has spread himself through all the land. The ramifications of this foreign plot are every where visible to all who will open their eyes. Surprising and unwelcome as is such an announcement, we must hear it and regard it. We must make AN IMMEDIATE, A VIGOROUS, A UNITED, A PERSEVERING EFFORT TO SPREAD RELIGIOUS AND INTELLECTUAL CULTIVATION THROUGH EVERY PART OF OUR COUNTRY. Not a village, nor a log-hut of the land should be overlooked. Where Popery has put darkness, we must put light. Where Popery has planted its crosses, its colleges, its churches, its chapels, its nunneries, Protestant patriotism must put side by side college for college, seminary for seminary, church for church. And the money must not be kept back. Does Austria send her tens of thousands to subjugate us to the principles of darkness? We must send our hundreds of thousands, aye our millions, if necessary, to redeem our children from the double bondage of spiritual and temporal slavery, and preserve to them American light and liberty. The food of Popery is ignorance. Ignorance is the mother of papal devotion. Ignorance is the legitimate prey of Popery.

But some one here asks, are not the Roman Catholics establishing schools and colleges, and seminaries of various kinds, in the destitute parts of the land? Are not they also zealous for education? May we not safely assist them in their endeavors to enlighten the ignorant? Enlighten the ignorant? Does Popery enlighten the ignorant of Spain, of Portugal, of Italy, of Ireland, of South America, of Canada? What sort of instruction is that, in the latter country, for example, which leaves 78,000 out of 87,000 of its grown up scholars signers of a petition by their mark, unable to write their own names, and many of the remaining signers, who write nothing but their names. What sort of light is that which generates darkness? Popery enlighten the ignorant? Popery is the natural enemy of GENERAL education. Do you ask for proof? It is overwhelming. Look at the intellectual condition of all the countries where Popery is dominant. If Popery is in favor of general education, why are the great mass of the people, in the papal countries I have named, the most ill-informed, mentally degraded beings of all the civilized world, arbitrarily shut out by law from all knowledge but that which makes them slaves to the tyranny of their oppressors? No! look well to it! If Popery in this country is professing friendship to general knowledge, it is a feigned alliance. If it pretends to be in favor of educating the poor, it is a false pretence, it is only temporizing. It is conforming for the present, from policy to the spirit of Protestantism around it, that it may forge its chains with less suspicion. If it is establishing schools, it is to make them prisons of the youthful intellect of the country. If the Papists in Europe are really desirous of enlightening ignorant Americans, by establishing schools, let them make their first efforts among their brethren

of the same faith in Canada and Mexico.

Do our fellow citizens at the South and West ask for schools, and are there not funds and teachers enough in our own land of wealth and education to train up our own offspring in the free principles of our own institutions? or are we indeed so beggared as to be dependent on the charities of the Holy Alliance, and the Jesuits of Europe for funds and teachers to educate our youth-in what?

The PRINCIPLES OF DESPOTISM! Forbid it patriotism! Forbid it religion!-Our own means are sufficient; we have wealth enough, and teachers in abundance. We have only to will it with the resolution and the zeal that have so often been shown, whenever great national, or moral interests are to be subserved, and every fortress, every corps of Austrian darkness would be surrounded: the lighted torches of truth, political and religious, would flash their unwelcome beams into every secret chamber of the enemies of our liberty, and drive these ill-omened birds of a foreign nest to their native hiding-place.

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