

FOREIGN CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE LIBERTIES OF THE UNITED STATES.

CHAPTER X



Samuel Morse

- All classes of citizens interested in resisting the efforts of Popery
- The unnatural alliance of Popery and Democracy exposed-Religious liberty in danger
- Specially in the keeping of the Christian community
- They must rally for its defence
- The secular press has no sympathy with them in this struggle, it is opposed to them
- The Political character of Popery ever to be kept in mind and opposed
- It is for the Papist, not the Protestant to separate his religious from his political creed
- Papists ought to be required publicly and formally and officially to renounce foreign allegiance and anti-republican customs.

In considering the means of counteracting this foreign political conspiracy against our free institutions, I have said that we must awake to the reality and extent of the danger, and rouse ourselves to immediate and rigorous action in spreading religious and intellectual cultivation through the land. This indeed would be effectual, but this remedy is remote in its operation, and is most seriously retarded by the enormous increase of ignorance which is flooding the country by foreign immigration. While therefore the remote effects of our exertions are still provided for, the pressing exigency of the case seems to require some more immediate efforts to prevent the further spread of the evil. The two-fold character of the enemy who is attacking us must be well considered. Popery is doubly opposed, -civilly and religiously, -to all that is valuable in our free institutions. As a religious system, it is the avowed and common enemy of every other religious sect in the land. The Episcopalian, the Methodist, the Presbyterian, the Baptist, the Quaker, the Unitarian, the Jew, & c. & c., are alike anathematized, are together obstinate heretics, in the creed of the Papist. He wages an indiscriminate, uncompromising, exterminating war with all.

As a Political system, it is opposed to every political party in the country. Popery in its very nature is opposed to the genius of our free system, notwithstanding its affected, artful appropriation (in our country only,) of the habits and phraseology of democracy. Present policy alone dictates so unnatural an alliance, aye, most unnatural alliance. What! Popery and Democracy allied? Despotism and Liberty hand in hand? Has the Sovereign Pontiff in very deed turned Democrat in the United States? Let us look into

this incongruous coalition, this solecism in politics-Popish Democracy. Do Popish Bishops or Priests consult the people? Have the people any voice in ecclesiastical matters? Can the people vote their own taxes? or are they imposed upon them by irresponsible priests? Do the bishops and priests account for the manner in which they spend the people's money? Has Popery here adopted the American principle of RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PEOPLE; a responsibility which gives the most insignificant contributor of his money towards any object, a right to examine into the manner in which it is disbursed? No! the people account to their priests in all cases, not the priests to the people in any case. What sort of Democracy is that where the people have no power, and the priests have all, by divine right? Let us hear no more of the presumptuous claim of Popery to Democracy.-Popery is the antipodes of Democracy. It is the same petty tyrant of the people here, as in Europe. And this is the tyranny that hopes to escape detection by assuming the name and adopting the language of democracy. Footnote: The poor, the illiterate, and the working classes, the most deeply interested in quelling riot and disorder. I have elsewhere hinted at the danger to the stability of our institutions of the mob spirit which has been manifested in different parts of the country. But I fear that the process of disorganization, the gradual change which frequent riot necessarily works in the nature of government has not been duly considered by those whom it most deeply, most vitally concerns; I mean the hardworking, uneducated poor. Let me endeavor to trace this process. What is the proper effect of our democratic republican institutions upon the various classes into which human society must ever be divided? How do they affect the condition of the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate? Equality, the only practicable equality, is their result; not that spurious, visionary equality which would make a forced community of property, but that equality which puts no artificial obstacles in the way of any man's becoming the richest or most learned in the state; which allows every man without other impediment than the common obstacles of human nature and the equal rights of his neighbor impose, to strive after wealth and knowledge and happiness. True Christian republicanism, by its benevolent and ennobling principles, impels the wealthy and the educated to use their talents for the benefit of the whole community; it prompts to acts of public spirit, to self-sacrifice, and to unwearied effort to lessen the natural obstacles in the way of the poor and uneducated to competence and intellectual character, by affording them both employment and education. The kindness and benevolence thus shown to the poor beget in this class of our citizens, industry and mental effort. They feel that they are not like the proscribed of other countries, they see that the way is equally open to all to rise to the same rank of independence in mind and condition, and they consequently are without the exciting causes of envy and ill-will and bitterness of feeling towards the wealthy and educated, which exist and produce these fruits in other and arbitrary governments. Society in its two extremes is thus knit together by a mutual confidence, and a mutual interest, for causes beyond human control are ever varying the condition of men. He that is rich to-day may be poor to-morrow; and thus there is a constant interchange, a mingling of ranks, which like a healthful circulation in the natural body, begets soundness and vigor through the political body. The vicious, and voluntarily ignorant being the only portions of society naturally and justly excluded from the benefits of this system.

Let us now look at the condition of these same classes under an arbitrary government. In Austria, for example, the poor and illiterate are considered as the natural slaves of the wealthy and learned. These classes are perpetually separated by the artificial barrier of hereditary right; the line of separation is distinctly drawn, and in all that relates to social intercourse there is an impassable gulf. There may be condescension on the one part, but no elevation on the other. High birth, learning, wealth, and polished manners are on the one side, strengthening the hands of the arbitrary power that sustains them; on the other, low birth, ignorance, poverty, and boorishness, kept down by their intrinsic weakness, generation after generation in irretrievable subjection; the upper classes knowing that their own security is based upon the perpetuity of ignorance and superstition in the lower classes. Now to make the change from republicanism to absolutism, what means would an arbitrary power like Austria be most likely to devise? Would she not attain her object entirely by the creation on the one hand, in the wealth and talent of this country, a necessity for employing physical force to hold in subjection the poor and illiterate? And the production, on the other hand, of a class ignorant and unprincipled, and turbulent enough to need the very restraints the other class might be compelled to employ? Are there any indications of such a change in this country? We have a daily increasing host of emigrants, a portion of the very class used to foreign servitude abroad. How could Austrian emissaries better serve their imperial master's interests, than by keeping these unenlightened men in the same mental darkness in which they existed in the countries from which they came, surrounding them here with a police of priests, and shutting out from them the light which might break in upon them in this land of light, nourishing them for riot and turbulence, at political meetings, and for bullying at the polls those of opposite political opinions? And what would be the effect of such a mode of proceedings upon that class, who have acquired by lives of honest industry and studious application, wealth, and knowledge, and political experience? Is not such a course calculated to drive them away from any participation in the politics of the country, and is not such seditious conduct intended to produce this very result? Will not men who have any self-respect, who have any sense of character, turn away and ask with feelings of indignation, where is that intelligent, sober, orderly body of native mechanics and artizans, who once composed the wholesome, substantial democracy of the country, and on whose independence and rough good sense the country could always rely, that well-trying body of their own fellow-citizens, accustomed to hear and read patiently, and decide discreetly? And when they see them associated with a rude set of priest-governed foreigners, strangers to the order and habits of our institutions, requiring us for their hospitable reception by conduct subversive of the very institutions which make them freemen; when they see them become the dupes of the machinations of a foreign despotic power, refusing to be undeceived, and madly rushing to their own destruction, will they not from motives of self preservation be willing to adopt any system of measures, however arbitrary, which will secure society from violence and anarchy? When disgust at priest-guided mobs shall have alienated the minds of one class of the citizens from the other, we have then one of the parties nearly formed, which is necessary for the designs of despotism in accomplishing the subversion of the republic. And the other party is still easier formed. The alienation of feeling in the

wealthier class, and their remarks of disgust, may be easily tortured into contempt for the classes below them, and then the natural envy of the poor towards the rich, will always furnish occasions to excite to violence. When hostility between these two parties has reached a proper height, the signal from the arch jugglers in Europe to their assistants here, can easily kindle the flames of civil strife. And then comes the dextrous change of systems. Frequent outrage must be quelled by military force, for the public peace must at all events be preserved, and the civil arm will have become too weak, and thus commences an armed police, itself but the precursor of a standing army. And which party will be the sufferer? All experience answers that wealth and talent are more than a match for mere brute force, for the plain reason that they can both purchase and direct it. The rich can pay for their protection, and soldiers belong to those who pay them. The man of talent is wanted to direct, and he also is retained by the rich. What then becomes of the illiterate and laboring poor? Reduced after ineffectual, ill-concerted resistance to the same state of perfect subjection that obtains in the "happy Austrian empire." It is the poor then, the poor and ignorant, not the rich and learned, that have every thing of hope and liberty to lose from the machinations of Austria. In a moral and intelligent Democracy, the rich and poor are friends and equals, in a Popish despotism the poor are in abject servitude to the rich. Let the working men, the laboring classes, well consider that their liberty is in danger, and can be preserved only by their encouragement of education and good order. It is this tyranny that is courted and favored at political elections by our politicians of all parties, because it has the advantage of a despotic organization. Footnote: And infidelity too, it seems, has just learned the secret of political power, and not content with civil and religious liberty, has introduced a third kind, and organizing itself into a new interest, demands to be represented in the state as the advocate of irreligious liberty! How much longer are the feelings of the religious community to be scandalized, and their moral sense outraged, by the bare-faced bargainings for Catholic and infidel votes? Have the religious community no remedy against such outrage? If they have not, if there is not a single point on which they can act together, if the religious denominations of various names can have no understanding on matters of this kind, if they have no common bond to unite them in repelling common enemies, then let us boast no more of religious liberty. What is religious liberty? Is it merely a phrase to round a period in a fourth of July oration? Is it a dazzling sentiment for Papists to use in blinding the eyes of the people, while they rivet upon them their foreign chains of superstition? Is it a shield to be held before Infidels, from behind which, they may throw their poisoned shafts at all that is orderly and fair in our civil as well as religious institutions? Or is it that prize above all price, that heaven-descended gift to the world, for which, with its twin sister, we contended in our war for independence, and which we are bound by every duty to ourselves, to our children, to our country, to the world, to guard with the most jealous care? And has it ever occurred to Christians that this duty of guarding religious liberty in a more special manner devolves on them? Who but the religious community appreciate the inestimable value of religious liberty?—Are their interests safe in the hands of the infidel, who scoffs at all religion, and uses his civil liberty to subvert all liberty? Is it safe in the hands of imported radicals and blasphemers? Is it safe in the hands of calculating,

selfish, power-seeking politicians? Is it safe in the keeping of Metternich's stipendiaries, the active agents of a foreign, despotic power? Does the secular press take care of our religious liberty? Is there a secular journal that has even hinted to its readers the existence of this double conspiracy? The most dangerous politico-religious sect that ever existed, a sect that has been notorious for ages, for throwing governments into confusion, is politically at work, in our own country, under the immediate auspices of the most despotic power of Europe, interested politically and vitally in the destruction of our free institutions, and is any alarm manifested by the secular press? No! they are altogether silent on this subject. They presume it is only a religious controversy, and they cannot meddle with religious controversies. They must not expose religious imposture, lest they should be called pious. They have no idea of blending church and state. They have a religion of their own, a worship in which the public, they think, feel a more exciting interest. One has a liberty pole to be erected, another a hickory tree, and the rival pretensions to superiority of these wooden gods of their idolatry, it is of the last importance to settle, and the bacchanalian revelry of their consecration must be recorded and blazoned forth in italics and capitals in its minutest particulars. "Oh Pole! oh Tree! thou art the preserver of our liberty!" No; If the religious community, (in which term I mean to include Protestants of every name who profess a religious faith,) awake not to the defence of their own rights in the state, if they indulge timidity or jealousy of each other, if they will not come forward boldly and firmly to withstand the encroachments of corruption upon their own rights; the selfish politicians of the factions of the day (and they swarm in the ranks of all parties,) will bargain away all that is valuable in the country, civil and religious, to the Pope, to Austria, or to any foreign power that will pay them the price of their treason.

We cannot be too often reminded of the double character of the enemy who has gained foothold upon our shores, for although Popery is a religious sect, and on this ground claims toleration side by side with other religious sects, yet Popery is also a political, a despotic system, which we must repel as altogether incompatible with the existence of freedom. I repeat it, Popery is a political, a despotic system, which must be resisted by all true patriots.

Is it asked, how can we separate the characters thus combined in one individual? How can we repel the politics of a Papist, without infringing upon his religious right? I answer, that this is a difficulty for Papists, not for Protestants to solve. If Papists have made their religion and despotism identical, that is not our fault. Our religion, the Protestant religion, and Liberty are identical, and liberty keeps no terms with despotism. American Protestants use no such solecism as religious despotism. Shall political heresy be shielded from all attack, because it is connected with a religious creed? Let Papists separate their religious faith from their political faith, if they can, and the former shall suffer no political attack from us. "But no," the Papist cries, "I cannot separate them; my religion is so blended with the political system, that they must be tolerated or refused together; my 'whole system is one, and indivisible, unchangeable, infallible'-I am conscientious, I cannot separate them." What are we to do in such a case? Are we to surrender our civil and religious liberty to such

presumptuous folly?

No! our liberties must be preserved; and we say, and say firmly to the Popish Bishops and Priests among us, give us your declaration of your relation to our civil government. Renounce your foreign allegiance, your allegiance to a FOREIGN SOVEREIGN. Let us have your own avowal in an official manifesto, that the Democratic Government under which you here live, delights you best. Put your ecclesiastical doings upon as open and popular a footing. as the other sects. Open your books to the people, that they may scrutinize your financial matters, that the people, your own people, may know how much they pay to priests, and how the priests expend their money; that the poorest who is taxed from his hard earned wages for church dues, and the richest who gives his gold to support your extravagant ceremonial, may equally know that their contributions are not misapplied. Come out and declare your opinion on the LIBERTY OF THE PRESS, on LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE, and LIBERTY OF OPINION, Americans demand it. They are waking up. They have their eyes upon you. Think not the American eagle is asleep. Americans are not Austrians to be hoodwinked by Popish tricks. This is a call upon you, you will be obliged soon to regard. Nor will they be content with partial, obscure avowals of republican sentiments in your journals, by insulated priests or even bishops. The American people will require a more serious testimonial of your opinions on these fundamental political points. You have had Convocations of Bishops at Baltimore. Let us have at their next assembling their sentiments on these vital points. Let us have a document full and explicit, signed by their names, a document that may circulate as well in Austria, and Italy, as in America. Aye, a document that may be published "Con permissione" in the Diario di Roma, and be circulated to instruct the faithful in the united church, the church of but one mind, in the sentiments of American democratic Bishops on these American principles. Let us see how they will accord with those of his Holiness Pope Gregory XVI. in his late encyclical letter! Will Popish Bishops dare to put forth such a manifesto? No? They dare not.

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