

# The Papacy And The Civil Power –

## Chapter II. The Pope and Civil Affairs



Continued from [The Papacy and Civil Power – Chapter I. Introductory.](#)

The Pope and Civil Affairs.—Preparations to Make him Infallible.—The Bishop's Oath.—National Council of Baltimore.—Their Theory of Government.—Defense of the Ancient Rights of the Papacy.—Arraignment of Protestantism as Infidelity, and a Failure.—Popular and Monarchical Government.—Protestant Toleration Necessary to Popular Government.

It has come to be an axiom among all the advocates of free government, that **“error ceases to be dangerous when reason is left free to combat it.”** But those who support the cause of imperialism maintain the opposite of this that the public mind and conscience are enlightened only in proportion as they are submissive to some superior governing power, sufficiently strong to hold them in obedience.

The contest between these opposing theories is one between intelligence and ignorance. In the one case, society is recognized as being entitled to govern itself by laws of its own enacting founded upon its own will. In the other, this right is entirely denied, and it is regarded as being fitted only for that condition of inferiority which shall reduce it to an unconsciousness of its degradation. The civil institutions of the United States are constructed upon the former of these theories. Wheresoever civil institutions have existed in obedience to the dictation of the papacy, they have been constructed upon the latter. Protestantism, with all its elevating tendencies, is the legitimate offspring of the one. Decrepitude, decay, and disruption have been the natural fruits of the other. These considerations must be kept in mind, in examining the claims now set up in behalf of the papacy, in order that we may have a clear view of what we are required to surrender, and understand the character of the millennial feast to which we are invited.

### **EFFORT AT PAPAL OMNIPOTENCE**

When Pope Pius IX., in 1867, convened all “the prelates of the Catholic world” in Rome, to witness the ceremony of canonizing saints to which their presence was not at all necessary – and assigned as one of the reasons for the convocation “the extreme peril which threatens *civil*, and, above all, sacred things, (Appletons’

“Annual Cyclopaedia,” 1866, p. 676.) “thoughtful men – as well Roman Catholic laymen as Protestants – wondered why so much expense should be incurred, and so much labor performed, for an object which could, of itself, confer no good

upon Christianity or the Church. And when these same Roman Catholic laymen had their attention then called many of them for the first time to the now celebrated Encyclical and Syllabus of the pope, and saw their tendency to arrest the progress of the nations, and turn them back toward the Middle Ages, many of the most intelligent of them did not hesitate to express their surprise. Some of them put one construction, and some another, upon the language of the pope, while yet others, better informed of the motives of papal action, attempted, by imperfect translations and false construction, to give it a meaning wholly at variance with what is now conceded, on all hands, to have been his design. But when the late Vatican Council enacted the decree which made papal infallibility, for the first time, a dogma of religious faith, and threatened with anathema all who should refuse to recognize the pope as incapable of all error in matters of faith and morals, all further disguise was thrown aside, and the world was awakened to the fact that these measures were but the inauguration of a deliberately concerted effort to make the papacy a power so absorbing and omnipotent that all nations and peoples should be held by it in abject, passive, and humiliating subjugation.

It would be an unjust reflection upon the acknowledged intelligence and sagacity of the papal hierarchy in the United States to suppose that they did not understand, from the beginning, the end the pope had in view, and the object he desired to accomplish. Their relations to him, and their dependence upon him for their official positions and dignity, require that there shall be no concealment between them. The kind of obedience they pay him renders it necessary that they shall furnish him with the most undoubted assurance that they are always ready to execute whatsoever lie shall command, in the domain of faith and morals, without stopping to inquire what human laws or institutions are in the way, except so far as it may be necessary to contrive some method to evade or over-leap them. All this is required by the official oath taken by each of them. By it they create an allegiance to the pope considered higher and more binding than any earthly obligation. It obliges them to be "faithful and obedient" to him; to "defend and keep the Roman papacy and the *royalties* of St Peter;" to do whatsoever they can to "*increase*" the papal "privileges and authority," and to "persecute and oppose" all "heretics, schismatics, and rebels" who shall stand in the way of making "the rules of the holy fathers, the apostolic decrees, ordinances, or disposals, reservations, provisions, and mandates," the foundation upon which all human institutions shall rest. (For the "Bishop's Oath," See Appendix A.)

These American prelates took the earliest occasion, after the appearance of the Syllabus, to show, not only that they fully comprehended its meaning, but that the pope's reliance upon their fidelity to him was not misplaced. In this extraordinary document it is asserted, with dogmatic brevity and terseness, that it does not appertain "to the civil power to define what are the rights and limits within which *the Church* may exercise authority;" that its authority must be decided upon by itself, that is, by the pope, and exercised "*without the permission and assent of the civil government*;" and that, "in the case of conflicting laws between the two powers," the laws of *the Church* must prevail over those of *the State*. ("The Pope's Syllabus," Articles 19, 20, and 42. See Appendix D.)

Here, every thing is plain nothing equivocal. The subordination of the State to the Church, and the substitution of the papal hierarchy for the people in enacting and enforcing such laws as the pope may think necessary for the Church, are distinctly and emphatically asserted. There is no room for misconstruction of the language. And it must be observed that the pope is speaking alone of civil "rights and limits," and the authority which "the Church may exercise" in reference to them; that is, over that class of *temporalities* holding the Church to be, in these respects, above the State, and having the right, as its superior, to command and enforce obedience. It requires but a moderate share of intelligence to see that the principle here asserted is in direct antagonism to the theory of American government, and that, if established, it would violate one of the cherished provisions of the Constitution of the United States and of the Constitution of every State in the Union. The American hierarchy understand this perfectly well. Whosoever else may shelter themselves behind the plea of ignorance, they can not. And yet this knowledge imposed no restraint whatever upon them, in the expression of their submissiveness and obedience to the pope. They considered themselves as owing their first and highest allegiance to him, as the representative of "the *royalties* of St. Peter," and did not hesitate to avow it: of all this, they have themselves furnished the most satisfactory evidence.

## **THE SECOND NATIONAL COUNCIL.**

The second National Council of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy of the United States met at Baltimore in October, 1866 nearly two years after the Encyclical and Syllabus were issued. It was composed of seven archbishops and forty bishops, besides a number of the superiors of religious orders, and was presided over by Archbishop Spalding, of Baltimore, as "apostolic delegate" representing the pope, and thus giving to the assembly as much weight and influence within its jurisdiction as if the pope had been personally present. In theory it represented the great body of the Roman Catholic laity in the United States; practically, it took no note of them or of their opinions. It was assembled for a special work to respond to the Encyclical and Syllabus; and it did it, to the "great comfort and consolation" of the pope. It would have been unnatural for him to have felt otherwise at thus seeing the ranks of the papal army closing up, and at knowing how well he had succeeded in inaugurating a conflict between the imperial dogmas of the papacy and the fundamental principles of American government.

## **CONFLICT WITH CIVIL INSTITUTIONS.**

In the pastoral letter issued by this Council, the relation of the Roman Catholic Church to the government and laws of this country is discussed. There is a tone of ecclesiastical authority and command employed by its authors which tends to show an impression existing in their minds that they were addressing an auditory not accustomed to question their authority or controvert their propositions. Hence, they proceed, without indirection, to lay it down as an axiom in the science of all government, not to be disputed, that the civil power is never absolute or independent. Inasmuch as "all power is of God," there must exist some delegated authority upon earth, which, representing God, must constitute the tribunal of last resort. Upon this tribunal alone all absolute power is conferred, no matter what the form of

government. If it be a monarchy, the king must be held in subjection to it; and if a democracy, the people must be taught that it is above them. With this as the beginning point of their theory, substantially expressed, though not in these words, they declare that obedience to the *civil* power of government "is not a submission to force which may not be resisted, nor merely the compliance with a condition for peace and security; but a religious duty founded on obedience to God, by whose authority the civil magistrate exercises his power." This power of the civil magistrate, being subordinate and delegated power, they insist, "must always be exercised *according to God's law*." And, therefore, "in prescribing any thing contrary to that law, *the civil power transcends its authority, and has no claim on the obedience of the citizen*" because it "never can be lawful to disobey God;" or, as a necessary and logical result, those to whom, as custodians of his power on earth, he has delegated the divine right to govern. Founding their theory of government upon this idea, they proceed to show how differently the principle operates in "the Catholic system" and in the Protestant system. In the latter, according to them, "the individual is the ultimate judge of what the law of God commands or forbids;" while in the former, "the Catholic has *a guide in the Church*, as a divine institution, which enables him to discriminate between what the law of God forbids or allows;" so that when the Church shall instruct him that any particular law of the State is contrary to God's law, he is thereby forbidden to pay obedience to it.

According to the Protestant system, in their opinion, the State is exposed to disorder and anarchy, because the authority by which it is governed has no warrant for its character as divine. The reverse they insist to be the case in the "Catholic system;" and, therefore, because it has this divine authority in the Church and not in itself, "*the State is bound to recognize*" the Roman Catholic Church as the sole depository of the delegated power to "decide what laws shall be obeyed and what disobeyed; for the obvious reason that the world, in order to obey God, must recognize that Church that is, the pope and his hierarchy "*as supreme* in its sphere of morals, no less than dogmatic teaching."

It requires no pause for reflection to see how directly a "Catholic system" of government, thus constructed, would conflict with the existing civil institutions of the United States. Nor do we need a prophet to tell us that the establishment of such a system here would be followed by their immediate destruction. To permit a church any church to decide upon the validity or invalidity of our laws after their enactment, or to dictate, beforehand, what laws should or should not be passed, would be to deprive the people of all the authority they have retained in their own hands, and to make such church the governing power, instead of them. Yet, understanding this perfectly well, and, evidently, contemplating the time when they might possibly be able to bring about this condition of affairs, these papal representatives directly assail a principle which has been universal in all our State governments, from their foundation; that which regulates by law the holding of real estate by churches and other corporations, and requires them to conform, in this temporal matter, to the statute-laws of the States. To this there could be no reasonable or just objection, had they invoked the rightful power to change,

alter, amend, or even to abrogate the obnoxious laws, for this would have been only the exercise of the admitted right of free discussion, secured as well to them as others. But they, manifestly, had no such idea in view, inasmuch as, according to them, that method of procedure belongs to the Protestant and not the "Catholic system" of government.

To exclude the impression that they design to look to any other authority than that of the papacy for the relief they seek, they take especial pains to say that they "are not as yet permitted legally to make the arrangements for the security of church property which are *in accordance with the canons and discipline of the Catholic Church!*" that is, that the canons and discipline of their Church, issued from the Vatican at Rome, by the pope and Roman curia, are not permitted to override and nullify the laws of the States! The plain import of this is, that all the laws of the States concerning the rights of the Roman Catholic Church, and regulating the manner in which it shall hold and enjoy property, have "no claim on the obedience" of the Roman Catholic citizen, because they are not "in accordance with the canons and discipline of the Catholic Church" and the papal decrees. Such a system of government, put into practical operation, would amount to this, that conformity to the "canons and discipline" of that Church would be the test of all laws, and none would be binding except those pronounced obligatory by the pope. The "divine right" of the pope to govern the people, through his hierarchy, would be fully recognized, and the right of self-government would be at an end.

The right of holding real estate and accumulating large wealth, after the manner of the Roman Catholic Church and monastic orders of Europe, the American hierarchy regard as of so much importance to the success of their ecclesiastical organization, that this Baltimore Council declared that to withhold it is to deprive their Church "of a necessary means of promoting the end for which she has been established." They declare that "she can not accept" the principles upon which the American laws are based "without departing from her practice from the beginning," because "they are the expression of a distrust of ecclesiastical power." And, to leave no doubt whatever about their meaning, they insist that the States have no more right to impose on their Church "a system of holding her temporalities, which is alien to her principles," than they have to "prescribe to her the doctrines she is to teach;" and they solemnly enter their "formal protest" against all such legislation, notwithstanding the laws they protest against in all the States, and embody a principle deliberately considered and approved by the American people. (\*)

\* Mr. Jefferson, in his opinion upon the constitutionality of the first bank of the United States, considered the principle of the English statutes of "mortmain" as among "the most ancient and fundamental laws of the several States." But these statutes have not been adopted generally, in all their rigor, in this country. The States are content to limit ecclesiastical and other corporations in the amount of their estates, and to subject them, in the ownership and enjoyment of property, to their general laws.

## PAPAL AUTHORITY PREFERRED.

It is incompatible, they say, "*with the full measure of ecclesiastical or religious liberty*" to deprive them of the right of holding whatsoever amount of real or other property they may acquire in the United States, by purchase, devise, or gift, and of *governing it by laws of the pope's* or their own enacting, independently of the laws of the States, to which all Protestant churches and people pay cheerful obedience; thus showing that they would have each archbishop within his episcopate, and each bishop within his diocese, and each priest within his parish, a temporal prince, with the scepter of royalty in his hands, although he might not wear its crown upon his head.

One would expect to see, in a document of this kind, a statement of some serious grievance against which relief was sought, something that would at least excuse, if not justify, the attempt to introduce into our government a foreign element of authority above the people. But the only "practical results" complained of are, first, the taxation of their church property; and, second, an attempt made by the State of Missouri, after the end of the rebellion, "to make the exercise of the ecclesiastical ministry depend on a condition laid down by the *civil power*;" that is, by requiring them to conform to the laws of the State, in furnishing evidence of their loyalty to the Government. From the nature of these complaints, it would seem that they were only employed as a pretext, merely affording them an opportunity of making known to the pope how cheerfully they responded to the doctrines of his Encyclical and Syllabus, and with what confidence he might rely upon them in doing their share of the work necessary to arrest the progress and advancement upon which this country had entered. (\*)

\* The pastoral letter of this Baltimore Council is, so far as I have been able to ascertain, the first document of the kind ever issued in the United States. I have deemed it proper, therefore, to give the text of it in the Appendix, together with the letter of the pope expressing his gratification at the promise of the council to maintain the ancient rights of the papacy, so that the reader can judge for himself whether or not I have misconceived its true meaning. See Appendix B.

The intentions of men are frequently made known far more satisfactorily by their surroundings, the contemporaneous events with which they are identified, the parties to which they are attached, and their connection with other individuals, than by the language they use. By reference to these we are furnished with a rule of interpretation which does not often mislead, although it is not altogether infallible. Therefore, when it is considered that these prelates who assembled at Baltimore recognize, to the fullest possible extent, their obligation of obedience to the pope; and when it is remembered that the pope had, but a little while before, announced his views of the relations which should exist between the Roman Catholic Church and civil governments, the conclusion is unavoidable that they desire the adoption, in this country, of their theory of government, based upon their ideas of the "Catholic system." To assign to them any other motive, after the distinct and emphatic avowals they have made, would be an impeachment of their integrity and sincerity; which is not designed. It is supposed that they occupy ground cautiously and deliberately selected by them, and are

fully prepared to take all the consequences which attach to their position. There is, at all events, no misunderstanding what they desire to accomplish. Nor should there be any misconception of the immense power they wield over multitudes of men in this country, in moving them backward or forward, to the right or left, as the pope shall direct.

## DOCTRINE OF SUBMISSION

We are not left in any doubt about the nature of the terrible struggle now going on between the modern nations and the papacy. These hierarchs at Baltimore comprehended it fully, when they entered upon an explanation of the difference between the Protestant system of government, with the people as the source of civil power, and the "Catholic system," with the pope as its only source. Having voluntarily yielded to the papal pressure by the frank avowal of their preference for the latter; and having no excuse, on the plea of ignorance, for not understanding what it has hitherto done for the world, **they must be considered as desiring to see the Christian nations, including the United States, carried back to the condition they were in when the papacy was at the zenith of its power;** when kings were ignoble enough to lay their crowns at the feet of the pope; when popes disposed of kingdoms at their pleasure, by imposing or releasing the obligation of allegiance, as the reward of fidelity to themselves, in the one case, or of disobedience, in the other; and when ignorant fanaticism and superstition were so universal that the Christian world dreaded nothing so much as the terrible thunders of excommunication. Why should anybody wonder that Pius IX. was gratified to see things going in that direction; and, especially, to see such flattering signs that the most liberal and advanced nations might become the first to turn back, and thus enable him to gain in them what he had lost where the "Catholic system" had been on trial for centuries? He would have possessed less sagacity than is assigned to him, had not the promise of these faithful subordinates to vindicate all his asserted prerogatives excited in his mind ardent hopes and flattering expectations of the future of the papacy. He could easily see that they were ready and willing to defend the theory which he considers the chiefest among all the fundamentals of government; for no matter what the form of government, whether monarchical or republican, it makes him its absolute and independent ruler in all things belonging to the domain of faith and morals.

The avowal is plainly made, in support of this theory, that submission to civil authority is founded *alone* upon obedience to God, and is not to be obeyed when otherwise! Therefore, it is proposed that the Roman Catholic citizen of the United States shall be carried along, step by step, in the following process of training for the duties of citizenship: he shall be brought to recognize his Church as the *only* custodian of God's law; that the pope is infallible, and therefore, as the vicegerent of God, has plenary and sole power to interpret that law, and can not err in its interpretation; that he shall find his only "guide in the Church" in deciding whether he shall obey or disobey the civil laws of the state; that the pope is the infallible representative of all truth in the world, and infallibly employs all the power and authority of the Church; that, as he can not err in any thing concerning faith and morals, he must, in their domain, be implicitly obeyed;

that, as the pope is infallible, as the chief instructor in doctrine and duty, his prelates are also infallible as his subordinate workers; that the pope, as he shall speak through the mouths of these prelates, must be obeyed absolutely and uninquiringly—all his utterances being taken as the voice of God, coming directly from his throne in the heavens; and that infamy in this life and eternal damnation in that to come will be the inevitable doom of all who shall impiously reject these teachings.

A citizen thus trained, disciplined, and humiliated would become, necessarily, a mere machine in the hands of superiors, who would allow him to obey those laws only which the Church—that is, the pope—should decide to be consistent with the commands of God; and would require him to resist and oppose those which should be decided to be otherwise.

If the laws requiring the Roman Catholic Church to hold property in subordination to them, and in the same way that Protestant churches do, are forbidden by God's law, as interpreted by the pope and placed in the canons and discipline of that Church—as the Baltimore Council declarers—they must be swept out of the way or violated with impunity, so that the Church itself, and all its monastic orders, and all its societies, may hold property to an unlimited amount, and make all the laws which shall govern its acquisition and enjoyment, without any regard whatever to the legislation of the States or to their rights and dignity! With this achieved, the hierarchy would be far along upon the road that would lead them to their **final triumph—the mastery over the people**. The pope, as the source of all authority in the Church, would put forth his royal edicts and decrees in regard to their church property in this country, prescribing how they should acquire, hold, and enjoy it, and these edicts and decrees would take the place of all our State statutes upon that subject! This would build up at Rome an imperialism that would reach out further over the world than did that of the Caesars, and might become far greater and more injurious to mankind.

### THE POPE'S MEANING.

When the pope was informed of the assembling of this council, and the obedient spirit it exhibited, he caused his cardinal secretary to dispatch an answer expressive of his apostolic joy and satisfaction. He directed the facts to be published in the official journal of his court, "for the edification of his Roman people and the faithful at large;" so that they, who had been striving after a government founded upon their own consent, could realize how ready the people of the United States were to give up such a government, in exchange for one constructed upon the *paternal plan* which prevailed at Rome, under his pontifical auspices. And, seemingly aroused to the highest point of rejoicing at the work the Encyclical and Syllabus had thus far accomplished, . he declared that his mind was excited by the hope that, by means and through the influence of what the council at Baltimore had done, "*a new impulse and continued increase to religion in the United States will result.*"(See the pope's dispatch; Appendix B.) What the pope meant by this may be derived from the fact that the cable dispatch sent to him by the archbishops and bishops who composed the council, expressed only their wishes for his "long life, with the preservation of *all the ancient and sacred rights of the Holy See.*"(Appletons' "Annual Cyclopedic," 1866, p. 678.



See Appendix B.)

There was no reference to any of the ordinary dogmas of religious faith, as there could be no doubt about their fidelity to them. There was no agitation in the Church rendering such reference necessary. The issue made by the Encyclical and Syllabus between the papacy and the progressive modern nations was the only one which immediately concerned the pope and the Church. This involved the existence of his temporal power, which the Italian people were only then prevented by the presence of French troops from taking away from him. Consequently, when they declared their desire to see "all the ancient and sacred rights of the Holy See" preserved, the pope was at no loss to know what they meant. He understood them as endorsing all the claims he had set up in the Encyclical and Syllabus, including that of temporal and ecclesiastical sovereignty, and his right to require that the civil governments of the world should conform to "the canon laws and discipline" of the Church. Therefore, the idea he intended to convey was this: that the religion which had received a "new impulse" in the United States was that which taught the subordination of all civil governments to the Church and the papacy! It was not the true religion which was exemplified in the life and example of Christ, and which has its foundation in universal charity and love; but that which places the pope above all kingdoms and peoples, and requires every human being to pay him homage and fidelity.

The facts before him tended naturally to draw from him the rapturous' expression of his hope. To see his followers in the United States stepping so hastily into the front rank of those who were ready to battle for the "*ancient*" rights of the Holy See—when kings, under the idea of "divine right," received their crowns from the popes—must have excited in his mind the most profound gratification. One can readily suppose that, in his pontifical enthusiasm, he looked forward, exultingly, to the time when governments and constitutions and laws—would be reconstructed so as to conform to the papal model, and when there would be snatched from the hands of the people, wherever they possess it, the power to make their own laws, or to enforce any which he or his successors shall declare to be contrary to faith and good morals.

To an old man of kind heart and generous sympathies, it must be terribly crushing to see such bright hopes and flattering anticipations suddenly dashed to the ground, as were those of Pius IX. after they had been thus excited, when Rome, by the act of the Italian people, became their capital. Shall the tide of retrogression, thus arrested in Italy, by a Roman Catholic population, be permitted to set in again in the very heart of the Protestant nations?

#### **ANTAGONISM OF THE TWO SYSTEMS.**

The reason assigned for the preference of the "Catholic system" over the Protestant is the incapacity of the people to govern themselves, and to take care of their own civil affairs—an argument as old as tyranny. The Baltimore Council tell us that by recognizing, as we do in this country, "an authority" to govern, "which has no warrant for its character *as divine*, and no limits in its application," the nation is exposed to "disorder and anarchy;" and the

concession to the Roman Catholic hierarchy of the right to separate their property from the mass of that belonging to other churches and people, and to govern it by their own laws, or by the canon laws of Rome, is demanded upon that express ground.

With these prelates, Protestantism thus tends to the disruption of the whole social fabric, because it confers upon each individual the right to decide what shall be the form of his religious belief, or whether he shall have any; and conducts all civil affairs without referring it to the pope, or his ecclesiastics, or to any church authorities whatever, to decide what laws shall be obeyed and what resisted.

The issue is a plain one—easily perceptible to the most ordinary comprehension. The two systems stand in direct antagonism with each other. The Protestant has separated the State from the Church; the papal proposes to unite them again. The Protestant has founded its civil institutions upon the *will of the people*; the papal proposes to reconstruct and found them upon the *will of the pope*. The Protestant secures religions freedom; the papal requires that every man shall give up his conscience to the keeping of ecclesiastical superiors. The Protestant develops the faculties of the mind by inciting the spirit of personal independence and manhood; the papal crushes out all this spirit by its debasing doctrine of passive obedience and submission. The Protestant has put the world upon a career of progress and prosperity; the papal desires to arrest this career, and turn it back into those old grooves which have led so many nations to wreck and desolation.

The issue is made between these systems in so bold and manly a manner, that its authors are entitled to that consideration which the possession of high moral courage always excites in generous minds. They can, therefore, have no just cause to complain of either intolerance or persecution, if, finding ourselves in the possession of free and popular institutions, which we have solemnly declared to be inalienable, we shall employ like courage in their defense; or even if, in maintaining their integrity, it shall become necessary to point out the contrast between these opposing systems to the extent of showing that the Protestant and popular system was necessary to lift the world out of the corruption and degradation into which the papacy had plunged it.

If it is a species of hallucination to suppose that such institutions as we possess are better suited to our condition than any that the pope, as "King of Rome," or any of his ecclesiastical subordinates, or any ecclesiastical tribunal whatever, would be likely to substitute for them, we are not yet quite prepared to see it dispelled. If we abhor kingly or papal imperialism, or imperialism in any of its variety of forms, and cling to institutions established in the face and in defiance of it, we should be unfaithful to our convictions, and unworthy our position among the nations, if we did not rebuke, in fit and indignant terms, any attempt, by whomsoever made, to fetter us with its chains, or to plant its iron heel upon our necks.

#### **VIGILANCE NEEDFUL.**

He must be stone-blind who does not see, in the light of these and other

facts occurring almost daily, that Protestantism has been formally arraigned by its vindictive and unrelenting enemy; that it has been put upon its trial before the civilized world; that judgment of condemnation has already been pronounced against it; and that the arm of the executioner is only stayed until the limbs of the victim can be so tightly bound as to make its resistance unavailing. Its open adversary and accuser is the papacy, which, unwilling to submit to the necessity that has wrought out its own defeat among those who are most familiar with its enormities and oppression, now assails it courageously, but impudently, in the citadel of its greatest strength. The loss of his imperial crown in Rome has dispelled the joy of Pius IX., and driven him into a frenzy of excitement and passion; and, availing himself of the license afforded by the tolerant spirit of American laws and institutions; he is rapidly transferring his best drilled and disciplined militia(\*) to the United States; and, claiming to be clothed in the robes and with the authority of divinity, he demands, in the name of Deity, that we shall bow down before him in passive submission, and accept his commands as if uttered by a voice from heaven.

\* When Pope Pius VII. re-established the *Jesuits*, after their suppression by Clement XIV., he called them the "*Sacred Militia*" of the Church.

We, who believe that Protestantism is sheltered by Divine care, must not remain unresisting under an attack so immediate and formidable, nor sit still while a judgment may be taken, by default, against us. A commanding sense of duty requires that we should look this haughty and imperious adversary full in the face, understand his machinations, strip him of his disguises, unravel his plots, and meet him at every point of attack. If we shall remain insensible to any of the obligations of this duty, now that the battle-cry is sounding in our ears, it may be too late after the storming-party has mounted the walls of our fortress, pulled down our flag, and planted that of papal and ecclesiastical absolutism upon the grave of popular institutions.

What does Protestantism mean? What necessity gave it birth? What has it done for mankind? What would be the condition of the world if it were destroyed? These are questions we should not fear to discuss, and which we are bound to discuss, now that it is denounced, in our very faces, as *heresy* and *infidelity*, and we are insolently told that duty to both God and man requires its total extermination, and the erection of a "Holy Empire" wheresoever its principles prevail and its institutions exist. We must not sink into indifference, nor, permit the fear of consequences to slacken our exertions in a cause of such transcendent importance to ourselves and our children. If our fathers had been easily intimidated, we should have had no such government as we now possess. If we shall prove less courageous than they, the heritage they have left us may not pass to many generations of our descendants. Some of the proudest governments of the earth have already fallen; there are none that may not fall.

This is not called a Protestant country because religion, in the Protestant sense, is established by law, or has any protection given to, it which is not equally extended to all other forms of religion—Roman Catholic, Jewish,

Mohammedan, Brahminical, Greek, or Chinese. No such preference could be conferred by law under our system of government; for it would so essentially and flagrantly violate its fundamental principles that it would be instantaneously destroyed. By these principles, upon which the whole superstructure has been reared, every citizen—no matter whether native-born or naturalized—is fully and equally protected in the personal and individual right to maintain, in private or public, whatsoever religious faith, and to practice whatsoever form of religious worship, his own conscience shall approve, no matter what degree of absurdity it may involve. No reasonable man should desire a higher degree of religious liberty than this. It gives to our form of government a distinguishing characteristic, found nowhere else in so eminent a degree, until the people of the United States entered upon the experiment of self-government. It stamps our institutions with their Protestant character, and distinguishes them, in a conspicuous degree, from such as have existed in those countries known as Roman Catholic, where no such toleration and liberality have ever existed, and no such experiment has been tried.

#### **OUR INSTITUTIONS PROTESTANT IN FORM.**

No intelligent reader needs to be told that the religious controversies of Europe gave rise to the term "Protestant." In its original application to those controversies it had a distinct religious meaning—as at the Diet of Spires, in 1529. But as they were of long continuance—through and subsequent to the great Reformation of the sixteenth century— and Protestants were compelled to concert some measures of escape from the oppression and persecutions which arose out of the union of Church and State, and the consequent claim of the "divine right" of kings to govern the world, it acquired, in the course of time, a different and more comprehensive signification. Protestant Christianity was understood to involve the right to protest against the corruptions and exactions of the Roman Catholic Church, to withdraw from communion with it, and to worship God in other forms than those prescribed by its discipline. It encountered, therefore, from that Church and its ecclesiastical authorities —then almost supreme over the Christian world—such position as it found itself without power to resist, unless it could find shelter, somewhere, under the protection of law. This was obtained, to some extent, after severe and protracted struggles, under the laws of Great Britain, Germany, and Holland; and yet, even in those comparatively free countries, it had many difficulties and impediments to overcome before it could acquire perfect freedom. **Its only formidable adversary, during all its struggles, was the papacy, which was ever ready to plunge the pontifical sword to the heart of its victims.**

The original emigrants to the United States brought with them from Europe the principles of Protestantism, mingled somewhat with the less liberalizing principles of Romanism; and, although for a while the effects of the habits of thought they had thus acquired were exhibited in the practice of religious intolerance, they united, in the end, in the creation of a government entirely freed from this taint. They gave up their intolerance in order to secure the perfect triumph of Protestantism, in its most comprehensive sense; and when our National and State governments were organized with the principle

of toleration at their foundation, our civil institutions, became also, necessarily, Protestant in form; because they contain the amplest guarantees for both religions and civil freedom.

The idea conveyed by the common expression "*the Protestant religion*" is generally misunderstood. Religion signifies a "system of faith and worship;" true or false according to the stand-point from which it is considered. To us the Christian religion is true, while those of the Hindus, Chinese, and Turks are false. Nevertheless, the systems of faith and worship which prevail among the Hindus, Chinese, and Turks are only so many forms of religion. Protestantism is not a religion in this sense, for it recognizes no system of faith and worship to the exclusion of others. It is only another form of Christianity, distinct from those which existed in the world before its origin. It is altogether proper, when speaking of the Church of England, to say the "Protestant Episcopal Church," because, at its organization, after the Reformation, it assumed an attitude of open antagonism to the Church of Rome by protesting against its errors, But neither that nor any of the other churches which have originated since the Reformation can justly demand to be known as "*the Protestant Church*." There are a number of Protestant *churches*, each representing its own form of Protestantism. Taken as a whole, they "may be regarded as different developments of one and the same Protestant principle." (Dr. Dormer, "History of Protestant Theology," Introduction, p. 11.) Therefore Protestantism, in so far as it has a religious aspect, represents all these churches; that is, Protestant Christianity is liberal and comprehensive enough to embrace them all. It goes even further than this, and recognizes the Roman Catholic Church as a Christian Church, and its religion as only a different form of Christianity from itself. (**Note:** I would not call the Roman Catholic Church a Christian Church. I call it Roman pagan religion with a Christian face.)

## **FREEDOM THE OUTGROWTH OF PROTESTANTISM.**

But Protestantism does not alone include Christianity and religion in these senses; it has other aspects. In its proper signification it embraces "*the whole offspring of the Reformation*;" (*Ibid.*, p. 2.) that is, all the principles, civil as well as religious, to which the Reformation gave birth. These principles have been at work, upon both individuals and governments, ever since the Reformation, and such has been their influence, that "the countries of the Reformation are the theater of the greatest work of God which has taken place since the days of the apostles." (*Ibid.*, p. 6.)

The leading cause of the Reformation was "a sudden effort made by the human mind to achieve its liberty, a great insurrection of human intelligence." (Guizot, "History of Civilization," vol. i., p. 257.) It had to contend, therefore, against every thing which put restraint upon liberty, whether found in Church or State; so that Protestantism, in taking its distinctive form, became the principle out of which all the existing guarantees of religious and civil freedom sprung. It saved religion by separating it from the corruptions of the papacy, and thus providing for the world a purer-and better form of Christianity; it saved society by breaking the scepters of kings and popes, and elevating the people to the point of asserting and maintaining their natural right to liberty. Consequently, Protestantism, by

diffusing new thoughts, ideas, and principles, has so influenced individuals, societies, and governments, that now, in the nineteenth century, its results are seen in all the civil and religious institutions existing among Christian peoples. Wherever there are freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press, they are exclusively of Protestant origin and growth. These involve no religious sentiments, but are mere civil rights. Yet they are rights which are included in Protestantism; because if it were destroyed, they would be also.

And thus the term "Protestantism" has a twofold signification, embracing whatsoever has grown out of the Reformation, in both Church and State. So it is regarded by the most distinguished authors who have endeavored to point out the philosophy of the Reformation. Even the Roman Catholic Archbishop Spalding, who presided over the Baltimore Council, has entitled his greatest work "The History of the Protestant Reformation," and has devoted it to the discussion of the influence of Protestantism on society, on civil liberty, on literature, and on civilization, as well as on doctrinal belief, morals, and religious worship. He who does not comprehend Protestantism in all these aspects fails to comprehend its real meaning, and will have poor conceptions of the differences between it and Romanism. If there were but a single difference—consisting merely in matters of religious faith—the field of controversy between them would be greatly narrowed, and would be occupied alone by the theologians. But they are, in fact, two opposing systems, as stated by the Baltimore Council; and this opposition is no less in government than religion.

In the formation of their National and State constitutions the American people designed to embody the means of preserving to themselves and their posterity all those fruits of the Reformation which are represented by Protestantism. They intended to give fuller development to its principles, and surer guarantees for their preservation, than they had before received. Hence, when we speak of this as a Protestant country, of our institutions as Protestant, and of ourselves as a Protestant people, we should be understood as conveying the idea that, in the affairs of both Church and State, we have chosen to abandon the old papal system, and to establish one more in harmony with the genius of our people, because it gives the best guarantee ever yet afforded to the world for perpetuating those great principles of the Reformation, by means of which the minds of men became free, and the shackles of civil tyranny were stricken from their limbs.

Whether mankind have lost or gained, or whether the world has moved backward or forward, under the influence of the institutions we have thus formed, are questions which, with us, need no discussion. We, at all events, cherish the belief, and teach it to our children, that under no other form of civil institutions found in the world are mankind so well protected in every just and proper right, or made so capable of advancing their own happiness and prosperity, as they are under ours. We confidently, and somewhat proudly, assert for our Protestant principles of government a superiority over those of the monarchical form; and congratulate ourselves that mankind are gradually coming to the realization of the idea that only by means of them can civil and religious liberty be fully secured and preserved.

Are we right or wrong in cherishing these opinions? in supposing that freedom is preferable to bondage? in maintaining that a government of *the people* is better than that of an emperor, or a king, or a pope, or an ecclesiastical hierarchy? and that no privileged classes are born into the world ready "booted and spurred" to govern and debase mankind by "*divine right*?"

## **PIONEERS OF LIBERTY.**

Other governments, besides ours, have been founded on the popular will-on the right of the people, as the source of civil power, to prescribe their own form of institutions. Before the Christian era, the Romans and the Spartans recognized the efficacy of the doctrine that "the safety of the people is the supreme law;" but they were unable to secure its establishment, as a distinctive and permanent feature of their governments, because they failed to cultivate that sense of personality out of which grow the virtue and intelligence necessary for the support of popular institutions. Unfortunate, however, as their failure was for the world, the avowal of the principle gave rise to influences which were never entirely destroyed. The idea of government upon which they unsuccessfully experimented struggled along through succeeding centuries-even through the Middle Ages- awaiting a favorable opportunity for ultimate and complete development. It has always had many able and zealous defenders in the countries considered the most enlightened; but they have been kept down by the governing classes, who employed the combined authority of State and Church to intimidate and subdue them. This combined influence was, for a long time, sufficient to hush almost every murmur of complaint against misgovernment, except among the few who dared to defy it, at the hazard of their lives. Now and then one of these intrepid spirits appeared, and flung his censures into the very teeth of royalty; and if he paid for his boldness by the forfeit of his life, others of like courage arose to take his place; and thus the line of patriotic succession was kept unbroken. They were few in number, but enough of them to keep the fires of liberty aflame, so that they might flash in the eyes of royalty. The world would, centuries ago, have been turned over entirely to cruel and exacting task-masters, and sunk into utter political darkness, but for the bravery of these defenders of popular freedom. Comprehending the true philosophy of government, they maintained that every man in a free state ought to be concerned in his own government, and that the legislative power should reside in the whole body of the people, (Montesquieu's "Spirit of Laws," vol. i., p. 154. ) to be exercised by representatives responsible to them; and that, in order to support and preserve this theory of government, each individual should be allowed to speak his own thoughts, employ his own reason, and consult his own conscience in reference to all matters concerning his duty to God.

The great difficulty which so long lay in the way of impressing these sentiments and principles upon the governments of Europe, grew out of the compact and unbroken union of State and Church-a union which found its only means of preservation in the denial and in the violent and forcible suppression of every kind of popular and political freedom. The antagonism between these opposing principles was too irreconcilable for compromise, and the stronger party prevailed over the weaker, the kings and popes over the

people. But the framers of our institutions escaped this antagonism only by the occupancy of a new and remote continent, and, therefore, were perfectly free, without any immediate fear of it, to make the principle so happily expressed by Montesquieu the basis of their political action and organization. In the Declaration of Independence they asserted it, by declaring that, in order to secure "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," it was necessary that governments should derive "their just powers from the *consent of the governed*; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the *right of the people* to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

### **SUPERIORITY OF REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS.**

This act of independence is esteemed to be one of the great events in history, and has commanded the admiration of a very large portion of the civilized world. It did not create a government, but asserted the right of the people, as distinct from that of kings and princes-whether of State or Church, or of high or low degree-to establish and maintain one of such form and structure as, in their opinion, was most conducive to their own "safety and happiness." Those who assail this great principle-whether they be native born or adopted citizens-deny the wisdom and impeach the integrity of the founders of the Republic. They aim their blows at the central column upon which our national edifice has rested for nearly a century, in the face of opposition from all the allies of monarchy.

Has the time come when this edifice shall be permitted to fall, or these blows be continued with impunity? They know but little of the temper of our people who suppose that they may not be pressed too far upon a question of such vital importance. Within its proper sphere they have assigned to each department of their government its own appropriate functions in making, interpreting, and executing the laws. Above and beyond, and higher than all these, they have retained the sovereign power in their own hands. They will allow their reason to be appealed to in favor of new laws, and the change or abrogation of old ones, without any exhibition of intolerance on account of differences of opinion. They live, and their intelligence and patriotism are increased, in the atmosphere of free discussion. But when the effort is seriously made to snatch this sovereign power from them; to dwarf them into inferiority before a foreign potentate; to exact from them obedience to laws enacted without their consent; to erect an ecclesiastical tribunal in the midst of them, answerable only to laws of the Roman curia; and to surrender up the inestimable privilege of self-government; then toleration ceases to be a virtue and becomes a crime.

If the people of the United States, in the progress of their history, have demonstrated any thing, it is that such institutions as require the least degree of force and coercion are best adapted to improve and elevate mankind. And they who pretend that the proper supremacy of law is inconsistent with such institutions are either ignorant or insincere, and unworthy, in either case, of being entrusted with their management. No political institutions can be safely given over to the care of those whose principles and sentiments are



in antagonism to them. Monarchism can not mingle with the principles of a free republic. Liberty and slavery can not exist together. The people can not govern in their own right, where ecclesiasticism governs in the name of "divine right."

The science of government involves, necessarily, the proper administration of law, as well as the making of law; for so long as mankind remain under the dominion of selfishness and egotism, law, in some form of restraint, must continue to exist. Christianity and civilization, with all they have done for the world, and all their discoveries, improvements, and elevating influences, have not yet raised man so high, or made him so near the angels, that he can be safely left to the full dominion of his passions. Consequently, governments have no more important problem to solve than that involved in deciding how far to apply the restraints of law, and in what manner to apply them, consistently with a proper degree of individual and political liberty.

The supporters of those governments where the sovereignty of the people is denied, and where nothing but force is relied on to secure the administration of law, make a great and radical mistake. They seem incapable of realizing the fact that law can only constitute a just and proper rule of action when it is made responsive to a pre-existing public sentiment; in other words, when it is adapted to the condition of the society to be governed by it. In the absence of this, all laws must remain inoperative and ineffectual, unless force is invoked to compel their execution. When the fundamental laws of a country-that is, those embodied in its civil and political institutions-are thus framed, there must, necessarily, be an entire absence of popular liberty. Thus, in a monarchy where the principle of popular representation does not exist, and the people are not consulted about the laws, obedience to them is enforced by some superior power, and fear alone restrains resistance. But in a republic like ours, where virtue and intelligence are stimulated by the structure of both government and society, the fundamental laws are not only executed, but preserved, without force, because they have their foundation in the consent of the people. Therefore, under monarchical absolutism, the citizen feels but little sense of personality; while in the freedom of a republic he feels it in so high a degree as to develop his manhood, and cause him to realize the individual interest he has in continuing the institutions which secure to him both defense and protection.

#### **IMPERFECTIONS OF MONARCHICAL LAW.**

All mankind derive from nature the right to be free, and whatever restraints are put upon this right by law are only such as the interest and necessities of society require. Those who share in society consent, in return for its protection, to be governed by such laws. Hence, popular liberty does not proceed from law, is not the result of it. Wherever it is found in written statutes, it is there because the people have risen up to the point of asserting it against the antagonism of monarchy; of snatching it from the hands of those who deny it to them, and would retain the means of withholding it, by defeating all its civil guarantees. It is the expression of their political faith, the avowal of their determination to exist as a society or a nation freed from all the restraints of arbitrary power. Hence, it is truthfully said that "liberty does not dwell in the palaces of kings." It is

equally true that it exists in the heart and conscience of every free man. In this sense, it is a personal and inalienable right which each man must assert for himself. In a broader sense, it belongs to a whole community; and each individual of a community is under the same obligation to assert and maintain it for those who share it with him, as for himself. It thus becomes a political right, requiring combined action to continue its existence. When, as the result of this combined action, political institutions are formed, to provide for its preservation, as in the United States, they, necessarily, exclude all idea of force, and rest upon the "consent of the governed."

Sometimes-as in the granting of Magna Charta and other charters by the English crown-governments profess to have conferred liberty. But, viewed properly, this is an absurdity; for to assert that a government has the right to confer or withhold it as it pleases, is to deny its existence under the law of nature. All these are familiar truisms; but it is because they are true, and their truth is recognized in every heart, that they give birth to the "'firm and resolute spirit with which the liberal mind is always prepared to resist indignities, and to refer its safety to itself:"

Where the form of government is an absolute monarchy, laws proceed from the sole and independent will of the ruler, whether he be called emperor, king, or pope, and rely wholly upon force for their execution. But where the form is republican, or democratic, as with us, no such force is required, because the obedience of the citizen springs from his own consent. Between these two opposing systems of government, our Revolutionary fathers were obliged to make a selection. That, in choosing the latter, they acted wisely and well, every man who is worthy of free citizenship will maintain. Their example has already shorn monarchy of much of its strength, and it is not the time now, when absolutism is trembling in the presence of popular representation, to abate our veneration for their memory, or our affection for their work.

Some of the leading nations exist in an intermediate state between these two forms. They have united the representative with the monarchical principle, but only so far as to make some unavoidable concessions to the popular sentiment of liberty, and not far enough to recognize its just and proper measure of influence upon society, or entirely to dispense with the presence of force. These governments have advanced somewhat from a condition of absolutism; some of them less readily and rapidly than others, accordingly as fear of the people has been weaker or stronger in the minds of their despotic rulers.

To trace out and observe the influences produced upon the world by these opposing systems of government, and to understand the nature and extent of their results, furnishes to the thoughtful mind a true conception of the philosophy of history. In the pursuit of such an inquiry, however, the friends of free popular government must not concede to the advocates of absolutism that the times in which we live are suited for additional experiments in the art of governing, in order to decide which form of political institutions is most conducive to human happiness. These experiments have been already and sufficiently made, and all of them combine to prove – what this philosophy of history teaches – that the freer and more popular the government, the happier and more prosperous are the people. In

such governments, where civil institutions are established for themselves by an intelligent and virtuous people, force is never required to secure the execution of the fundamental laws. Where there is a power superior to the people to prescribe the law, so much force is always necessary that liberty can not exist in its presence.

The people of the United States have nothing to fear or to lose by the closest scrutiny of their institutions, especially in the light of the lessons of history and past experiments in government. The unbiased judgment of the civilized world, in the absence of the fear of coercive authority, will agree with them in the opinion, that the form of government which gives the greatest elevation to society is that in which all the fundamental laws reflect an intelligent popular will. Therefore, we may well regard such a form as central among the governments of the earth, as the sun is the center of the planetary system. We may extend the figure one step further, without the exhibition of an undue degree of national vanity; for if the light which it sends out over the nations were obscured, it would inevitably lead to the complete triumph of imperialism, as all nature would be darkened if the light of the sun were extinguished.

#### **PASSIVE OBEDIENCE AND MONARCHISM.**

Accordingly as we are the advocates of absolutism or of popular government, we will condemn or approve the theory of American government. The absolutist insists that each step in the departure of nations from the monarchical form is receding that far from the true point of national elevation; that it is an abandonment of legitimate authority; that it is passion, vertigo, delirium, madness, the excess of unlicensed and destructive revolution- a blind exercise of the mere physical power to do wrong, in violation of the divine law. With him, the fewer who direct the destiny of a nation and control its government, the better, because, by keeping the multitude in subjection, they hold them to the steady line of duty. Unlimited dominion on the part of the ruler, and passive obedience on the part of the people, are, with all the supporters of absolutism, the *ne plus ultra* (the highest point) of government. Of those who reason thus, there are two classes- the masters and the slaves. The latter are so disciplined into subjugation by the former, that they seem incapable of comprehending the nature and extent of their degradation, and suppose themselves to be relieved from the galling of their chains, or to be compensated for its endurance, by the belief that their servitude is the highest and noblest exhibition of fidelity and duty. The former maintain their superiority with an entire disregard of the humiliation they create, and cling to their ideas of human and national advancement, in the face of the present condition of the world, as if they regarded ambition the highest motive of the mind, and its gratification the greatest of all human achievements.

Socrates, probably, had both these classes in his mind when he said, "That every master should pray he may not meet with such a slave; and every such person, being unfit for liberty, should implore that he may meet with a merciful master." If all the world were divided into these two classes, monarchy, secure of its place upon the papal and other thrones, would have an easy time of it, for there then would be only the oppressor and the oppressed

– “the oppressor who demands, and the oppressed who dare not resist.”

Fortunately for us and the world, the framers of our institutions belonged to neither of these classes. By their training in the school of Protestantism they were endowed with the courage to defy both the authority and machinations of those who claimed the “divine right” to govern. Their careful study of the history of nations enabled them to comprehend fully the necessities of their condition. They had realized how abject mankind had become in those countries where Church and State were united, and, with this experience to guide them, signaled their efforts to frame a new government by dissolving this union, as an unnatural and corrupting one. Ecclesiastical tyranny and intolerance were finally expelled, and Protestantism reached a degree of development for which it had been struggling for more than two hundred years.

Thomas Jefferson took an early opportunity to congratulate the people of the United States upon their “having banished from our land that *religious intolerance* under which mankind so long bled and suffered,” and, under the sanction of his official position, declared that among the great principles which “guided our steps through an age of revolution and reformation” were those which inculcated “the diffusion of information, and *arraignment of all abuses at the bar of public reason, freedom of religion, freedom of the press.*” And he addressed to us this admonition:

“The wisdom of our sages, and the blood of our heroes, have been devoted to their attainment: they should be the creed of our political faith, the text of civic instruction, the touch-stone by which to try the services of those we trust; and should we wander from them in moments of error and alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps, and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty, and safety.”

James Madison, when officially declaring the purposes for which our government was formed, enumerated among them the duty “to avoid the slightest interference with *the rights of conscience*, or the functions of religion, so wisely exempted from civil jurisdiction; to preserve, in their full energy, the other salutary provisions in behalf of private and personal rights, and of the freedom of the press.”

These sentiments were not alone expressed by these great statesmen. Words of like import were uttered by many of their compatriots. They were but the echo of those existing in the minds of the people, and were embodied in our national Constitution, in these words:

#### **PRINCIPLES THAT MUST BE PRESERVED.**

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Upon such foundations as this, the superstructure of our government now rests. So long as these principles shall be preserved, the Government will

stand: whenever they shall be abandoned, it will fall. They must, therefore, be guarded with the same ceaseless care as that with which we guard our lives. For we have no more right to lose by neglect, than we have to strike down with the sword of rebellion, the civil and religious institutions of a free people.

Continued in [Chapter III. War against Protestantism Part 1](#)