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THE FOUR CORNER-STONES

OF

THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC.

A SERMON,

Preached on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 29th, 1877,

IN THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, DOVER, DEL.,

BEFORE THE

Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian Congregations,

BY

REV. C. HUNTINGTON,

Pastor of the Presbyterian Church.

The following preamble and resolution was unanimously passed at a meeting of the Official Board of the M. E. Church, held in Dover, Del., on the evening of November 29th, 1877:

WHEREAS, In our judgment, the Thanksgiving Sermon of the Rev. Cyrus Huntington of the Presbyterian Church, preached in our church this morning before the Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist congregations, is worthy of a wider circulation; therefore,

Resolved, That the Rev. Mr. Huntington be requested to furnish a copy of his sermon to be printed in papers of as wide a circulation as possible.

J. H. CALDWELL, Chairman.

S. McGONIGAL, Secretary.

In behalf of the Elders of the Presbyterian Church, I heartily concur in the sentiments of the above preamble and resolution.

JOHN A. NICHOLSON.

In behalf of the Baptist Church, I endorse the above, and can say for myself that I heartily approve of it.

B. G. PARKER.

Psalm xiv. 6.—The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea I have a goodly heritage.

The American Citizen may well adopt the language of the Psalmist, when he thinks of his own land. For the all-beholding sun in his daily circuit shines upon no land more pleasant than this. And wherever he may go, he finds contrasts which make him prouder and fonder of his country—

"The wandering mariner, whose eye explores
The wealthiest isles, the most enchanting
shores;—

Sees not a realm so bountiful, and fair,
Nor breathes the spirit of a purer air."

But I do not propose to speak particularly this morning of our indebtedness to the Great Giver of every good and perfect gift, for these bounties of his hand which contribute mainly to our physical and social welfare. They are so obvious and so numerous that it is neither possible nor necessary to recount them. They are spread in unexampled profusion all around us. Our land is full of plenty—the fruits of the earth were never more abundant, the treasures of our forests and mountains are inexhaustible. The soft showers of Spring, the Summer sun, and the snows of Winter contribute alike to our wealth. Every ship that enters our ports is loaded with the productions of other climes—American industry and enterprise meet with their full reward. And within a very few years the inventive genius of Americans has added more to the grand total of the world's wealth than any century of its history. Our exemption from those national evils which are the scourges of mankind is no less remarkable. The famine and pestilence which even now, while I am speaking, devastate other lands, do not come nigh us. For all these blessings of a kind Providence we cannot be too thankful, but they do not necessarily constitute the elements of national prosperity. They may be, and are now, perverted and abused. There are other lands as fertile as

our own, and other skies as fair: "where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile." The influence of soil and climate on national character is very great. Where the skies are always soft, and the earth yields an abundance without the labor of man, effeminacy will characterize the people. But where amid the rigors of a Winter climate, they are compelled to gain their subsistence from a rocky soil, or from the stormy sea, you will find a hardy race, with sinews strong as steel and souls which despise danger. Luxury and ease are unknown to them—amid their mountain fastnesses Liberty always finds her last refuge, and there her standard will always float—

"With nature's impregnable ramparts around
her;
And the cataract's thunder and foam at her feet."

This is Freedom—but it may be only the freedom of lawless men who simply exult in the absence of restraint—the freedom of fierce barbarians, who will descend like an avalanche from their native hills upon the peaceful inhabitants of the valleys below to plunder and destroy. Thus Attila, the Hun, in the 5th century, with his mounted warriors, swept from the frozen North, across the rich plains of Southern Europe, leaving devastation and ruin in their track. Such freedom to trample on the rights of others has always been the curse of nations.

"For what avail their unexhausted stores,
Their blooming valleys, and their sunny shores,
With all the gifts that Heaven and Earth impart,
The smiles of nature, and the charms of art;
While fierce oppression in those valleys reigns
And tyrants grasp the products of their plains?"

Those qualities which are the true elements of national greatness are altogether of a moral character. They have their source in ideas of justice and right which are innate—ideas, therefore, not unknown to the great oppressors of mankind, but altogether disregarded by them—for they neither fear God nor regard man. But these are thoughts which continually

dwell in the minds of the oppressed. They are every now and then reasserting themselves in the history of the world, and embolden men after centuries of slavery to rise, and break their chains on the heads of their oppressors. How thrilling are the pages of human history which record their struggles for liberty! What courage and fortitude, and noble disregard of self, shine in the lives of these martyrs to the truth of God whose blood was never shed in vain. To such men and women who counted not their lives dear unto them in the cause of humanity, we owe our heritage of freedom. The traveler from the granite hills of New Hampshire crowned with snow, to the orange groves of Florida, where even now the roses of Summer are blooming, is among a people bound together by the strongest ties of kindred—under the same government—and sharing alike the privileges of the same institutions that are absolutely free—the goodly heritage bequeathed to us by those who laid their foundations in tears and blood. A century of education in the principles of Constitutional liberty has already demonstrated by the severest trials, that the American Union cannot be divided. Our Republic gradually rising to a proud pre-eminence among the nations of the earth, stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific; and from the Northern lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. “No pent up Utica contracts our powers, but the whole boundless continent is ours.” But it is not its vast extent which constitutes its greatness; nor its agricultural and mineral wealth—nor its manufactures, nor its inventions—but the intelligence and morality of its people. These are its real foundation—and its Corner-Stones are, a free Church; a free Government; free Schools, and a free Press. And I will speak first of a free Church, because the Church is the simplest form of human society—it was established in the family of Adam—it was the original and only form of human government. It is still the highest form of government because its laws are directly from God who is the Lord of the Universe—it was at

the beginning absolutely free, because its forms of worship were of divine appointment. And its Law, the law of God written on the Conscience. In process of time its laws and mode of organization were written in the Bible. And that book is as well authenticated, as the history of the race, as any history can be. The Church, as a form of government, was sufficient then for all the purposes of society; and it is still. If all men would obey the laws of God, from the heart, there would be no need of any other form of government. If the precepts of the Bible were obeyed, in the spirit of them, there would be no need of any other law-books,—no need of Legislatures, nor Courts, nor Judges, nor Sheriffs, nor Jails, nor armies, nor navies, nor forts, nor cannon. And so it shall be, when He, whose right it is, shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Now, that Church is the nearest to being absolutely free, which comes nearest to the divine standard, because then its government is administered upon principles of truth and righteousness with the least admixture of human selfishness. These principles held absolute sway in the soul of man when he was created in the image of God. “He is the free man whom the truth makes free.” That Church is the nearest to being free, in which every thing not expressly stated nor ordained in the Word of God, is left to the individual conscience. That Church is the nearest to being free in which the Gospel is preached without money and without price, and the support of the ministry depends entirely upon the free will offerings of the people.

And that church is the farthest from being free, in which the commandments of men usurp authority over the Word of God. That church is not at all free, in which the Bible which contains the only constitution of a free church is kept from the people, so that they cannot tell what their rights and duties are, but must depend altogether upon such an interpretation of it as may suit the designs of those ecclesiastics who hold them in

bondage. No such charge can be brought against the Protestant Church; for the constant appeal of the Protestant clergy is to the Bible itself and to their hearers to search the Scriptures for themselves, to see if these things are so. In all these respects the American Church is not only free, but, apart from its directly religious influence, it furnishes an amount of instruction from its pulpits, by way of illustration, and information, which is perfectly free to all who wish to hear; and which could be conveyed to the masses of the people in no other way—for such a means of education, we of all people, have the most reason to be thankful.

Let us now go back in the history of the world, and we shall easily see in what way men lost the prerogatives of self-government by losing their respect for the law of God. In process of time the church became corrupt, because men “did not like to retain God in their knowledge.” But man being by his very nature a religious being was compelled by the necessities of that nature to retain the forms of religious worship, while he had lost the spirit of them. His conscience no longer recognizing the authority of God, acted in a limited sphere, and her voice for a time feebly remonstrating against injustice and crime, was at last hushed in the silence of a moral death. Thus originated all the religious systems of the heathen world, pompous enough in their idolatrous rites and ceremonies; but bearing a painful and degrading testimony to the fact that men had lost a knowledge of the true God. Yet also did they bear an indirect testimony to his actual power and Godhead, in the fact, that even their cruel sacrifices furnished abundant evidence that they were derived from the first mode of worship which God gave to man. Thus the vast and imposing systems of heathen mythology were spread over the ancient world, and still retain their power through the ignorance and superstition of the people. And we must not forget that the chief elements of the power by which the priests of

these religions kept the people in bondage, was their assumed prerogative of controlling the future destiny of their worshippers. It was this which invested all their rites and ceremonies with a mysterious awe. This was the essential link in that chain with which they bound the consciences of men to their despotic thrones. Whenever men are conscious of guilt then they desire forgiveness and seek it by penances and sacrifices. In their ignorance of the true way of forgiveness through the great sacrifice of the Cross, they will even outrage the tenderest instincts of nature by giving their first-born for their transgression, and the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their souls. This fact fully explains the terrible tyranny of the Church of Rome, for so many centuries, over so large a portion of Christendom. That Church, becoming corrupt through the lust of worldly power, so soon after the time when Christ said to Pilate “My Kingdom is not of this world,” and grasping after all the kingdoms of this world, has always used the guilty conscience of man as the engine of her despotism. From her priests the wicked purchased indulgences for every crime—and if any dared to assert that God alone is Lord of the conscience, their reward was the dungeon and the rack. The heart sickens, and our nature revolts, as we read on the blood-stained pages of history, what cruelties and crimes have been perpetrated in the name of Christianity, and for the pretended purpose of spreading the doctrines of the Prince of Peace. How could men so long submit to these things? The only answer which history can give, is, that they were deprived of the Word of God. Now here is a question for the statesman, and the philanthropist. What would become of us if the blasphemous infidelity of the day should overthrow the institutions of the Bible, under the pretence of seeking a greater freedom? Is the nature of man capable of any other alternative than that of the freedom of that Book, or the bondage of superstition? Infidelity is altogether a negative thing. Its power is only that of

taking away, and giving nothing in return. Destroy the restraints of God's Word, and you bring back the slavery of the dark ages by an inevitable law of nature. We are permitted to live at a time, and in a country where the church is as free as it was when Christ founded it; and simply because the truths of the Bible reach all persons, and pervade the entire structure of society—how can we be sufficiently thankful that the Word of God is no longer bound? Now, though the statement may seem paradoxical, that church is no more free which lords it over the state, than if it bowed to its authority. It might be said, with some plausibility, that if the church confers such blessings upon mankind, then give her unlimited power to compel their obedience to her mandates. Merge the civil into the ecclesiastical power; let the church rule and all will be well. Upon general principles this would seem to be the case—but it is not so in fact—the church is composed of individuals very far from being perfect. Entrust the church with civil power, and the Bible will again disappear. Was the Church of Rome free, when she held the sceptre of almost unlimited temporal power, and every monarch of Europe was at her feet? When King John of England was excommunicated by Pope Innocent III. and the English nation absolved from all allegiance to him. When the people were forbidden to bury their dead, which were thrown into ditches, and no religious services permitted in the churches, until King John submitted to the Pope. When Henry the Emperor of Germany having been excommunicated by Pope Gregory VIII. went to Rome in the middle of Winter, and stood three days barefooted and bareheaded in the open air, with only a woolen rag thrown around his body, until he had done penance for presuming to think that he had a better right than the Pope to govern his own people. Was the Church free when her mitred dignitaries sat in the temple of God, as God, and held in their bloody hands, not the sceptre of Immanuel, but the fagot and the

sword? Not unless by liberty you mean unbridled licentiousness, and disregard of every right that is dear to man. It was not the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free, when, enthroned upon the seven hills, arrayed in purple and scarlet, and "drunken with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus," she lighted the fires of the Inquisition, and tolled the midnight bell of St. Bartholomew's.

In our beloved land, the nature of that authority which belongs to the church, and of that which belongs to the State, are well defined, and the limits of each distinctly marked. The church seeks not, but rather repels the patronage of the State. Nor does our civil government ever undertake to interfere with the ecclesiastical arrangements of the churches. The pulpit is placed under no surveillance. The ministers of all denominations are free to preach the truth, and they do preach it. With the rare, and almost insignificant exception of a few crack-brained preachers, who seek to bewilder and confound their hearers with exploded theories raked out of the rubbish of the dark ages, there is poured forth from tens of thousands of pulpits every Sabbath day a volume of moral and religious truth whose influence upon the destiny of this nation cannot be estimated by any mode of human computation. We can say that this is an influence for our political, as well as our eternal salvation, because it is the same truth which has always made men free. There are some Christian people who deprecate the progress of free enquiry, and are afraid that modern science, falsely so called, is sapping the foundations of Christianity. I do not sympathize with them. They need not go mourning all their days on this account. Let them "walk around Zion, mark well her bulwarks, and tell the towers thereof." The idea of attacking Christianity in the name of science, is one to provoke laughter. Christianity is the most extensive, and noblest of all sciences. A science, so rich in facts, that all other sciences are poor in comparison. The theories of the

evolutionists are builded upon data, which you can almost count upon your fingers. Professor Watts, of Belfast, Ireland, has so completely demolished the atomic theory, in a little pamphlet of thirty-three pages, that it is as good as a play to read it. Spencer, and Tyndall, and Huxley disposed of it in thirty-three pages duodecimo; it reminds one of David and his sling. No, no, let them hammer away at the walls of Zion—they may do some good by knocking off the excrescences which mar her beauty, but they have not even reached the solid adamant beneath. The Church of Christ is still in process of building, and much scaffolding is being used by the workmen upon her walls. These men think that the scaffolding is the building, and they lay hold of one of the poles that support it, with dire intent, as Sampson hugged the pillar in the temple of Dagon, and lo! they are on their backs with all the rubbish rejected by the builder, upon them. It is only in this way that scientific infidelity can be said to be looking up. We would not stop their enquiries by force if we could. We exult in the fact that the freest enquiry will only bring light out of darkness and truth out of error. Besides, it is contrary to the spirit of Christianity to fetter even the tongue of the blasphemer. The day of Inquisitions and of Anto Da Fes is past. It would not make a free church, to cram the truth down a man's throat at the point of the sword. The church that uses such means to destroy error, is so far from being free, that it is henceforth the slave of circumstances and expedients.

Out of a free church springs—2. A free Government—all impartial history testifies to this fact. Such historians as Bancroft, and Froude, and Motley, have spread upon the pages of their immortal works the evidence of the same. Where was there any constitutional liberty in Europe, until the voices of Luther and Knox declaring that the truth of God could alone make men free, were heard in the Protestant Reformation, awakening an answering echo in thousands of hearts which had long groaned under

tyranny, but had not dared to speak? There never has been any successful struggle for civil liberty which did not originate in this truth. It is the recognition of all power and authority as residing in God which fired the hearts of these great reformers, and nerved their arms to strike the disenthraling blow; and gave their voices a power which thundered against the thrones of despots till they fell.

Let us never be deluded with the plausible but infidel doctrine that human government is a mere social compact in which the people agree that the majority shall govern. I know that this doctrine seems to be taught in the Declaration of Independence where it says that "governments derive their just powers from the governed." But what powers have the people which they can delegate to their rulers, or retain and exercise themselves? Have the majority of the people any power to abolish the eternal distinctions between right and wrong? Can they, even by unanimous consent, invest those, whom they have chosen to administer the government, with the authority to legalize any species of crime? And why not? Because the authority of any government is derived not from the consent of the governed, but from the law of God. Whenever the idea entertained by some, becomes universal, that the people means the majority, then farewell to Constitutional Liberty. The true political theory of government is that the minority have rights which cannot be disregarded. It was the truth that God takes care of the minority, and will protect them in their rights, which emboldened the Barons of England to demand of King John the signing of Magna Charta. These noblemen builded better than they knew, or desired, for while the concessions of Magna Charta were mainly sought for their own benefit, they secured for all an administration of justice, before unknown. The authorship of this remarkable document must be assigned to men who knew how to wield both the pen and the sword. And although it dates back three hundred years before the Protestant Reformation,

yet one great dignitary of the English Church shares, with an equally distinguished nobleman, the honor of its production. It is altogether likely that if Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, had not found in the Bible which even then lay chained in the chancel of his Cathedral, the principles of Magna Charta, it would not, at least, have been, what Hallam calls it, "the Keystone of English Liberty." It is this provision for the rights of the minority which is the essence of free government. There must always be a minority, and there is no safety for them but in the regard of the majority for the law of God. Our representative form of government is the most complete check to usurpation on the part of the majority which political wisdom has ever devised. While from the necessity of the case it gives to the majority the power of deciding who shall be entrusted with the exercise of that authority which is derived from God, it also provides in the ballot box an effectual remedy against the abuse of power on the part of our rulers. Effectual, however, only so long as the people are pervaded with the spirit of religious liberty. Could the substance of this be secured, without our present form of government, the form would not be so material. Indeed a numerical majority of bad men, would only subject us to many tyrants instead of one. When Oliver Cromwell inaugurated that revolution which cost King Charles his head, he had no idea of even changing the form of the English government, but only of surrounding it with such constitutional guarantees as would secure the rights of the people. He knew that they were not prepared for a purely representative form of government, nor are they now, nor will they be so long as hereditary rank and title confer privileges of which the masses are deprived. Cromwell would have been well content with Constitutional Monarchy. But when he had marshalled all the elements of that revolution, he found that he had evoked a storm of wrath against the king which he could not control. And the justification of the same is written in characters

still legible through the storms of two hundred years at the mouth of "the Cave of the Regicides" in West Rock, New Haven, Connecticut, "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God." There must be an authority superior to the will of the people, to which the majority and minority alike bow. The only such authority known to man, is the revealed will of God. And so we come back to the truth stated at the beginning, that the church is the foundation of civil government. And here, too, the Church and State come together in spite of our fears,—for we are all very much afraid of a union between Church and State, and justly so,—when history teaches us that from the day when the Israelites asked God for a king,—and got one, till now, the union of Church and State has been an unholy alliance, productive of injury to both. But there are relations which they sustain to each other by means of which the prosperity of each may be promoted. And this depends altogether upon the education of the people in knowledge and virtue.

So then we come 3d, to our Free Schools as one of the corner-stones of our Republic. In these our future Statesmen and Legislators must learn the first principles of liberty. They are really a provision of the State for its own perpetuity. Self-preservation is the first law of Nature. The whole theory of Public Instruction is a theory of self-preservation. Upon this theory alone, can taxation of the people for the support of the public schools be defended. Why should a man who has no children, be taxed for the education of other people's children any more than for their food and clothing? Simply because it is the right and duty of the State to educate its citizens in those things which will qualify them to be safely entrusted with the destinies of the Republic. And if this is so then the State has the right to make that education compulsory. Upon this theory the excellent system of Public Instruction in Prussia is conducted. But nothing is permitted to be taught in these schools which is inconsistent with monarchical

ideas. The children of Prussia learn in their public schools some things which are not taught in ours, but they cannot learn in them the cardinal doctrine of liberty, that the people have a right to choose their own rulers. If monarchs who depend in a great measure upon hereditary prerogatives, and aristocratic institutions, for the perpetuation of their power, are wise enough to see, that besides these, it is necessary to instil ideas favorable to monarchy into the minds of the young, how much more should we, who depend altogether upon the intelligence and virtue of the people for the preservation of our liberties, require such education by law? This theory secures its own limitations in practice, from the very nature of the case. How far can the State carry taxation for this purpose, without being unjust and oppressive? The answer is plain enough, if we keep the aforementioned purpose in mind. Public Schools are not benevolent institutions. The children are not educated in them, at public expense, in order that they may be better qualified to make money, or indulge in the pursuits of literature, science, or art. The simple object which the State has in view, is to make them sufficiently intelligent and virtuous to become good citizens and upholders of our free institutions. Therefore if it should be proposed to teach in them other languages than the English; music; or the fine arts; or a scientific course; the people might justly remonstrate against being taxed for such a purpose, and say that it is not necessary that the children of the Republic should be taught music and the languages, in order to their becoming good citizens, and the remonstrance would be well founded. Still it must be admitted that the instruction of the people has a reflex influence which is continually raising higher and higher the standard of public education. Consequently as the nation itself advances in intelligence and moral character, a higher, and still higher education may be required for those into whose hands all the prerogatives of self-government will soon come. So that the line of discrimi-

nation between what should be, and what should not be taught in our Public Schools is a most difficult and delicate one to draw. It is however cause for congratulation that the popular views upon this subject are becoming more and more liberal, and that the introduction of new studies into these schools is looked upon with more favor than formerly. This springs out of a proper national pride. We desire that our public education should be inferior to that of no other country; but rather that it should offer superior advantages. And what the people are willing to pay for, in this regard, they should have. As in other matters, so in this, it is their privilege to elect to office those who represent their views. There is however an impression prevailing in some quarters that insomuch as the people pay for the support of public schools, they have a sort of right to interfere with their arrangements, and dictate with regard to the studies pursued, or the teachers employed. This is a mistake. The whole matter of Public Schools must be one of municipal control. Like all other institutions of the State they are under the regulation of law. All the officers of the Government are by the very choice of the people placed in an authority which elevates them far above the shifting demands of the popular will. And this rule holds good through all the departments of a representative government. If these views of Public Education are correct, then the question whether the Bible shall be excluded from the public schools is easily answered. It becomes a question not more of the rights of the people, than of the duty of the State. If it is the duty of the State to educate its citizens in the true theory of self-government, then it must teach them those principles of morality and religion upon which that theory rests. And the Bible is the only book on the face of the earth in which they can be found. It is a mere subterfuge to say that compilations may be made of such truths of the Bible as bear upon this point, and the rest excluded. No human being is competent

to make such a compilation. No compilation of any kind would satisfy the opponents of Christianity. The truths of the Bible like those of every other science must be taught in their connections in order to be taught fairly. If Atheists and Infidels say that the State has no right to teach religion, we reply that the State has a right to teach anything which is required for her safety. Our free government rests on the doctrines of the Christian religion, and it is not only the right, but the duty of the State to teach that which alone will perpetuate our form of government. Our political institutions have their origin in protestant Christianity, and it is the most unblushing effrontery in those who come from other lands, and enjoy here the blessings of Civil Liberty, to ask that the very book which is the magna charta of our freedom, should be excluded from our ~~Public~~ schools. Our Public Schools are a greater benefit to us than can well be expressed in words. The amount of taxation required for their support is an insignificant sum compared with the advantages which they confer. And among ourselves the sums thus raised, are expended with the strictest economy. There is no equal amount of labor, performed by any other class, in the employ of the public, for so small a compensation as that performed by the teachers in the Public Schools. Yet some think that those who teach only five or six hours a day, for five days in the week, earn their salary very easily. But the continued mental strain of six hours teaching, is more exhausting to the whole physical power than ten hours of manual labor. We have reason to be proud of the Public Schools of this town. Under their present efficient management they have reached a grade of instruction which is making its influence felt in the surrounding country. Quite a number of the country schools are now being taught by the graduates of the Dover Public Schools, a thing unknown, till within the last few years. You should look upon the teachers in our Public Schools as public benefactors, and not be too ex-

acting in your demands upon them. There is another class of Public Schools, which sparkle like gems of beauty, all over this wide land, in the beams of every Sabbath morning's sun. They are not under the control or patronage of the State, but without them, I am afraid that the State would die. They are not the church, but are under her maternal care, and in them hundreds of thousands of young and tender minds are taught by loving and patient teachers the priceless truths of the word of God. When we think of all these children, with their clean clothing, and happy faces, wending their way each Sabbath morning to the Sabbath Schools, some in little buildings perched on the sides of the western mountains, some nestling in the valleys where the sound of the church-going bell has not yet been heard; it seems a sight to make the angels smile. Infidelity which does not hesitate to lay its sacrilegious hands upon the Bible, and profane the sanctuary of the most High, seems to spare the Sabbath School; whether through awe or admiration I cannot tell—perhaps for very shame at the thought of defacing so sweet a picture of youthful innocence and piety. Ye Sabbath School teachers, persevere in your pious and patriotic work. Your pupils are the hope of the church, of the country, and of the world.

And what shall I say at last about 4, the Public Press, that mighty engine of political and religious influence which thrusts its sheets still quivering with the excitements of the day into every hand? When we think how often it is prostituted to unworthy purposes, while still evading those laws which are enacted for the protection of the public morals, we might for a moment stand in doubt whether we should be glad that it is in this land absolutely free. But the fact that the press is the mouthpiece of public opinion—that is the only way in which we can learn what are the conflicting views of all sorts of people upon subjects of public policy, makes its freedom indispensable to that end. There is nothing beneath the Almighty which comes

so near to being omniscient and omnipresent as the public press. There is nothing whose ceaseless activity so nearly approaches that of the forces of nature. It is truly a faithful watchman over our national interests, ever ready to sound the alarm when those interests are in danger. Where the press is free there never can be any widespread conspiracy against the rights of the people. Indeed, since the ingenious invention of interviewing, no public man is safe from investigation. That which a well trained newspaper reporter cannot get out of him is not worth knowing. Besides all this the profession of journalism now takes high rank in the intellectual world. Its members are educated in the severest school of mental discipline, and one too of the broadest enquiry, and in their treatment of the questions of the day they display an ability not surpassed in the halls of Congress, or in any deliberate body whatever. Such a body of men must wield a vast influence for good or for evil. But they come from the people, and will necessarily represent their views to a great extent, while at the same time by reason of their superior position, and advantages, they will mould their views in return.

The public press is the sun which sheds the commingled rays of political, religious, and scientific intelligence upon our daily path. Truly it shines for all—and we should be as thankful for its light as for that of yonder sun in the heavens. These are the corner-stones of the American Republic. A free church, a free government, free schools and a free pen, and glorious indeed is the building which is rising upon them, containing every element of strength and beauty which has ever challenged the admiration of men. The American Union has been subjected to the last and greatest strain, in the shock of civil war; and not only has it survived the shock, but the rapidity with which it is recovering from the direful effects of such a war, shows how indestructible are these constituents of our Christian Civilization which we have been discussing. They are all found in the Bible, and nowhere else. There is no guarantee for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, but in this Book. Press it to your heart, on this Thanksgiving day, with grateful joy, for you hold there all the interests of your country, all the hopes of humanity, and the eternal salvation of the world.

