

U.S. F8

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.



A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED

IN THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AT HANSON,

ON THE FOURTH OF JULY,

1832.



BY F. FREEMAN,

Pastor of the 3d Church in Plymouth.



“Every enlightened and liberal man feels that the right of conscience in matters of religion, is the most dear and sacred of all rights.”

Prof. Stuart.

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”—*The Bible.*



PLYMOUTH, MASS.

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1832.



HANSON, JULY 5, 1831.

TO THE REV. F. FREEMAN.

DEAR SIR,

I am requested, in behalf of the citizens of Hanson, to tender you their thanks, for the able and eloquent Discourse on RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, by you delivered on the 4th of July, inst. before them, and request the favor of a copy for the press.

I am with due respect,

your obedient servant,

NATHANIEL COLLAMORE.

PLYMOUTH, AUG. 30, 1831.

DEAR SIR,

The Discourse delivered in Hanson, on the 4th ult. was first preached to my own people in a course of Evening Lectures in 1831, and was written without the remotest design of publication. Called at a late hour to address the good people of Hanson, on the same day that an Address on African Colonization was expected from me by the citizens of Plymouth, the Discourse on Religious Liberty was delivered without the opportunity for revision or amendment. It is now yielded, with much diffidence, at your request, in behalf of the citizens of Hanson. Parochial and other engagements have prevented my attending to the request at an earlier date.

I am, very respectfully, &c.

Your most obedient,

F. FREEMAN.

N. COLLAMORE, Esq.

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DISCOURSE.

NEHEMIAH, VI. 6.—“AND GASHMU SAITH IT.”

WHEN Nehemiah was engaged in rebuilding Jerusalem, he met with constant and violent opposition, notwithstanding he was moved to the work by the Spirit of God and encouraged by the King of Persia. Various kinds of art, threats, and even force where it was practicable, were resorted to by the multitude of opposers that rose up against the people of God and the great work which He had directed to be done, to weaken their hands, and discourage their hearts, and hinder the work.

At the first, the opposers affected to treat the work of the Lord in which Nehemiah and his associates were engaged, with *contempt*. As is written, “They laughed us to scorn and despised us.”

When affected contempt and derision would not avail, their opposers *threatened*; “What is this thing

which ye do?"—and represented their pious devotedness to the service of God according to his command, as *rebellion against the King*.

But this people were neither moved by derision, nor intimidated by threats. Other means must be employed. And amongst those means was this:—Sanballat and others associated with him in desires and efforts to defeat the pious duty and work of God in which Nehemiah was engaged, sent to him a *request* disguised under the mask of *friendship*, hoping thereby to divert him from the work and effect his ruin. Nehemiah, aware of their feeling and design, wisely declined their invitation, saying "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?"

This manœuvre failing, Sanballat and his party were anxious, they professed, to take hold and *build with them*. All at once, even they were desirous of building the walls of Jerusalem. But they had still the same unfriendly design in view. The people of God continued at their post of duty, and were neither turned aside, nor did they stop to engage in any thing that should retard the work.

Four attempts were made after this manner, and still the people were not to be prevented from obedience to God's command.

Then, sent Sanballat, in like manner, the fifth time, with an open letter in the hand of the messenger; wherein was written that it was REPORTED—that Nehemiah and those who, with him, were for

rebuilding Jerusalem, had some dangerous *conspiracy* against the State in view. “It is *reported* among the heathen, AND GASHMU SAITH IT.”

Having got up this report, and backing it with the declaration “GASHMU SAITH IT,”—(and who Gashmu was, nobody can tell,)—having got up this report, the next thing was to give it circulation. And if it could be spread abroad extensively, and be generally believed among the great mass of the people, that Nehemiah and his friends were aiming at the subversion of the liberties of the people; then, Sanballat and his party might confidently expect to succeed in putting down this ‘spirit of religious zeal and enthusiasm.’ Their misrepresentations would prejudice the public mind, weaken the hands of the pious Jews and finally work the overthrow of the cause of God!

They also charged Nehemiah with having appointed prophets, or preachers, “to preach (of himself) at Jerusalem, saying, There is a King in Judah.”

All this Nehemiah well understood; and keeping his eye on their purpose, conscious of his own innocence and that the cause in which he engaged was the cause of God; and now more than ever satisfied of this by the means used by the enemy to oppose this cause,—he simply, in the spirit of firmness, but of meekness, denied the charge, reproved their guilt and shame in resorting to such unworthy measures, and professed his continued attachment to the cause of God, and his trust in Him. “There are no such things done as thou sayest; but thou feignest them

out of thine own heart.” “Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.”

The subject proposed for this occasion, agreeably to previous notice, is

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

And I have chosen the words which you have heard, for my text, because they help, as I conceive, to illustrate appropriately and forcibly the manner in which, in this free country, RELIGIOUS LIBERTY has been, and still is generally and most effectually assailed.

There are, in this happy land, no inquisitorial dungeons; no Smithfield fires; no law which can authorise any one to lord it over another's conscience. But there are ways, notwithstanding, in which religious liberty may be, and often is assailed. And the means which are most effectual, and therefore oftenest employed, are referred to in our text: “GASHMU SAITH IT.” In other words, the means most frequently and effectually employed are MISREPRESENTATION, associated with *sneers, scoffs, ridicule, appeals to the selfish and unhallowed passions, and a determination to put down* (whether in business, in civil life, or in the enjoyment of those kind and amiable feelings that should ever distinguish a civilized and enlightened community) whoever has the mental independence that dares to think for itself; that sense of honour and mental right that scorns to be a slave; and that firm religious principle that says with Peter and John, “Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto (man)

more than unto God, judge ye ;” and which cherishes the feeling of Moses, “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the *reproach* of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.”

“There are,” (to use the language of another, however the Rev. Dr. Channing might have intended it,) “There are chains not made of iron, which eat more deeply into the soul. An espionage of bigotry may as effectually close our lips and chill our hearts, as an armed and hundred-eyed police. There are countless ways by which men, in a free country, may encroach on their neighbours’ rights.” And “in religion the instrument is ready made, and always at hand.”

When I speak of religious liberty, I mean the thing itself and not merely the name. And in all that I may say in support of religious liberty, I wish to have it distinctly understood that I have religious liberty itself solely in view. I have no reference to *party*. My remarks are not designed to apply to any man, or set of men, in particular ; to any denomination or distinctive name in particular : but are designed to apply wherever they may apply. The true religious liberty for which I would contend is the unalienable right, not of one sect, or of a few sects, but the unalienable right of MANKIND of every name and belief. And all that is opposed to this true religious liberty, wherever found, I do most heartily condemn.

I have the happiness, however, of believing and am well convinced, that the sentiments which I shall present, are the sentiments of the very numerous and respectable portion of the orthodox community in these United States, with whom I have the honour to be associated in my religious views and in christian fellowship. True, there may be anomalies in every community; especially in one so vast. And in what body are there not found individuals whose views and feelings it would be most unrighteous to charge upon that whole community after whose name they are pleased to call themselves? Who, because the perpetrators of the Salem tragedy were inhabitants of Essex County, would think of charging the respectable inhabitants of that County, therefore, with the feelings which prompted that deed of darkness and with a participation in its guilt? Who, because there may yet be found tipplers in this place, (I say *may* yet be found, for this respected and favored community may not be able to boast an exemption which none of our towns are yet able to boast,) will feel justified in accusing this highly respectable town with being a community of tipplers? Because some will persist in their shame, and have always on board a few gills of the waters of death, so that we can hardly pass them without inhaling the noxious effluvia which impregnates their every breath, and exudes from every pore, and pollutes the very air; it does not therefore follow that we are all "*particeps criminis*"—partakers in the crime. No community would acknowledge the

justice of a decision upon such principles; for then every community upon earth would find the verdict recorded against them. No denomination or religious society would be willing thus to be made answerable for the offences of its vagrants and excrescences. No family of any considerable extent would be pleased with the establishment of such a standard.

Let it not be supposed then, although individuals in many denominations may fall under rebuke as violators of religious liberty, that your Speaker supposes therefore that every denomination to which they may happen to belong are thus chargeable; nor although among some denominations, especially in some places, the instances may be very common,—nay, the infringement of religious liberty a general thing,—that he therefore supposes there are no individuals even there of an opposite spirit.

After these preliminaries, I trust that the remarks which I shall offer will not be misunderstood.

WHAT THEN IS TRUE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY?

I will humbly attempt to answer the question; and I have no apprehension but that the views which I shall present on this subject will commend themselves to the *conscience* of every rational man.

FIRST,—I would say, RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IS THE UNMOLESTED RIGHT OF A SPIRIT OF FREE ENQUIRY.

No enquiry can be presented to the consideration

of the mind of man, of more vital importance to his everlasting interests, than that question in religion, "What is truth?" Enquiry and discussion should be free as air. The mind should be laid under no restraint whatever. Not that we mean that no efforts should be made to obtain light and to disseminate truth. Light may be poured into the mind, and we should be ready to receive it. We should read and hear and investigate. And open to conviction by truth ourselves, we may seek in all proper ways to convince others; to reclaim the erring, to enlighten the ignorant, and to enlighten the enlightened, if we please, for truth is all-important. But all this should be by means that neither degrade and enslave ourselves, nor bring into bondage the minds of others. Let evidence be presented: but let the mind make up its own verdict. Let the opinion it shall form, be its own opinion.

True, a man may enjoy this religious freedom so far as relates to the influence of others, and yet may hold himself in bondage. He may do it by refusing, or neglecting to exercise this sacred and unalienable right of free-enquiry. "O," said one, (permit me, by fact, to illustrate this remark,) "*I have made up my mind long ago. I have read all about these things. Nothing new can be told me.*" That individual called himself — I will not say what he called himself. Nor do I mention the fact because he was what he was in sentiment; for there may be just such cases among those of the opposite sentiment. I mention it, as I said, to illustrate my previous re-

mark.—This individual would fain be thought a very knowing man. And so he was—very passable in matters of worldly concern, and well-read in all the novels of the day. But his Bible he knew but very little about. And he could not tell, if it were the salvation of his soul he could not tell his *own* religious views. He could not tell what is Unitarianism—he could not tell what is Calvinism, although he was always ready to sneer at every thing called by that name. He could state nothing correctly about any *ism* that he believed, or that he condemned. As ignorant in these matters as the child of yesterday, and yet swelling most complacently at the thought of his own superior light, and, like the mole, still burrowing in the earth, blind, blind, perfectly blind, he held himself in the most disgraceful mental bondage!

And here permit me to say, thus I do believe there are many, very many, who are bitterly opposed to ORTHODOXY, and yet know not what it is, and withhold themselves from a spirit of free-enquiry.

I have been mortified, as well as exceedingly disappointed, to find how extensively an utter ignorance prevails in respect to that faith which was the faith of our Fathers; while at the same time, that faith is so incessantly and bitterly opposed and spoken against. And yet such persons talk of ‘liberal views,’ and, it may be have learned to pronounce the words ‘free enquiry,’ notwithstanding they shut out every ray of light that might possibly enter their minds. And are there those of various and opposing

sentiments to whom these remarks may apply?—let them apply.

To enjoy true religious liberty, a man must neither be enslaved, nor enslave himself; but honestly, fearlessly, solicitously enquire, “What is truth?” Enquiry and discussion, I have said, must be free as air. And wherever an attempt is made to suppress free enquiry, whether it be by misrepresentation, by frowns, by ridicule, by flatteries, or by exciting to unworthy motives, there—let it be among what people it may—*there* is an attempt upon one’s religious liberty. And if we ourselves suppress free-enquiry in our own minds, the greater our shame.

I do not say, nor do I suppose that it is our duty always to be agitating every subject in Theology, as if the mind could never be settled. But it becomes us to have investigated the fundamentals of our religious faith as for eternity, and to be established in the truth. It becomes us surely to know what we believe, and to have good reasons for our belief; and to know what we reject and oppose, and to have good reasons for so doing. It becomes us to have some better reason for our faith, at least, than “GASHMU SAITH IT;” and some surer ground on which to charge those who differ from us, than, “GASHMU SAITH IT.” And yet, on no better foundation than this, do thousands rest all their belief, and here also find a plea for all their unbelief.

I would say,

2. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IS THE FREEDOM OF

CHOICE IN OUR RELIGIOUS VIEWS.

No man is to be called "Master" in this matter. And consequently, none are to "lord it" over the conscience, by obliging us to fall in with, or to acquiesce in their opinions.

That mind whose views are "passively formed by outward circumstances," not daring to follow the convictions of conscience, but cowering to the opinions of others, and subscribing to, or submitting to the creed of another, without examination and conviction, is a mind enslaved indeed. And he who designedly exerts over the mind of any man any other influence than that of moral suasion, is chargeable with an infringement of that man's religious liberty. And yet, how many, even of those who do in some degree investigate, have not the moral courage, to follow the dictates of conscience, the teachings of the word of God, and the leading of the Spirit; but are completely under the influence of the fear of the frown or the sneers, or under the influence of the desire of the good will of those to whom they make themselves subservient. They sell their religious liberty, their mind, their conscience, or rather offer it in sacrifice to propitiate the smiles of religious intolerance!

True: it may be that they who are masters of the consciences of these, exclaim against *creeds*; and profess that they themselves have none. But IT IS NOT SO. Any solemn profession of principles or opinion is a creed. Any religious sentiments, whatever, believed, are *the creed* of him who so be-

lieves. It matters not whether that creed be written on paper, or written only on the heart; whether it consist of one article, or ten or fifty. Every man who believes any thing in religion has a creed; and he who has no creed, has *no belief*. And it has been justly said, “a creed in the head or in the heart, is as influential as a creed on paper, and may be acted upon with as much zeal and perseverance” as any other. The hue and cry that is raised against creeds, is one of the many attempts upon our liberty. It is one of the many attempts that are made to destroy the religious liberty of those who dare to think and believe for themselves, guided by reason, and conscience and the word and Spirit of God, and who will not give up this sacred right to float upon the tide of popular error.

CREEDS! they have been well denominated “The indispensable elements of free enquiry”—the “moral landmarks between truth and error.” There is, and there can be no enquiry in religion which has not reference to a creed, or which does not go to the formation of a creed. What child does not see that the *result* of free enquiry (which is something believed) is *itself* a creed, necessarily, whether written on paper, or written on fleshly tables of the heart? Nor is this position correct only in religion. Where is the Statesman without a political creed? Where is the Judge without legal principles? Where is the civilized nation without some constitution or bill of rights? And we may with propriety ask, Where is the candour, the honourable

feeling, the republicanism, the christian spirit; or where, in one word, is a solitary principle or feeling consistent with religious liberty, in any sect, community, or individuals who reproach and condemn others for the exercise of that liberty which belongs to all; aye, that very liberty which they themselves practise!

Whose rights are encroached by creeds? Not the rights of those who do not subscribe to them? They are forced upon none. And they are open surely to the assent of those whose views they express. The summary of one's religious belief, why should they be concealed? Are they written? It is honourable to the openness and candor of those who embrace them. The honest, public avowal of religious opinion, they are then open for examination by all. If erroneous, the error may be shewn; if in accordance with truth, their correctness may be the more easily discovered, by means of the superior facilities afforded by a written statement for deliberate investigation and comparison with the word of God.

Is it said, 'But we want no creed—the Bible is to be our guide?' I answer, the BIBLE *is* our guide. It is an article in the creed of the churches of our Fathers, that 'the Bible is our only perfect rule of faith and practice.' We go to the Bible to *see what the Bible teaches*. And what we think it teaches, is our belief—our CREED; whether we are not ashamed or unwilling ingenuously to commit it to writing, or for some cause choose that it should not

be written. Do you who object to creeds, go to the Bible to know what it teaches?—and do you conclude that it teaches that all will finally be saved? or that our LORD JESUS CHRIST was a mere man, or, at most, a divine being and not the very GOD? And further, do you conclude that you find in the Bible those doctrines which are usually associated with these I have named?—*That, then, is your Creed.* You may write it, if you please; or you may not write it: still, *that* is your CREED—and, moreover, in your religious books and periodicals, that creed is fully stated and published. It is inculcated with becoming diligence and zeal, and advocated with the best ability of which its more prominent supporters are masters. And to exclaim against creeds, as many do, under these circumstances, is unworthy of honourable men. Nay, the hue and cry against creeds is irrational, as well as directly aimed against religious liberty, as much so as the hackneyed theme of the “Union of Church and State,”* and the thousand other kindred, ridic-

*The PHILANTHROPIST, an Unitarian semi-monthly publication, has the following candid and pertinent remarks to those of its own order, in regard to the cry of Church and State:

“The constant cry of “Church and State,” will do harm to the Liberal party. The cry will ere long cease to alarm; and then, if there be a party in favor of a union of church and state, they may move on unmolested, at least, regardless of all our solemn warnings, and strong appeals to the public. We but betray our folly, or our love of fault-finding, when we keep eternally harping upon ‘the dangerous movements of the orthodox.’—We make these remarks because we deem them called for.—There is need of caution in our charges upon any class of people. Charges of the appalling nature of those which are made against the orthodox should not be thoughtlessly uttered, nor repeated on slight evidence. We gain nothing when we accuse our neighbor of that of which he is not guilty; we gain nothing when we charge him with crimes which cannot be proved; we gain nothing by vague declamation and continual accusation.”

ulous, pitiable inventions, all supported by evidence no better than that we have named, "GASHMU SAITH IT."

This leads me to say

3. Religious Liberty implies not only free enquiry and entire freedom of choice in our religious views, but—THE FREE AND CANDID EXPRESSION OF THOSE VIEWS.

What would be the liberty of thinking and of believing, if after this, we are so in bondage that we cannot speak or act? What signifies it that we live in a free country, and hear much said of freedom, even of *religious* freedom, if we may not declare our trust in God, our views of His character, our views of the doctrines and precepts of His word, without subjecting ourselves, not only to the jeers and revilings of the debased, but to every unamiable feeling shewn by those who profess respectability and would fain be considered liberal? We are authorized to maltreat no one for the honest expression of his views. He is none the less our fellow-citizen and neighbour, possessing equal rights with ourselves and entitled to the same urbane and respectful treatment, whether he be a Christian or a Jew, a Turk or a Pagan—whether a Catholic, an Episcopalian, a Baptist, a Methodist, an Universalist, a Presbyterian, an Independant, or a Congregationalist—whether Trinitarian, or Unitarian, or Nothingarian. And all disrespectful treatment arising from such a cause, whatever that treatment be, whether simply hard

looks, or public or private slights, menaces, scoffs, ridicule, misrepresentation, impeachment of motives without cause, or whatever else that is discourteous, is the expression of a feeling which is diametrically opposed to true religious liberty, and is the offspring of a little, a very contracted mind.

Again,

4. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY implies also THE FREEDOM OF FOLLOWING THE DICTATES OF CONSCIENCE, CHOOSING ONE'S OWN MODE OF WORSHIP, ONE'S OWN PLACE OF WORSHIP, AND ONE'S OWN RELIGIOUS TEACHER.

It was for this religious liberty that our Fathers came to this land. And if we may, in any manner, be deprived of it, we are deprived of that fair inheritance for which our Fathers toiled and which they have bequeathed us. And yet, is it not true, that these religious rights are infringed in too many, in numerous instances?—Even when the influences of the Holy Ghost are shed down, convincing “of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come,” and converts to the cross of Christ are multiplied; especially if here and there are those who were once like the man of Tarsus, and from whose eyes the scales are now fallen, and of whom it may be said “but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,” and who with their present views and feelings, old things having passed away and all things become new, cannot conscientiously coun-

tenance what they believe to be “another Gospel,” and therefore go and worship where they are fed with “the sincere milk of the word—that (they) may grow thereby;” when other efforts are unavailing to deter them from their purpose and to fasten upon them their former blindness, how many envenomed darts are thrown! How unsparingly are the motives impugned! What a difference at once in the conduct of many, and the treatment received from them! How cold—how distant! Why, neighbours and friends are hardly known; or are only known to be taught that those who would bind their consciences mean that *they* shall know how disagreeable they themselves can be! And why is it? Ah! the difficulty is, *there* is not a feeling which allows true religious liberty.*

Different, very different are the feelings that should influence us. I know not that I can better express what the feelings which become us are, than

* On this subject it is painful to speak; but it has been remarked, and it is believed truly, “There are men who think themselves respectable and would be accounted gentlemen, [who] hold the religious inmates of their houses in a state of bondage and of fear. Their wives and daughters have little more freedom on that great subject which, of all others, lies nearest to their hearts, than though they were the inmates of a Turkish *harem*.” And it seems that professedly liberal men recommend and inculcate the duty of this mode of treatment. In a certain tract by the Rev. Jonathan Farr, a clergyman whose tract “on Revivals” written for the American Unitarian Association, is extensively known, is this remarkable sentence designed to prevent an attendance on the religious exercises of protracted meetings: “Keep at home,” says Mr. Farr, “and ☐ keep those under your authority at home also.”—This, surely, is religious liberty with a witness! ☐ “Keep at home, and keep those under your authority at home also.”—And this is the boasted spirit of ‘free-enquiry!’

The views and feelings of the author of this discourse, and he believes the sentiments of the orthodox generally, are well expressed in the following passage taken from the “Spirit of the Pilgrims:”

“Calvinists as we are, and sensible as we are of the *danger* of erroneous teaching on religious subjects, the advice which we should give to those

by relating an anecdote which I have somewhere read of a distinguished English Prelate—a man of true liberality—one who would enjoy religious liberty himself and would grant the same to others.

He had observed among his hearers for some time a remarkably attentive hearer. He was a poor man, and the Bishop had occasionally made him some trifling presents. But after a while, he was missing from the meeting. Falling in with him in some of his walks, the Bishop said, “My friend how is it that I do not see you of late in your place as usual?” The man with some hesitation replied, “I hope, Sir, you will not be offended: but to tell you the truth, I went the other day to hear the Methodists; and I understood their plain words so much better, that I have attended there ever since.” The Bishop put his hand in his pocket, and gave the man a guinea, with words to this effect; “God

under our influence in regard to the subject here discussed, would be directly the opposite of that given by Mr. Farr. We would say explicitly to the Evangelical Christian householder, if you have a wife who is conscientiously a Unitarian or a Universalist, and who wishes to worship with either of these denominations; by all means let her go. And not only let her go, but aid her to go; furnish her with a seat; and treat her with the same kindness when she returns, as though she had worshipped at your own meeting. The danger of attending such places of worship is indeed great, but the responsibility in this case is hers, not yours, and forcibly to restrain her would only be to increase the evil. And if you have children of sufficient age and capacity to form an enlightened opinion on religious subjects, who after all your instructions are seriously and conscientiously inclined to attend a different place of worship from yourself, we would give the same advice in respect to them. By no means constrain them. And if this is not Christian liberty, then we will consent to take lessons from those who say to their readers, “*Keep at home, and keep those under your authority at home also.*”

If there are those among the orthodox, or among any other class of the community, whose views of religious liberty are adverse to the preceding extract, be they many or few, their views are opposed to and endanger true religious liberty; and with such views the author has no fellowship.

bless you! and go, my dear Sir, by all means, where you can receive the greatest profit to your soul.”—Here was the true spirit of freedom; the spirit of true liberality.

But this *putting down* of free enquiry, and freedom of choice in our religious views, and the free and candid expression of them, and, above all, the freedom of following the dictates of a free conscience, choosing one's own mode of worship, one's own meeting, and the preaching that is most congenial to one's own conviction of duty, feeling that our accountability is to God, and to HIM only,—I say, this putting down, or the attempt to put down perfect liberty—whether the attempt be made by menaces, by the withdrawing of business, by sneers, by derision, by misrepresentation, or by any discourteous treatment whatever, is the *veriest* TYRANNY! tyranny over a man's *conscience!* tyranny over his *religious rights!!* tyranny over his *soul's eternal interests!!!*

And, O tell me not of ‘freedom,’ where these chains are thrown around the soul. Tell me not of ‘liberality,’ where a penalty is inflicted for daring to maintain the spirit of free enquiry—and that penalty the frowns, the jeers, the scoffs and aspersions of INTOLERANCE! Tell me not of an ‘enlightened age,’ where BIGOTRY disowns her name, then casts it upon others, and raves and talks of ‘Church and State,’ while the idea of such union is in her own mind only; and of ‘dungeons,’ while she herself has all the instruments of torture in her own hand, ready to

seize the man who dares to think and to act for himself, unless he wear the *livery* of her own *sect*, or speak the "*shibboleth*" of her own *party*.

Once more,

5. Religious Liberty implies THE RIGHT OF DEFENDING OUR VIEWS OF TRUTH BY ARGUMENT, (whether by the pen, or viva voce); AND OF EXTENDING THOSE VIEWS BY MORAL SUASION.

By moral suasion I would be understood to refer to all those *means* which are employed by any denomination to illustrate, defend and impress what they conceive is truth, whether by preaching, by conversation, by publications from the press, by religious ordinances, by prayer, or by example.

When, however, by any of these means the morals of the young and heedless are endangered, or the passions of the profligate are inflamed, and the virtuous are scandalized; whenever abused to the purposes of misrepresentation or personal invective; whenever employed with the design to injure individuals, or societies, or denominations, rather than honestly to promote the cause of truth; then religious liberty has degenerated to licentiousness. And that people, or those individuals whose views cannot be defended, or made to commend themselves to others, without the help of such means, have abundant occasion to hide their heads in confusion and disgrace.*

* There is a feeling indulged by some in respect to free-enquiry, and even

I by no means suppose that it is unimportant what a man believes, or that it is to be none of our concern. O far, very, very far from it. Friendship, christian love, good will to men, forbids such a thought. We must answer to God for all that we believe and for all that we disbelieve. But no sentiments, correct or incorrect, that are not against the peace of society are to be extended or suppressed by any other means than moral suasion.

What is the difference, whether you seek to extend your party and pull down other denominations by the fear whether of civil disfranchisement, loss of business, loss of caste, (yes, loss of caste, among a christian people, just as among the Burmans!) invectives, bitter sarcasms, uncivil treatment, frowns, unneighbourly and unfriendly coldness and distance and reserve, or by the fear of chains and dungeons

in respect to *civil* liberty which merits the disapprobation and frown of every honorable man. They seem to claim for themselves a religious liberty "exempt from intellectual collision and emancipated from the supervision of public sentiment." And against every attempt of others who would enquire "What is truth?" or feel it to be their duty to expose what they believe to be error, they raise the cry of abuse, intolerance, and persecution. If such as differ from them exercise the privilege which they themselves exercise, and have a right to exercise, their motives are at once impugned, their character is assailed, and the whole is made a personal affair! This cry of persecution is itself the bitterest persecution. This charge of intolerance is the very hand of intolerance itself, stretched forth with unrelenting grasp. And that cause which cannot be supported without resorting to the cry of bigotry, intolerance, abuse or persecution, and whose advocates are often heard charging these upon those who *dare* manfully, honourably, openly, to meet them, or their leaders in controversy, we may depend on it, is a *bad* cause. They who have plain truth (*veritas non simulata*) on their side, have no occasion to exhibit or to cherish such a spirit. "Magna est veritas." They whose sentiments must not pass the ordeal of investigation and criticism, claim for themselves a freedom which they may hope to find only by seeking a shelter under the Papal throne.

Allied to, and generally the fruit of a spirit of this kind is that illiberality and envy so often exhibited on public occasions, perchance one's own *party* is not most prominent, although the object be one of mutual and universal interest.

and torture? There are ways of tyrannizing over one's religious liberty, beside the fear of the sword, the rack and the faggot. And those ways, I fear, are constantly resorted to in too many instances, where there is a loud cry for liberty.

Shame, shame on the man who seeks the advancement of his religious views by such means! Shame, shame on the man who would by such means hinder any one from following the dictates of conscience, or resent his doing so, by treating him with any less respect than if his faith were our own.

And now did time permit, I would like to speak of religious liberty in a still higher sense—in the extended meaning of the Gospel of Christ.

I would then set it forth as a freedom from sin; knowing no fear so much as the fear of doing wrong.

I would point you to him who is become "a new creature," "in Christ Jesus;" and being "born again" is, by the grace of God, pressing forward day by day in that narrow path that leads to heaven, resisting and overcoming the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. I would try to describe something of that liberty wherewith CHRIST MAKETH US FREE, and without which we are in bondage, although free in all things else.

But my object has been to speak of religious liberty, on this occasion, in more general terms, presenting the simple outlines and first principles of religious liberty, such as I think cannot but commend themselves to the bosom of every truly honor-

able man whatever may be his religious views whether those views be founded in truth, or in error; and not only to the bosom of every truly honourable man, but to the conscience of every sober and rational man.

I will bring the subject to a close with a few brief remarks. And

1. Would you enjoy CIVIL freedom, maintain RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

Civil, or political liberty is of little worth, except as it springs from, or is associated with a true religious liberty. What does it avail that I am under the iron hand of no foreign power, and that I am permitted undisturbed possession of my earthly substance by those around me, if, at the same time, my mind is enslaved; my conscience bound, and in the concerns of my best, and dearest, and eternal interests, I must be controlled whether by the many or the few?

Religious liberty has ever paved the way for civil liberty; and if our religious liberty be once destroyed, our civil liberty will be of very little worth. What blessings untold and unspeakable were diffused abroad in the earth as the consequence of the Reformation? The conflict, as all know who know any thing of history, was first for religious liberty. And in this struggle and its triumphs, how followed the increase of knowledge, the invigoration of intellect, the extension of sound moral principle, the de-

velopment of decision of character, “energy of action, unyielding endurance, untiring perseverance,” until civil liberty succeeded as a consequence. And from that moment that Calvin, and Luther, and Zuingle, and Melancthon began that great work, “the principles of the Reformation have been developing their power, gradually undermining the thrones of Europe, and infusing into the people” a desire for self-government and “a spirit of free enquiry.”

And let it be remembered by such as are hostile to the religious liberty of those who still maintain the faith of our Fathers, that those noble spirits who first gave the impulse to civil liberty in Europe were Calvinists. The doctrines of the Bible as maintained by John Calvin, be it remembered, were the doctrines of the Reformation.* The tendency of these doctrines has never been to the subversion, but to the building up of liberty, civil and religious. That little band who retired to Holland for the sake of liberty, and then crossed the Atlantic and laid on these shores the foundation of the Church, and of this great Republic, were Calvinists. And they who were the actors and chief agents in our struggle to shake off the oppressive yoke of Britain were Calvinists. And I hazard nothing in saying that so far from those sentiments having the remotest tendency to an infringement of our liberties by a union of Church and State, or in any other way, they are

*“Luther was a Calvinist so far as accordance with Calvin’s principles could make him so, as will be seen on reference, to the writings of Luther and the tenets of the Lutheran Church.”—*Dr. Beecher.*

diametrically opposed to it. The genius of our religion inspires a different, a very different feeling. And never, never did I hear a sentiment advanced on this subject, which did not authorize me to believe that the foremost to put down such an attempt would be found to be those who are charged, as was Nehemiah, “It is *reported* among the heathen, that thou and the Jews think to rebel; and GASHMU SAITH IT.”

If our civil and religious liberties are ever overthrown, it will be—not by those who are every where spoken against, and who are held up as the unsparing theme of reproach and misrepresentation in the fashionable party, in the pulpit, in disgraceful publications, at the corners of the streets, in bar-rooms, in grog-shops and gaming houses; (for against this faith, the more respectable and the disorganizer and profligate make common cause;) but it will be from another source.* From what source, I need not, and therefore will not undertake to say. But this I may say,—where our liberties are already infringed by repeated and causeless aspersions and

*The reader has seen in a note on another page, an extract on this subject taken from the “Philanthropist,” an Unitarian publication. The following is presented as the honorable declaration of a gentleman of another denomination, the Rev. Adin Ballou, Editor of a Universalist periodical. The author, it is understood, belongs to, and is distinguished among that class of Universalists, now denominated Restorationists.

“Let no man suppose that we intend to embark in that *clamorous crusade*, whose legions under pretence of preventing a “*union of Church and State*,” denounce all the religious associations and institutions of our country, as so many engines of *priestcraft* invented to demolish our rights. ** They have raised a censorious outcry, which in our humble opinion ought not to be countenanced by any friend of civil and religious order. We heard this outcry (at first with alarm, afterwards with indifference, and finally with disgust) till by scrutinizing the conduct of those who take the

sneers, we may fear that this beginning of persecution may be like the letting out of water.

Would we be the friends of liberty, we must set a proper value upon our own rights, and must respect the rights of others. We must see to it that **OURSELVES** are **FREE**. Not free to wrong others of their rights, as a mind perverse may please: that is not *freedom*, but it is *slavery* to our own lusts and envy and wicked passions: but free to **INVESTIGATE** and **EMBRACE**, and **FOLLOW** the **TRUTH**, according to the dictates of conscience, having none to molest or make afraid. And thus respecting our own rights, that which we claim for ourselves we must concede to others.

2. Consider, you that have dared to face the difficulties which a wicked world lay in your path; who have, as you humbly trust, "a good hope through grace" that you have been "born again," and have "chosen that good part which shall never be taken from" you—"consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." You remember that it is written "My kingdom is not of this world;" and you seek "a kingdom prepared for (the

lead in it, the conviction has forced itself upon us, that there is *among them* as much ambition, selfishness, craft, persecuting bigotry, and radical malignity to civil and religious liberty, in proportion to numbers, as amongst those whom they accuse. They, too, need watching, lest while they cry "thief! thief!" to turn our suspicions upon others, they make booty of our gold, and leave us in poverty to pine away upon the bitter morsels of dear-bought experience. God preserve us from State religion, and above all *State irreligion*."

faithful) from the foundation of the world"—“a kingdom that cannot be moved.” The Saviour has said for the encouragement of such “It is my Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” You will meet with trials by the way; for “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” “The servant,” says CHRIST, “is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” “If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?” The “offence of the cross (has not) ceased.” The opposition of a wicked world has always been the same. “Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” If you have *that* liberty, happy are you. Whatever trials you endure, still trust in God and go forward in the faithful observance of all his commands, and you shall enjoy liberty, although it be assailed. Let the devout language of your heart be that of the poet:

“ Shall I to gain the world’s applause,
Or to escape their harmless frown,
Refuse, my Lord, to plead thy cause
And make thy people’s lot my own?

No! let the world cast out my name;
And vile account me, if they will;
If to confess the Lord be shame,
I purpose to be viler still.

My soul and body I resign,
To fear and follow thy commands;
O keep my heart; my heart is thine;
Accept the service of my hands.”

Then, a crown of glory is yours.

3. Are there those who have suffered themselves to be influenced by the desire of the smiles, or the fear of the frowns of others, or who through indifference have subscribed to the opinions of others upon trust? To such I would say, For what has God made you wiser than the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air? Dare to examine and think and decide for yourselves. God has made you capable of thinking and judging for yourselves: and he will hold you accountable for the use you make of this privilege. He has given you abundant means of knowing what is truth and of becoming wise unto salvation; and he will hold you accountable. Your soul's eternal interests are at stake. None can investigate and believe for you. And if "a new heart," through the transforming influences of the Holy Ghost, is necessary to the salvation of your soul, it is important that you should know it. Time is short. Eternity is at hand.

Will you suffer yourselves to be enthralled and taken by "the fear of man?" That man, who, whether by fear, or ridicule, or by appeals to the unhallowed motives, or by any earthly considerations whatever, would keep you from the path to which conscience leads you, is a TYRANT. I repeat it, that man is a TYRANT. And if our Fathers' blood was with propriety represented as crying from the ground to their descendants "MY SONS, SCORN TO BE SLAVES!" when we were politically oppressed; how much more does the practice of those who have gone before us, and the voice of the great multitude

of the faithful, even the blood of martyrs, and what is more the blood of CALVARY, call upon us in such a case to resist the yoke of spiritual bondage, and assert the liberty of freemen.

You have the right. Maintain it. Free yourselves; be men. Learn to discriminate. Be truly free: secure the salvation of your souls. I fear that many, especially among those who are just setting out in life, young, ambitious, thirsting for popularity, and desirous of wealth, DARE NOT BE FREE. I see the influence that is abroad in the earth, and that blasts the rising promise of a spirit of free enquiry.* Day by day I see its iron arm outstretched. They who fear its vengeance cower; and they who

* Dr. Hawes in his Lectures to Young Men, speaking on this subject, says: "The cry of bigotry and superstition and persecution will be echoed again and again. * * * This stale and silly slang is in the mouth of every enemy of religion, who has only wit enough to repeat what others have said before him: and has, time out of mind, furnished the standing topics of ridicule and reproach to all who hate the spirit and institutions of the Pilgrims. A sufficient reply is—Look at results. Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles. The works of the Pilgrims speak for themselves. They furnish their own defence. But who are they that are so fond of raising the cry of bigotry and superstition? Are they the truly candid, the truly pious, the truly liberal? The very last characteristics to which such persons are entitled. They cry bigotry against others, but are themselves the greatest bigots; and are tolerant towards none but the enemies of evangelical truth and serious religion.

Be not moved then, my young friends, at the charge of bigotry, while you stand up in defence of essential principles, and show yourself decided in supporting the institutions of your ancestors. The charge falls on others rather than on yourselves; and furnishes an occasion of glorying rather than of shame.

But Calvin burnt Servetus, Calvin burnt Servetus—yes, Calvin burnt Servetus. He did not. He neither burnt him, nor instigated his burning.—He endeavored to plead him off from the sentence pronounced upon him by the Senate of Geneva, and to obtain for him a commutation of his punishment for something less severe. But what if he did procure the death of Servetus? Does this prove the Bible untrue, or the system of doctrine usually denominated Calvinistic, false? or that the Orthodox of New-England hold that system just as Calvin taught it? or that they are advocates for the persecution and burning of heretics? Nothing of all this. Why then are all these things said! *To bring reproach upon the truth, and to bring odium against the friends of evangelical religion.* But was Calvin,

would enslave them rage and seek to perpetuate and still further to extend a tyrannic influence. Let your language be, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

~~Take~~ **Take no religious sentiments on trust from others.**
"PROVE ALL THINGS; AND HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

or the Puritans the only persecutors that ever lived? Did not Socinus, the founder of Socinianism, persecute Francis Davides, superintendent of the Socinian Churches in Transylvania? Did he not procure his being thrown into prison, where after languishing six years he died? Are not Christian men and Christian women at the present day, in various Cantons of Switzerland, persecuted, imprisoned, and banished from the country, for holding the evangelical doctrines, by those who style themselves liberal Christians? I am ashamed to state these things, and would not, but for the sake of rescuing the truth from perversion, and defending it against the reproaches that have been cast upon it. Let the doctrines and institutions of the fathers of New-England stand or fall on their own merits; but let no dishonest, illiberal measures be adopted to bring them into disrepute, or to arm ignorance or prejudice against them. Those doctrines and institutions will bear examination. Examine them; examine them for yourselves; examine them in the light of God's word; examine them in the light which the experience of two centuries has cast upon them; examine them in the light which beams from the virtue, the intelligence, the piety, the happiness that so signally bless this fair portion of our land, and sure I am, that the effect will be a deepened conviction of their excellence, and of the duty of maintaining them."