

*To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress Assembled:*

The Memorial of your petitioners humbly sheweth, that seldom has a nation arisen, prospered, declined and fallen, without feeling, in the time of their prosperity and begun decline, an ominous confidence in the strength of their institutions, and a fatal disregard of that which ultimately effected their ruin. This should teach us caution.

Experience has proved the weakness of all human institutions under the attacks of corrupt principles, and has made the fact evident that the material of their strength lies in the intelligence, sound principles, and good morals of the people. This experience shows the necessity of vigilance, and especially of a vigilant eye on all principles and measures, which, though they be at present feebly supported, yet when they acquire strength, are sufficient to subvert the liberties of the State.

Our equal right of suffrage, which is the great excellence of our political institutions, is, by abuse and intrigue on the one hand, and unsuspecting confidence on the other, the chief avenue of danger: and this has not escaped the notice of eagle-eyed despotism. The easy access of foreigners to the elective franchise in the United States, by the present laws of naturalization, and of foreigners of doubtful morals and hostile political principles, is a source of danger to our civil and religious liberties, to which your Memorialists would humbly and earnestly invite the speedy attention of Congress.

Equal right of suffrage is the right of the majority to rule; but our constitution did not contemplate a majority hostile to its principles. And by the very fact of naturalization laws, our nation says—We have principles, privileges and institutions which we cherish, and will maintain, and in opposition to which, no foreigner shall have a right of suffrage with us. If we cherish civil and religious liberties and esteem them above all price, we have a right to defend them from foreign invasion; whether it approach by open warfare, or insidiously by obtaining the privilege of citizenship. Since naturalization laws have been judged necessary, let them be adequate for our defence. Our country has happily been the asylum of the poor and oppressed of other nations; let it still be worthy of the name, and not yield to a despotism which none may court to enjoy. Let us see that those admitted from the lap of tyranny to the right of suffrage with us be indeed the friends of our cherished liberties.

Your Memorialists view with deep concern the great influx of Roman Catholics into this country from the various nations of Europe, and their admission to citizenship while they retain their principles, as eminently threatening our civil and religious liberties. Dr. Robertson in his history of Scotland, says of Popery that it "prepares and breaks the mind for political servitude"—that it is "a system of superstition which is the firmest foundation of civil tyranny"—"a religion, whose very spirit as well as practice is persecuting, sanguinary and encroaching."

Against Roman Catholics, as men, we have no hostility. Against their religion, in its religious character, we ask no legislation, offensive or defensive; we leave it to be combatted by the appropriate weapons of education and religious institutions; but against political principles interwoven with their religion, we do ask legislative defence. This distinction must be made if we would not be the dupes and victims of foreign intrigue. Our constitution happily allows the free toleration of all religions; it is for this toleration that we plead against a religion which refuses it. Does our constitution, by allowing the toleration of all religions, contemplate the toleration of a politically intolerant religion? the toleration of political principles subversive of our free institutions, merely because interwoven with a religious creed? Are political principles subversive of our free institutions less dangerous, or less the subjects of constitutional condemnation, because they are part of a religious system? Does our constitution intend to tolerate a religion, which would erect a church establishment subjecting the civil authorities, and our civil and religious liberties, to its religious and despotic control? Does it allow the mere name of religion to sanctify such political principles subversive of its very spirit and intention? Our constitution is not suicidal.

Your Memorialists, unwilling to encroach further on your patience, earnestly petition your honorable body to inquire whether the principles of Roman Catholics, as held at present as well as formerly, are not political and hostile to civil and religious liberty; and whether their religion is not essentially political, requiring the union of Church and State, and the subjection of the latter to the former: and whether it does not require allegiance to the Pope of Rome, holding the obligation to obey him, as paramount to all other authority, and his subjects not bound even by an oath, when he requires the breach of it for the sake of his religion? And whether it does not justify, and imperiously require, legislative defence against this influence in our government; and further, whether there be not a plan in operation, powerful and dangerous, under the management of the Leopold Foundation, for the subversion of our civil and religious liberties, to be effected by the emigration of Roman Catholics from Europe, and by their admission to the right of suffrage with us in our political institutions; and further, whether any amendment of the laws of naturalization can more fully secure our free institutions, our liberties, civil and religious, against the danger of subversion by foreign influence, and despotic tyrannical principles, even under the cloak of religion. All which is respectfully submitted.

NOVEMBER, 1837.

NAMES.

RESIDENCE.

James P. Miller

Argyle Washington Co N.Y.

John Stett

Fort-Edward do

John Reed

Argyle

John Bishop

Argyle

James Robertson

Greenwich

Wm. W. Cochran

Argyle

Samuel Dobbin

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