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PHIL. M. McCAKIN.

Bigotry.

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No Crime has ever had so dire an influence on the mind of man as bigotry. The most contagious disease, the foulest plague spot that ever ravaged Society never caused one half the vice and misery that has been effected by the Bigot— hein whose mind is a stranger to Reason, whose breast is a foe to Charity, and who wrapped in the mantle of exclusiveness shuts himself out from the passions and sympathies of the human race. In vain would I essay to picture to your imagination the various forms in which this enemy of Science and of human happiness takes hold upon the mind of man. We are everywhere exposed to Fanaticism — in our own private opinions — in our public expressions — in the church and state alike are we in danger from its insidious attacks.

Even in our communica-

tions with our Maker - in the performance of those duties which enjoined upon us by our relations to the Supreme Controller of the Universe - where we have for our guidance the teachings of the Book of Books, and the example of Him whose whole life was an act of resistance to the influence of Bigotry - there all is perversion Scarcely a doctrine of the word of God but what is made the instrument of evil in the hands of senseless bigots - The heart sickens as it contemplates the degredation of those principles by which a benificent Creator intended to reform the world. The sincere Religion of the heart - an humble reliance on the will of Him who is the Arbiter of Fate is now supplanted by mere forms - a Religion of externals - a whited Sepulchre, all beauty to the sight, but all corrupt within - The Church which came forth pure and holy from the Son of Man is now

but too often an arena for sectarian strife a battle ground for fiends in human shape. For what more fiendish than the mind of him who without compunction traduces the character of his fellow. of those whom he has been commanded to love even as himself- who calling upon God to witness imbrues his hands in the blood of his fellows and glorying in his crime then dares to claim without a blush the meed of virtue.

Nor is it only in Religion that the voice of Bigotry is heard. There is not a Country on the face of the earth that has not been disgraced by local jealousies, by sectional fanaticism

The feelings of the patriot have lately been aroused by such assaults upon the liberty of this fair land. Infuriated faction reared his head and the shrine of American Freedom trembled to its foundations from the fierce assaults of narrow minded prejudice. The horizon of our

future was so filled with images of horror and signs portentous of approaching evil, that the Genius of the union shrank back in terror and the bosoms of Columbia's sons were filled with dread

While all was thus dark and cheerless, the bright Star of the West arose and its cheering rays were reflected back from the rekindled flames of Liberty in the heart of every true American. The Savior of his Country was again called forth from his retirement. His appearance in the midst of our national assemblies reanimated the drooping spirits of every freeman. His patriotic soul burning with indignation denounced in unequivocal terms those traitors to their God, their Country, and themselves who regardless of consequences to satisfy their own selfish views, would plunge the land of their birth in all the miseries of anarchy

and civil war - The voice of the people echoes his own Godlike sentiments - and the guilty cower into insignificance. The true are steadfast and the wavering confirmed

Yet though Bigotry has met with signal defeat the contest has not yet been ended. Nothing but utter annihilation can destroy the hopes of Fanaticism. May the high souled patriot live to guide us through this peril! May his Spirit encourage us to sustain the dignity the honor the Union of our Country! When this has been accomplished the great Conservator will go down honored to his grave, and the venomous tongue of slander that has ever been dirceted against his character will at length be stilled. Oh it were well for America did an Henry Clay exsit in every state, in every household, in every heart!

Into this extremity have we thus been driven. If such has been the past, well may

we look forward with anxious forebodings ~~to the Future~~. The bird of Freedom, our own glorious Eagle which in its high and upward flight had almost reached the pinnacle of glory is checked in its brilliant career and the shield of Liberty trembles in his grasp as it bends its keen and anxious gaze upon the dark and lowering Future. Fear not proud bird! Never while we have hearts to love and bosoms to protect thee, shalt thou become the prey of Faction and the victim of Bigotry

Phil. M. Leakin

Commencement Oration of Phil M. Leakin, Class of 1850
Transcribed by Sarah-Hazel Jennings, May 2008
Edited by Chris Altieri, June 2008

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