

slaving conservatism, and class distinction; and on the other we welcome the light of universal education, liberalism, and social equality. But education is not only fundamental in itself, but it has been the direct cause of a third element which is found in our own country to a greater extent than in any other—I mean the principle of toleration in religion.

It has been said that "religious toleration is the best fruit of the last four centuries." We can hardly realize its blessings to mankind until we search the pages of history to see what suffering the race has endured. When we read that some of the best blood of our ancestors has been sacrificed upon the altar of martyrdom, when we learn how governments have been rent in twain by religious controversies, we can only fall back and thank our God and the framers of our constitution that we enjoy this privilege. It means more than it presents on the surface. Nothing can create a spirit of unrest and antagonism more readily than to interfere with the consciences of a people. Religious beliefs, from their very nature, rest upon the heart of the individual, and when that is wounded through persecution, the very vitals of a nation are attacked. Through the right of free worship the nation has reached a higher conception of the principles of Christianity—we have learned that God is love, and that he is not, as was believed in earlier times, chiefly a punisher of the unjust.

And on a parallel with freedom of religion is the assertion of public opinion as a means of keeping the social equilibrium. It cannot be overestimated, and to the press, its exponent, the nation is almost as much indebted as to the influence of the pulpit. When a new doctrine springs up, when a new principle concerning the public weal is evolved, or some delicate problem in international diplomacy appears, the press comes forth heralding the sentiments of the people and bearing the shield of the nation's judgment. In other countries, no such institution as this has ever existed