

“Knowledge is Power”:

The Reverend Grosvenor Clarke Morse’s Thoughts on Free Schools and the Republic During the Civil War

edited by Scott N. Morse

When Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act in May 1854 providing popular sovereignty to Kansas on the issue of slavery, “a sectional race to establish political hegemony in Kansas” was guaranteed. In both the North and South, emigration of ideologically-minded settlers to Kansas was encouraged in order to control the outcome of future elections. The issue at stake was whether the new Kansas social and political institutions would resemble those of the South or the North.¹

In this contest, Southerners, many of whom were traditional smallholders, saw themselves as the embodiment of the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer ideal. They valued honor and their agrarian lifestyle and saw slavery as the underpinning of their social and political status as white people. Southerners felt required to defend this way of life against the onrush of commercialism and modernity. Their enemies were the Northern industrial bosses and their impoverished factory workers. In this context, many Southerners came to identify the common schools with the North, abolitionism, and industrial capitalism, and thus it was hard for them to support universal public education.²

In contrast, Northerners embraced an ideology of free labor. It glorified the middle class and economic independence, and it was based on the conviction that Northern society was dynamic, capitalist, and superior to the stagnant slave society of the South. Wage labor was seen as a temporary condition and the means by which the disciplined worker could advance toward the acquisition of property. Progress would be accomplished through industrialization, education, personal orderliness, and accumulation of property.³

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1. Gunja SenGupta, *For God and Mammon: Evangelicals and Entrepreneurs, Masters and Slaves in Territorial Kansas, 1854–1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 12; the quotation is from Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 13. See also Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), and for a fine review of the literature on this subject, Gunja SenGupta, “Bleeding Kansas: Review Essay,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 24 (Winter 2001/2002): 338. An updated version of the latter along with several other relevant selections is in Virgil W. Dean, ed., *Territorial Kansas Reader* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 2005).

2. Fellman, *Inside War*, 18, 19; SenGupta, “Bleeding Kansas,” 338; A. Kenneth Stern and Janelle L. Wagner, “The First Decade of Educational Governance in Kansas, 1855–1865,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 24 (Spring 2001): 38.

3. In the summer of 1854, in response to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Republican Party emerged from diverse elements, including Whigs, Know-Nothings, and free-soil Democrats, who supported free labor and opposed the extension of slavery in the territories. J. G. Randall and David Donald, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1969), 97; Bill Cecil-Fronsman, “Advocate the Freedom of White Men, As Well as Negroes’: The Kansas Free State and Antislavery Westerns in Territorial Kansas,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 20 (Summer 1997): 105–7; SenGupta, *For God and Mammon*, 46; Eric Foner, *Free Labor, Free Soil, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Jonathan H. Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery and the Politics of Free Soil, 1824–1854* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

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Boys attend school in Jefferson County, Kansas.

Southerners were seen as “quaint relics of a passing and inferior culture” and slavery as the chief example of Southern backwardness.⁴ Those emigrating from New England to Kansas saw themselves on a “civilizing” mission to spread their values among less advanced peoples, be they Southern slaveholders, Catholic immigrants, or western frontiersmen. They sought to transplant New England institutions to Kansas as part of an effort to convince poor Southerners of the superiority of free labor over slavery. The free school was a critical New England transplant, and it was established in Kansas “after the New England style.”⁵

4. Fellman, *Inside War*, 11.

5. SenGupta, *For God and Mammon*, 2, 14; Richard Lyle Power, “A Crusade to Extend Yankee Culture, 1820–1865,” *New England Quarterly* 13 (December 1940): 646.

New England churchmen were instrumental in the aid societies that promoted Northern emigration to Kansas. For them, the old Calvinist fatalism had given way to an evangelical embrace of the idea of human perfectibility. It was an optimistic time, according to Richard Lyle Power: “perhaps no other age in man’s experience ever entertained grander visions of the rewards of efforts directed at self-betterment.” As historian Michael Fellman demonstrated, there was an “almost universal Northern belief that American culture was progressing to ‘higher,’ more civilized forms.”⁶

No one was more committed to the ideology of self-betterment and free labor based on universal public educa-

6. Fellman, *Inside War*, 15; Power, “A Crusade to Extend Yankee Culture,” 640; SenGupta, *For God and Mammon*, 11.

tion than the Reverend Grosvenor Clarke Morse. An early emigrant to Kansas, he organized the First Congregational Church in Emporia in July 1858 and became Lyon County's first superintendent of schools. He was active in the effort to bring the State Normal School (now Emporia State University) to Emporia, was a member of its first board of regents and chairman of its executive committee, and he recruited Lyman Kellogg as the school's first president.⁷

Morse was born on April 19, 1827, in Acworth, New Hampshire, in the foothills of the White Mountains. He was the oldest of thirteen children. He attended school, but as Morse grew older he could only do so during the winter months because his help was needed at home. He developed an intense desire to obtain an education and devoted his leisure time to study. Three months before his twenty-first birthday, Morse persuaded his father to allow him to go away to school in return for relinquishing the gift of a suit of clothes that was customarily given the boys in the family when they reached twenty-one years of age.⁸

After graduating in 1850 from Kimball Union Academy in Meredith, New Hampshire, Morse studied at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, and graduated in 1854. While in college, he supported himself by, among other things, teaching school, working in cotton mills, and carrying firewood for stoves in a four-story building. He survived on very little, "living on mush and milk."

Morse graduated from the Andover Theological Seminary in Newton Centre, Massachusetts, in 1857 and was subsequently ordained a minister in the Congregational Church. He joined three other recent graduates to form the "Andover Band," and under the auspices of the American Home Missionary society, traveled west "to save Kansas from the sin and curse of slavery."⁹ To Morse, universal pub-

7. *A History of the State Normal School of Kansas* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1889), 13, 14, 136, 137; Sam Dicks, ed., "A Sower Went Forth: Lyman Beecher Kellogg and Kansas State Normal," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 24 (Winter 2001/2002): 253; Albert R. Taylor, "History of Normal-School Work in Kansas," *Kansas Historical Collections, 1897-1900* 6 (1900): 115-17; "Official Roster of Kansas, 1854-1925," *Kansas Historical Collections, 1923-1925* 16 (1925): 689-90.

8. "Sketch of the Life of the Rev. Grosvenor Morse. Excerpts from an Article by his Wife, Abigail [sic] Barber Morse," in *National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the State of Kansas, Recollections of Families in Kansas in Eighteen Hundred Sixty-One* (n.p., 1961), 46; Betty Breukelman, "Morse Pioneered Schools, Religious Life of Emporia," *Emporia Times*, June 27, 1957; Lyman B. Kellogg, "The Founding of the State Normal School," *Kansas Historical Collections, 1911-1912* 12 (1912): 88, n. 3.

9. Charles M. Correll, *A Century of Congregationalism in Kansas, 1854-1954* (Topeka, Kansas: Kansas Congregational and Christian



The Reverend Grosvenor Clarke Morse, an early emigrant to Kansas, was deeply committed to the ideology of self-betterment and free labor based on universal public education. Portrait from A History of the State Normal School.

lic education was an important means for preventing the establishment of slavery in Kansas. Educated citizens would support democratic institutions and would oppose slavery. An educated workforce would enable the development of a dynamic free labor economy. To create an educated citizenry, it was necessary to transplant the New England common school to Kansas. "Of Puritan descent, he would plant the school by the side of the church," explained Morse's wife, Abigail, many years later. "In every school in the country he sounded the warning that 'finding ourselves in the wilderness, with odds against us, it is only by desperate efforts

Conference, 1953) 23-25; Richard Cordley, *Pioneer Days in Kansas* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1903), 11-18; Marjorie Sullivan, "Grosvenor and Abigail Morse," *Qualities of Greatness* (100th Anniversary Publication of Kansas State Teachers College: Emporia, Kans.), 21.



Once they were established, early Kansas schoolhouses took many different forms. Above children meet in a sod school; opposite they gather at the stone schoolhouse in Eudora, built in 1879.

New England culture over that of the South. It also reflects his belief that these values would eventually take hold and would mold future generations, including Southerners and European immigrants. Indeed, laws establishing free schools were passed by the first territorial legislature in 1855, though attendance was voluntary and they were not publicly funded through taxes. Six years later the Wyandotte Constitution called for a state superintendent of public instruction and provided funding for the state's common schools.¹²

12. In the January 2, 1864, *Emporia News*, Morse wrote an article advocating public support for the State Normal School (now Emporia State University), the location of which the Kansas legislature had recently approved. There Morse argued that the "Common School is the foundation of all other institutions," since it was a channel "for cultivation of general intelligence, the diffusion of knowledge, and a good foundation for business and higher culture." To Morse, the normal school was needed in order to produce a "corps of thoroughly effective teachers" to teach in the common schools.

SCHOOL LECTURE: THE RELATION OF FREE SCHOOLS TO REPUBLICANS¹³

by the Reverend Grosvenor Clarke Morse

Aside from the direct and personal blessings of Christianity, nothing contributes so greatly to the prosperity of the community or nation as a good government. Of this fact a comparison of the history of our country, with that of others, will most deeply impress us. . . . Our unexampled growth has attracted universal attention and awakened in

13. Morse's "School Lecture," a thirty-three-page handwritten document, is in the personal collection of the editor, Scott N. Morse, attorney at law, Austin, Texas. The excerpts that follow were carefully transcribed and selected to give the reader a true sense of Morse's thoughts on this important issue of his day. Insertions have been bracketed, omissions noted with ellipses, and notes added to clarify vague allusions or references to people and events perhaps unfamiliar to the twenty-first-century reader. Some capitalization and punctuation was altered to make it conform more closely to modern usage.



the breasts of millions longing desires for similar blessings. Hence it is that European despots have been so jealous of our prosperity, fearing lest the idea of Republicanism should be the cause of another uprising among their people.

At the time it was supposed that the revolution of eighteen hundred and forty eight would prove a complete success. The multitude of this country confidently expected that those ancient systems of despotism, heavy with age, would give place to a republican form of government and constitutional liberty.¹⁴ . . . In what respect were the nations

14. Here, of course, Morse refers to the wave of revolutionary uprising that swept across much of Europe, inspired by ideas of democracy, opposition to authoritarian rule, and demands for universal suffrage. The old regimes generally survived—indeed, the Revolution of 1848 essentially “misfired,” but this age of revolution spawned individuals and ideas that could not be easily quelled (e.g., Karl Marx published the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848). See, among others, R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World Since 1815*, 4th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 511–42; William L. Langer, *Political and Social Upheaval, 1832–1852* (New

of Europe deficient which led to their failure? And in what particulars are the rebel states wanting the elements of a healthful national life which has given rise to the terrible war now upon us? . . .

. . . Those states that have devoted most attention to education have made the greatest progress in developing our national resources and thus have most contributed to our wealth and prosperity. These facts at once suggest the important relation of popular education or our system of free schools to our social and national prosperity. . . .

. . . I design to make this a prominent point in the remarks I shall offer upon the present occasion. *Every individual of the state should fill some useful position in the state.* By this I do not mean however that every one should be a lawyer, a minister, a politician, a teacher or an individual

York: Harper & Row, 1969); Priscilla S. Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).



“The equality of the [human] race is really a principle of Christianity,” Morse wrote, “but it took a long time to illuminate it so that [it] might be distinctly seen.” By 1858 the territorial legislature had amended school laws so that free education was to be provided not only to white children but to all children, and in subsequent years schools like the one pictured in Leavenworth in 1879 were established for black children.

of wealth. . . . But I mean that every individual should by his or her labor and intelligence, by moral influence and by the ballot box, contribute, if I may so say, to the common stock of intelligence and moral principle necessary to the maintenance of self government and the development of the material resources of the country.

The Spartans . . . endeavored to make their people a nation of hardy warriors [and] hence went in for improvement of stock by strict temperance, severe discipline and by killing off all the weak and sickly children as not worth raising. Every man, woman, and child must

be worth something to Sparta. Hence the state assumed the control and discipline of the children at a very early period that it might the more effectively realize all that was possible in the well-trained soldier. With us, the case differs somewhat. The individual is no less important to the American state than to the Spartan, but instead of all being subjected to the military authority to become soldiers, the value of each is determined by his intelligence and moral character. Each individual is regarded as a self-moving, self-directing unit consequently responsible for his own course, and consequently responsible as one of the great whole for the well being of the nation. . . . The education of American youth

is of far greater importance to us as a nation than that hard discipline of military rule was to the Spartan state.

The fundamental principle of constitutional liberty and a representative government is human equality. The first clear and emphatic demonstration of this principle in form was made in the Declaration of Independence July 4/76. The equality of the race is really a principle of Christianity but it took a long time to illuminate it so that [it] might be distinctly seen. By equality I do not mean that all are born with the same capacity but that all are endowed by a Common Creator with certain inalienable rights as specified in that remarkable declaration. The success of a democratic government is conditioned upon the general intelligence of the people because each individual in a certain sense is one of the law makers.

The design of the free school is to secure to all the opportunities for obtaining an education, and thereby intellectual equality and capacity to participate in the affairs of government. Knowledge is power. . . .

Now while it is true that there is no equality of mental strength, it is true that the mass[es] possess sufficient capacity to become intelligent and valuable citizens. They ought to understand the principles of the constitution, the history of our country, its interests and government, and be posted in reference to common topics of the [day]. This degree of intelligence is absolutely necessary to a good citizen; not but there may be good citizens knowing less, but this is necessary to render an individual capable of thinking for himself in relation to matters affecting the welfare of the country and not become the prey of every designing demagogue. We may speak of this amount of knowledge as a common platform upon which every citizen should stand. This is the Platform of Intellectual Equality.

If an individual should rise above this level he may and will be the better fitted for duty and influence but he gains no real ascendancy above his fellows because they can comprehend him. [If] he use[s] falsehood, he is liable to detection. The ignorant may be led into any project by falsehood or fraud as easily as by truth. Now it is the design of the common school system to bring every individual upon this common platform of intellectual equality.

Knowledge is power. Should learning be confined to a few that few would soon [have] an unbounded influence or authority over the ignorant rabble. The few become the ruling class while the other the abject slave. Property would follow the same channels. The intelligent lords would be rich and the ignorant poor and despicable. Supposing all

were permitted to vote, the ignorant would be at the mercy of the unscrupulous. But in such a state of things equal franchise would be hateful. "Shall these ignorant dogs," the haughty aristocrat would say, "fit only for slaves be placed upon the same level with us? Shall they participate in the government? Let those rule that know how to govern." The lower class would be regarded as worth no consideration save as servants to the rich and an impassible gulf would separate the two classes. . . .

. . . The first free school established by law in Plymouth Colony was [in] 1670–2. In 1647 by a law of the Colony Mass. Bay, it was ordered that when any town shall increase to one hundred families or householders, they shall set up a grammar school, the master thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may [be] fitted for the university. Of this spirit which we have inherited from the Pilgrims we may well thank God, for that was the seed that has germinated and brought forth a glorious harvest in our boasted free schools. And the influence of our free schools it is that has compelled Europe to make provisions for the education of her ignorant masses. . . . In the struggle of forty eight [1848] no class proved so troublesome as the students. The love [of] human liberty is innate and in the generous aspirations of youth it burns most fiercely. . . . Popular education will prove a most fearful foe to the despots of Europe. . . .

We come now to the more important relational topic, comparison of the educational interest of the loyal and rebel states. . . .

. . . The condition of the common schools is the true index of general intelligence. According to Appleton's Cyp [Cyclopedia] 1862 in the loyal states one fourth of the whole free white population attend school while in the rebel states only *one in fourteen*.¹⁵ . . .

. . . Some years since, Gov. [Henry] Wise of Va. thanked God that they were not cursed with free schools and petty newspapers, [as] they were always the nest of abolition heresies.¹⁶ His idea was that nobody had any right to an

15. Almost certainly a reference to *The American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events. Embracing Political, Civil, Military, and Social Affairs; Public Documents; Biography; Statistics; Commerce; Finance; Literature; Science; Agriculture; and Mechanical Industry* (14 vols.; n.p.: D. Appleton and Company, 1862–1874); after 1874 this publication continued for many years as *Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events*.

16. Henry Alexander Wise served as a United States congressman (1833–1844), U.S. minister to Brazil (1844–1847), governor of Virginia (1856–1859), and brigadier general in the Confederate army. As Virginia governor and a defender of slavery he signed John Brown's death warrant after the abolitionist's trial and conviction for treason resulting from the October 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry. *Biographical Directory of the United*

education but . . . it was really a matter of no very great importance except for gentlemen who expected to control the empire of both North and South. It is a singular fact that all of our Northern colleges have a goodly number of Southern nobility, and also we have supplied a large proportion of teachers for their select schools, academies, . . . and colleges. It is a notorious fact that multitudes of those rustling in silks and satins cannot even write their own names. . . .

I know of nothing . . . combining more of the ridiculous than this element of Southern society. It affects superiority to all the rest of the world. . . . We hardly know whether to laugh at such arrogance and ignorance or pity the weakness and imbecility displayed. It reminds us of certain fowls in a barnyard, very fond of taking on airs themselves but flying at once in a rage if any one else should be guilty of the same thing.

It knows nothing of free, vigorous, and intelligent labor. It delights in bandying low epithets, especially against the Northern laborer. When the senator from Va. some years since threw out his vile slang in regard to our factory operatives, he found himself in bad business, worse than a swarm of enraged hornets, for of all the stinging letters of scorn, contempt, [and] malediction he received the worst from these very factory operatives whom he had ranked with the meanest of his slaves—showing that they could wield the pen to repel any vile slanderer and that he had made a slight mistake in his attack upon intelligent labor.¹⁷ The trouble with this chivalry is it is ignorant. It don't know. It

States Congress, online at <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=W000649>; Craig M. Simpson, *A Good Southerner: The Life of Henry A. Wise of Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

17. In territorial Kansas, the arguments advanced in support of free labor and slavery defied neat categories. Some free labor advocates were radical abolitionists who envisioned a racially egalitarian Kansas, but most shared a white supremacist ideology with their proslavery opponents. The debate often centered on whether free labor or slavery worked best to advance the interests of whites. Slavery advocates argued that their “peculiar institution” enabled whites to enjoy economic independence and democratic self-government. They saw northern wage laborers, in Dickensian terms, as degraded, urban, slum dwellers. (It is this image that Morse no doubt alluded to when he referred to the Virginia senator’s “vile slang in regard to our factory operatives”). In contrast, free labor advocates argued that slavery was a pernicious means by which white wages were brought down in the labor market. They argued that slavery reduced land values (through slave owning farmers “wearing out” their soil), an argument intended to scare farmers and land speculators. While slavery advocates necessarily favored allowing blacks into Kansas (albeit as slaves), free labor advocates often supported black exclusion. The Wyandotte Constitution, under which Kansas came into the Union in 1861, allowed blacks to move into the state but denied them suffrage and left their status in other areas nebulous at best. Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas*, especially, 69–88, 113–38; SenGupta, “Bleeding Kansas,” 330, 338; Cecil-Fronsmann, “Advocate the Freedom of White People,” 106, 113.

is, however, now learning quite fast. Gen[eral] Banks, once a poor bobbin boy in a cotton mill, proves a very excellent instructor.¹⁸ . . .

This class (the aristocracy) though few in numbers is the controlling element and have been the prime movers in fomenting this rebellion. They have avowed themselves the natural and fit lords of the land both North and South. They first crushed out free speech and free thought allowing no opinions that in any way were opposed to theirs. . . . The masses were kept in complete subjection and ignorance of Northern character. Because Northern men did not carry pistols & Bowie knives [or] bully and bluster, it was supposed that they were dastardly cowards and not a few really began to think that one chivalrous son of the old Dominion was a full match for the miserable degraded Yankees and the mass of the people believed it. Nine tenths of the people [in the] South were under the influence of the other tenth. The mass were made to believe, in some places, that abolitionists were plotting to raise an insurrection among the Negroes to butcher the inhabitants and lay everything desolate; in others that the Negroes were to be placed upon an equality with the whites.

Take this which most of you have seen from a correspondent at Chattanooga. . . . [an exchange between a provost marshal and an applicant for relief].

[Q] Your husband is in the rebel army. When did he join it?

[A] Years since.

[Q] Did he volunteer?

18. Nathaniel P. Banks was a United States congressman (1853–1857; 1865–1873; 1875–1879; 1889–1891), Massachusetts governor (1858–1861), and Union general. He was born in poverty and received only a common school education. Early in life, he worked at a Waltham, Massachusetts, cotton mill where he was given the life-long nickname, “Bobbin Boy.” During the Civil War, Banks unsuccessfully led Union troops against Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley (where Southern troops nicknamed him “Commissary Banks” because of their ability to provision themselves through the capture of his supply trains). Nevertheless, he succeeded General Benjamin Butler as commander of the Department of the Gulf in October 1862; he experienced some success in Louisiana in July 1863 but failed in an effort to invade Texas from Louisiana along Red River in the spring of 1864. This latter defeat led to his removal from field command and effectively ended his national political aspirations as well. William Riley Brooksher, *War Along the Bayous: The 1864 Red River Campaign in Louisiana* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 1998), 2; Ludwell H. Johnson, *Red River Campaign: Politics and Cotton in the Civil War* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1993), 284; James B. Hollansworth, *Pretense of Glory: The Life of General Nathaniel P. Banks* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998); Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *The Civil War in the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 157–76, 186–92.



"All may not be rich, yet all may be intelligent," Morse wrote. "The poor boy with a patched jacket or the daughter [of] toil and penury in a faded dress may strive with equal hope for the prize of the examination with those boasting of unsoiled broadcloth or rustling in silks and satins and oftener than otherwise such bear away the medal of honor." Pictured here a boy practices his numbers in an early Kansas schoolhouse.

- [A] Yes to keep from being conscripted.
 [Q] But the rebel conscription was not then in force.
 [A] But they told him it would soon be and he had better volunteer.
 [Q] Was he not a strong secessionist from the start?
 [A] Yes, he thought you wanted to deprive us of our rights and take away all of our slaves.
 [Q] How many slaves do you own?
 [A] None.
 [Q] Had he a plantation?
 [A] No sir.
 [Q] What property had he?
 [A] Nothing, he lived by day's labor.
 [Q] Why then was he so fearful about the slaves?
 [A] Because he was afraid the North would put the niggers on an equality

The above facts are suggestive [of] general ignorance fostered and encouraged by the aristocracy [that] rendered them supple tools to the few by whom this fearful struggle has been precipitated upon them.

When this war shall have closed, no one class will be found more truly loyal than this abused and oppressed class of whites. . . . None [will] cheer more heartily the return of the dear old flag of our country. None [will be] more ready to make large appropriation for popular education and, remembering the bitter bondage in which they have groaned, will hate and abhor that system of human

servitude which was the occasion of all of their sorrow. How will they not curse and excoriate the last remaining stock of that old aristocracy till the very name shall be for a curse and reproach.

Had the means for obtaining an education been as abundant as in the North, I venture nothing that this war would never have occurred. The intelligence and good sense of the masses would have utterly frowned upon a scheme of such madness and fraught only with disaster and ruin.

We have referred to the aristocracy of the South—an aristocracy of wealth, intelligence, position, and as is claimed of blood. . . . It is one of the legitimate results of our free schools to destroy that system of caste which so naturally springs up in communities so fond of show as ours. It

is true we have no peerage, we boast of no heraldry but yet wealth is a power and intelligence is a power. The words of the rich old men are listened to with attention. It is not so much the man as the money that is honored and we are a money making and a money loving people. But intelligence will secure honor. All may not be rich, yet all may be intelligent. In the free schools the children of poverty may compete for the honors of the school upon equal footing with those of affluence. It is not a race for silver and gold; or political preferment but a struggle of intellect. The poor boy with a patched jacket or the daughter [of] toil and penury in a faded dress may strive with equal hope for the prize of the examination with those boasting of unsoiled broadcloth or rustling in silks and satins and oftener than otherwise such bear away the medal of honor. . . .

. . . The road to a noble station in life is equally accessible to all the rich and poor, the native and the foreigner; while the state furnishes the opportunity to secure an education, each one becomes the architect of his own fortune. And it is an interesting fact that a very large part of the noblest and best men of our day have risen aided by our free institutions, by their own inherent energy, and force of character. With free schools an aristocracy is an impossibility [and] an absurdity. They can be built up and sustained only by state privileges and [the] ignorance of the masses. Solid as is the English aristocracy, defended by irreversible laws of caste and titled privileges forbidding children of one class to be associated in school with those of another

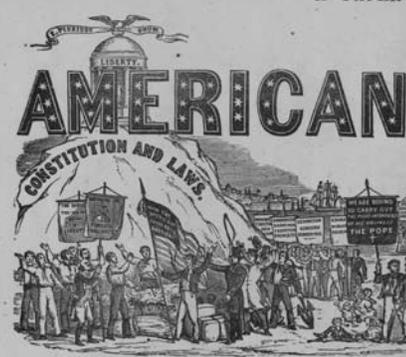
AMERICAN CITIZENS!

We appeal to you in all calms. Is it not time to pause? Already the enemies of our dearest institutions, like the foreign spies in the Trojan horse of old, are within our gates. They are disgorging themselves upon us, at the rate of HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS EVERY YEAR! They aim at nothing short of conquest and supremacy over us.

A PAPER ENTITLED THE



PATRIOT



AMERICAN

CONSTITUTION AND LAWS

<p style="text-align: center;">IN FAVOR OF</p> <p>The protection of American Mechanics against Foreign Pauper Labor.</p> <p>Foreigners having a residence in the country of 21 years before voting.</p> <p>Our present Free School System.</p> <p>Carrying out the laws of the State, as regards sending back Foreign Paupers and Criminals.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">OPPOSED TO</p> <p>Papal Aggression & Roman Catholicism.</p> <p>Foreigners holding office.</p> <p>Raising Foreign Military Companies in the United States.</p> <p>Nunneries and the Jesuits.</p> <p>To being taxed for the support of Foreign paupers millions of dollars yearly.</p> <p>To secret Foreign Orders in the U.S.</p>	<p>We are burdened with enormous taxes by foreigners. We are corrupted in the morals of our youth. We are interfered with in our government. We are forced into collisions with other nations. We are tampered with in our religion. We are injured in our labor. We are assailed in our freedom of speech.</p>
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The PATRIOT is Published by J. E. Farwell & Co., 32 Congress St., Boston, And for Sale at the Periodical Depots in this place. Single copies 4 Cents.

This 1852 advertisement for the American Patriot newspaper, which approves of free schools and opposes “Papal Aggression & Roman Catholicism,” reflects the prevalent nineteenth-century American distrust of the Catholic Church. Morse held such sentiments, though his solution was not to oppose immigration, but rather to establish “free schools where alike in native and foreign born, wealth and poverty, the love of country is cultivated; where alike all receive that culture necessary to qualify each for the high and noble position of an American citizen.” Advertisement courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

class and political privileges, still aspirants from the lower class will break through all obstacles and wrest for themselves a proud seat among the nobility. . . .

See that widowed mother toiling night and day to support her family of little children. In the midst of her work she pauses to prepare her little ones for school. Giving each a kiss, she tells them to be good children, obey the teacher and learn as fast as they can. Her eye follows them as only a mother’s can as they wend their way to the schoolhouse. There are the children of her rich neighbor richly dressed and proud of their wealth. But at school, her children are as good as any other, and often time they bring home the prize of standing at the head of the class. Who knows, she thinks, but in a few [years], they may rise to posts of honor, influence, and wealth. . . .

I wish [to] introduce another point showing the relation of our system of free schools to our government. All are aware of the immense tide of immigration that is pouring in upon us from the old nations of Europe. Every wave brings them by the thousands. Already they form an important element of our population and wield a tremen-

dous power in controlling our elections. Already have they seen the occasion of serious outbreaks [of] violence and bloodshed in many of our cities. While some of the vast multitudes that are thronging [to] our shores are virtuous and intelligent, becoming at once true and valuable citizens, the large mass of them are ignorant and vicious, either hating the institutions of Christianity which are the very basis and spirit of our government or retaining their allegiance to an ecclesiastical authority inimical and most hateful to our own and whose spirit is to subvert all and subject all to itself.¹⁹

Now what is to be done with this crude heterogeneous mass. Will they, as the Goths and Vandals of Europe, overrun and destroy our sacred inheritance bought with blood or can they be Americanized and made good citizens? Our institutions rest upon the virtue and intelligence of our people. The enfranchisement of such masses possessing neither qualification renders them an element of great danger because they readily

become the supple instruments of riot and anarchy as we have seen in N[ew] York, Phil[adelphia,] and St Louis.²⁰

What shall be done? This to many thoughtful minds is a question of great importance. Can we risk all that to us is so precious and purchased at such cost in such hands? Shall such disintegrating forces be permitted to accumulate among us? Shall the scum of those

19. Morse was no doubt referencing the Catholic Church, which was widely distrusted in nineteenth-century America. Northeastern, Protestant churchmen commonly saw slavery and “Romanism” as “twin evils.” To them, the influx of European Catholic immigrants brought about “rising crime, inflated welfare costs, drunken brawls, a Papal crusade against public education and a moral indifference to the sin of slavery.” This view, however, did not translate into opposition to immigration. Rather, Protestant churchmen sought to convert European Catholic immigrants to the antislavery cause and relied on northeastern institutions (such as the free school) to redeem the lowly immigrants. SenGupta, *For God and Mammon*, 91–93.

20. This was probably a reference to the riots and civil unrest that occasioned the passage of a national conscription law in March 1863 and the subsequent drawing of the names of draftees. In New York the rioting in July 1863 was particularly intense and included Irish immigrants. See Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626–1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 279–88.

festered masses of corruption of the old world be permitted to dictate to us law? (We kindly welcome the good.) It is indeed a hard question, but humanity will not say to the children of superstition, of despotism and sorrow, of the over-crowded Europe, as they come pouring in upon us hoping their childish dreams of liberty and wealth realized, "Go back and wear out your miserable lives in living graves and bequeath the cup of your degradation and sorrow as the only inheritance of your wretched offspring." She rather beckons to our ample domain where the hand of industry may convert the wilderness into fruitful fields and where human affections may find abundant scope in happy homes. She points to our free schools where alike in native and foreign born, wealth and poverty, the love of country is cultivated; where alike all receive that culture necessary to qualify each for the high and noble position of an American citizen . . .

In conclusion, my friends let me urge you, by your love for your homes and families, by all that is dear and precious to you on earth, by the blood of the martyred patriots to cherish a profound and lively interest in our free schools. Protect and foster them as the great pillars of American liberty and prosperity and the guarantee of their perpetuity. Let ignorance be banished from our land and the high state of popular education be the source of a commendable pride. Let our schools be not only the repositories of knowledge

but fountains of patriotism. Let the reading books we place in the hands of our children be made up from the choicest selections from American orators, American histories, from those glowing, burning speeches that have thrilled thousands of hearts with the patriot's devotion and enthusiasm. . . .

To us my friends is committed a trust, the education of those children made fatherless in this cruel war. On distant fields they gave their lives upon the altar of liberty. Their blood watered the tree in whose shadow we rejoice. Often their hearts bled for the wife and little ones in the far off cabin as they thought [of] those loved faces they might see no more. Then came that bitter soul crushing question, "who will care for the little ones?" For us have they given their blood, to us in that struggle of life they commended all that was dear on earth. It is a sacred trust, never let [it] be forgotten. Let there be such care for our free schools, and let them possess efficiency that she who toils on alone to provide [for] her fatherless ones may feel that the state is not ungrateful, that the country for which their father [gave his life] . . . will train the children for honored and useful positions in society. Though her hands may be hard with toil, and her body decrepit, but as she sees her country regenerated, rising in greatness, her children honored, useful, and happy, she will thank God and rejoice for such a glorious country. KH



Thirty-five years after Morse advocated for the establishment of free schools in Kansas teachers are trained at the Kansas State Normal School in Emporia, a school Morse helped to establish.