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THE  
SALEM WITCHCRAFT.

A Lesson for Our Time.

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# THE SALEM WITCHCRAFT.



THE movers for the Religious Amendment of our National Constitution constantly refer to the action of the prophets, priests, and rulers of Israel, as precedents for the course they wish to pursue. The case of Nehemiah is especially cited as a warrant for their proposed action. We deny the relevancy of this citation, and will strengthen our denial with facts and a very forcible illustration.

A "Christian Government," one in which the "usages, laws, and institutions" of Christianity are placed on "a legal basis," must of necessity be "a corrector of heretics." It is useless for the National Reformers to say that they "will not interfere with *the religion* of any as long as *their actions* are not contrary to the law," for if a man's religion does not regulate his actions and show itself in his life, it is not worth defending or possessing.

There is a law in the Scriptures which reads as follows: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Ex. 22:18. And again: "A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones." Lev. 20:27. It may not be said that this is obsolete, if it be that we are to take the Scripture regulations in full as our guide in *civil government*; for in both the Old and the New Testament, witchcraft is declared to be an abomination to the

Lord. Compare Deut. 18:10-12; Gal. 5:19-21, and Rev. 22:14, 15.\* It was in obedience to this law that Saul "put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land." 1 Sam. 28:3.

And now the question arises, If witchcraft is an abomination to the Lord, and if he required that witches and wizards be put to death, and if the rulers of the people were required to carry out this order of the Lord, why should not the rulers of the people *now* put this order into effect? "The powers that be are ordained of God" at this time as truly as in any other. God does not change; and the rulers of to-day bear the same responsibility to do the will of God that they did in olden time. If, then, the rulers acknowledge their responsibility to God, and if they desire to put the expressed will of God into effect, as our rulers ought to do, will they not obey this order, and destroy out of the land all them that have familiar spirits?

These statements and queries are based upon the position assumed by the Religious Amendment party; and if their positions are tenable, then these questions must be answered in the affirmative; no other answer is admissible. And this is precisely the manner in which the Puri-

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\*"There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord; and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee." Deut. 18:10-12.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Gal. 5:19-21.

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Rev. 22:14, 15.



tans of New England reasoned two centuries ago. But all history attests that they made a most miserable failure in their efforts to act upon the principles which they laid down. They verily thought they were doing God service, but they stand condemned for their folly, and for the wanton violence which they did to the plainest principles of morality. If God holds the movers in those terrible scenes responsible for the lives that were sacrificed, then indeed are they to be pitied.

But what was the cause of their sad failure? And what is the defect in the reasonings and conclusions of the Religious Amendmentists? The answer to one of these questions is the answer to the other. Cotton Mather and his bigoted associates taught that the "interests of the church, and the maintenance of the true religion," demanded that these rulers should put the accused persons to death. For this demand they pleaded the warrant of a law of the Bible, and the precedent of Saul and other rulers of the theocracy or kingdom of Israel.

The answer to the above questions is found in the fact which we have repeatedly urged upon the attention of the National Reformers, namely, that we are in a different dispensation, and that there has not been, is not, and never will be upon earth by divine sanction, a human or civil government the counterpart of that of Israel. That was a theocracy, and afterwards a theocratic kingdom, such as cannot exist under the gospel. The antitype of that will be the kingdom of Christ, which the God of Heaven will set up. This kingdom will not be set up during the Saviour's priesthood, but when the time comes for him to take vengeance on his foes (2 Thess. 1:7, 8), and destroy all the kingdoms of this world. Dan. 2:44. The error into which the advocates of National Reform run, in referring to the action of Nehemiah and others, is in confounding things utterly unlike. It is not enough in a theocracy that the laws be given to the people, and that kings and governors be required to rule in accordance therewith, but divinely appointed and inspired teachers must be sent from time to time, to instruct them in the laws, to reprove them for their departures from the laws

—sometimes unintentional—and to lead them in emergencies where all human wisdom is at fault. But such a state of things cannot exist in a republic. A theocratic and republican Government in one is an impossibility. In a republic the people elect all their rulers, and the rulers are responsible to the people who elect them. Even if the people err in their judgment, and the ideas of the rulers are correct, the people must learn their errors by their own experience; to deprive them of their right of choice is to subvert the republic.

In the Government of Israel no such choice existed. Moses was chosen for their leader, not by the people, but by the Lord. Over and over they essayed to reject Moses, but the Lord interposed by his power. Once they decided to choose a leader in his stead, with the avowed purpose of having one who would carry out their will. And this they would have done if they had had a republican form of Government. If the Lord had given them the right to choose their rulers, they could have elected a leader in the place of Moses without incurring any guilt—without rebelling against God's authority. Nehemiah was divinely appointed to his office, and divinely inspired to his work, as were all the rulers and prophets of Israel.

The disastrous failure of the Puritans of Salem, in their efforts to enforce the law for the suppression of witchcraft, was owing to the fact that they had no Heaven-appointed and divinely inspired leader to direct them. They judged according to their own judgment—according to human wisdom. They were led by their own feelings and impressions, and mistook these for the mind of the Lord. They thought to bring the land under subjection to the will of God, but instead they brought upon it a lasting reproach. They essayed to model their Government after the theocracy of Israel, when God had neither instituted nor given any warrant for a theocracy. It is just so in the efforts of the National Reformers. They point to the example of prophets, priests, and kings as the precedent for their proposed action, when they have no prophets, priests, nor kings to follow the example. But without

these they have no right to act as they propose, for none but prophets, priests, and kings have any right or authority to fill the offices and endeavor to discharge the duties which the Lord assigned to prophets, priests, and kings. If men without any special ordination or inspiration essay to fill these offices, they become guilty of the foulest usurpation. Here is a sufficient reason why every Christian should oppose the machinations of these self-styled reformers.

And, as if purposely to give the fullest proof of their duplicity, or of their ignorance of the principles of government, they assert that they do not propose to make any radical change in the form of our Government; that they desire to retain its republican form of representation; yet they propose to take for their pattern a Government which had not a single feature of a republic, and copy the acts of those who did not represent the people, and who were not in any wise responsible to the people for their official acts. But their plans are chimerical. It is impossible, as everyone must own, to follow the precedents presented in the theocracy, or kingdom, of Israel and still retain our republican form of government. And their own writings show that they do not expect to have leaders of the same order as those who declared the will of God to Israel, or who will receive their messages from Heaven in the same manner that those did. Thus it was said in the *Christian Statesman*:—

“The churches and the pulpits have much to do in shaping and forming opinions on all moral questions, and with interpretations of Scripture on moral and *civil*, as well as on theological and ecclesiastical points. And it is probable that in the almost universal gathering of our citizens about these, the chief discussions and *the final decisions* of most points will be developed there.”

Mark this well. The final decisions *on civil* and moral points, as well as on theological and ecclesiastical, will be made in the churches and the pulpits. But the final decisions are not made at the beginning of discussions and agitations. How do they propose to reach the desired point? Hear the *Statesman* again:—



"But the changes will come gradually, and probably only after the whole frame-work of Bible legislation has been thoroughly canvassed by Congress and State Legislatures, by the Supreme Courts of the United States, and of the several States, and by lawyers and citizens generally."

Thus the "final decisions" will be developed in the churches after the "frame-work of Bible legislation" has been canvassed by Congresses, by Legislatures, in the civil courts, and by lawyers and citizens generally, which will carry the discussions of Bible legislation into party caucuses, beer halls, and dram-shops! for the *habitués* of the dens of vice will each have a vote on the settlement of the questions of Bible legislation; and at the polls each such vote will carry as much weight as that of the president of the National Reform Association. And when the will of the majority—good, bad, or indifferent—is expressed, and their decisions are legally enforced, then our model "reformers" will justify such transactions by pointing us to the example of Nehemiah and other inspired teachers and rulers! Was ever arrogance so arrogant or self-conceit so assuming?

And why will there be an "almost universal gathering" of the people around the churches? Because religious tests will then be required as qualifications for office, and, as Dr. Browne said in the Pittsburg National Convention, the office seekers will be the firm friends of this movement as soon as they are assured of its success. And as Dr. Hays said in the same convention, politicians who are now afraid of it "will bawl themselves hoarse in applause" when they become convinced that it must succeed. Ah, yes; this is the very thing to look for when the way to office is through the church! And such is the means by which they propose to elevate "the true religion," and to honor the institutions of Christianity.

The editor of the Cincinnati *Gazette* is a Christian, and a man of acknowledged ability. In an article on the subject of the proposed amendment he said:—

"The Government will continue to be administered by men of ordinary passions, such as are elected by the average intelligence and virtue, and the average ignorance and corruption, of

the voting population. Viciousness, and ignorance, and corruption will continue to be powers in the body politic the same as before, and these will continue to elect legislators, executives, and judges of their own sort."

This must be so if our republican form of government is retained; and any effort to enforce the laws, usages, and institutions of religion in such a Government, will reproduce the horrors enacted at Salem. It will arouse and intensify all the passions of the people. The rights of the minority will be trampled underfoot, because bigotry and misguided zeal will pervert the judgment and drown the reason of those who may for the time have power in their hands.

Religious usages and institutions are *for the church*, and not *for the civil government*. It is the duty of the church to keep witchcraft and every other abomination from its midst; but the civil government has no right to act in such matters. Had the Puritans regarded this distinction, they would not have stained their hands with blood. And if our modern "National Reformers" would regard this distinction, they would not strive to so change our Government as to make it possible for such follies and crimes as those of Salem to be re-enacted in our land. "We are not better than our fathers." They who clamor for power which they have no right to use, will be sure to use it when it is obtained. And when the flood-gates of persecution are once opened, no power can stay the current until it has left desolation and ruin in its course.

From the course pursued by those favoring the religious amendment, and their unwillingness candidly to examine reasons, and weigh the consequences which must follow their schemes, we fear they will not be warned to desist from their work. But if they do succeed, we are fully determined that the wrong shall not lie at our door. We shall continue to sound the alarm, whether they will hear or forbear.

J. H. WAGGONER.

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