**“The Legacy from Our Fathers” American Sentinel 2, 2.**

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One of the stock arguments of the National Reformers in favor of their movement is that loyalty to the memory of our forefathers demands it. One of the reasons given in the preamble of their constitution is, “that this country was settled by Christian men with Christian ends in view, and that they gave a distinctly Christian character to the institutions which they established.” And “the legacy which we have received from our fathers” is a common method of commending those “Christian institutions” which they wish to enforce by civil law. We wish to notice a few things in the early history of our country to see how strong this argument really is. {AMS February 1887, p. 11.1}

One of the institutions which we received as a legacy from our fathers was slavery. All are acquainted with the fact that in the colonies, both North and South, slavery was practiced. In McMaster’s “History of the People of the United States” we read the following:- {AMS February 1887, p. 11.2}

“If the infamy of holding slaves belongs to the South, the greater infamy of supplying slaves must be shared by England and the North. While the States were yet colonies, to buy negroes and sell them into slavery had become a scourge of profit to the inhabitants of many New England towns. Scarce a year passed by but numbers of slavers went out from Boston, from Medford, from Salem, from Providence, from Newport, from Bristol, in Rhode Island. The trade was of a threefold kind: Molasses brought from Jamaica was turned to rum; the rum dispatched to Africa bought negroes; the negroes, carried to Jamaica or the Southern ports, were exchanged for molasses, which, in turn, taken back to New England, was quickly made into *rum.”-Chap. 7, par. 15.* {AMS February 1887, p. 11.3}

It cost the nation millions of dollars and thousands of lives to get rid of this legacy, yet Mr. Gault, speaking of the National Reform Association, is willing to have another revolution equally bloody, if necessary to secure their ends. {AMS February 1887, p. 11.4}

But slavery will hardly be called a Christian institution, hence it cannot be what they refer to in their constitution. We must remember, however, that it was engaged in by the Christian men who settled this country; and even they could not give it a Christian character. Let us look, then, at some of the acts which they did in the name of and for Christianity. In the “Encyclopedia Britannica,” art. “Quakers,” we read the following:- {AMS February 1887, p. 11.5}

“The earliest appearance of Quakers in America is a remarkable one. In July, 1656, two women Quakers, Mary Fisher and Aria Austin, arrived at Boston. Under the general law against heresy their books were burnt by the hangman, they were searched for signs of witchcraft, they were imprisoned for five weeks and then sent away. During the same year eight others were sent back to England. {AMS February 1887, p. 11.6}

“In 1657 and 1658 laws were passed to prevent the introduction of’ Quakers into Massachusetts, and it was enacted that on the first conviction one ear should be cut off, on the second the remaining ear, and that on the third conviction the tongue should be gored with a hot iron. Fines were laid upon all who entertained Quakers or were present at their meetings. Thereupon the Quakers, who were perhaps not without the obstinacy of which Marcus Antoninus complained in the early Christians, rushed to Massachusetts as if invited, and the result was that the general court of the colony banished them on pain of death, and four Quakers, three men and one woman, were hung for refusing to depart from the jurisdiction, or obstinately returning within it. That the Quakers were irritating cannot be denied; some of them appear to have publicly mocked the institutions and the rulers of the colony, and to have interrupted public worship; and some of their men and women too acted with fanaticism and disorder. But even such conduct furnishes but a poor apology for inflicting stripes and death on men and women. The particulars of the proceedings of Governor Endicott and the magistrates of New England as given in Besse are startling to read. On the restoration of Charles II. a memorial was presented to him by the Quakers in England, stating the persecutions which their fellow members had undergone in New England. Even the careless Charles was moved to issue an order to the colony which effectually stopped the hanging of Quakers for their religion, though it by no means put an end to the persecution of the body in New England.” {AMS February 1887, p. 11.7}

In McClintock and Strong’s Encyclopedia, art. “Baptists,” we find the following as a further illustration of how the Puritan Fathers put the stamp of Christianity on this country:- {AMS February 1887, p. 11.8}

“Massachusetts issues laws against them in 1644, imprisoned several Baptists in 1651, and banished others in 1669. In 1680 the doors of a Baptist meeting-house were nailed up. In New York laws were issued against them in 1662, in Virginia in 1664. with the beginning of the eighteenth century the persecution greatly abated. They were released from tithes in 1727 in Massachusetts, in 1729 in New Hampshire and Connecticut, but not before 1785 in Virginia. The spread of their principles was greatly hindered by these persecutions.” {AMS February 1887, p. 11.9}

In Bancroft’s “History of the United States,” we find an account of the struggle which Roger Williams and the Baptists had for religious liberty. Since the National Re-formers are desirous of having this country sustain the same relation to religion which it did then, we quote quite largely from those chapters. In the following paragraphs the reader will find a very correct picture of the result of National Reform principles:- {AMS February 1887, p. 12.1}

“A fugitive from English persecution, he had revolved the nature of intolerance, and had arrived at its only effectual remedy, the sanctity of conscience. In soul matters, he would have no weapons but soul weapons. The civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control opinion; should punish guilt, but never violate inward freedom. The principle contained within itself an entire reformation of theological jurisprudence; it would blot from the statute-book the felony of non-conformity; would quench the fires that persecution had so long kept burning; would repeal every law compelling attendance on public worship; would abolish tithes and all forced contributions to the maintenance of religion; would give an equal protection to every form of religious faith; and never suffer the force of the Government to be employed against the dissenter’s meeting-house, the Jewish synagogue, or the Roman cathedral. In the unwavering assertion of his views, he never changed his position; the sanctity of con-science was the great tenet, which, with all its consequences, he defended, as he first trod the shores of New England; and, in his extreme old age, it was the last pulsation of his heart. The doctrine was a logical consequence of either of the two great distinguishing principles of the Reformation, as well of justification by faith alone as of the equality of all believers; and it was sure to be one day accepted by the whole Protestant world. But it placed the young emigrant in direct opposition to the system of the founders of Massachusetts, who were bent on making the State a united body of believers.” {AMS February 1887, p. 12.2}

“The Government avoided an explicit rupture with the Church of England; Williams would hold no communion with it on account of its intolerance; ‘for,’ said he, ‘the doctrine of persecution for cause of conscience is most evidently and lamentably contrary to the doctrine of Christ Jesus.’ The magistrates insisted on the presence of every man at public worship; Williams reprobated the law; the worst statute in the English code was that which did but enforce attendance upon the parish church. To compel men to unite with those of a different creed, be regarded as an open violation of their natural rights; to drag to public worship the irreligious and the unwilling seemed only like requiring hypocrisy. ‘An unbelieving soul is dead in sin,’ such was his argument; and to force the indifferent from one worship to another ‘was like shifting a dead man into several changes of apparel.’ ‘No one should be bound to worship, or,’ he added, ‘to maintain a worship, against his own consent.’ ‘What!’ exclaimed his antagonists, amazed at his tenets; ‘is not the laborer worthy of his hire?’ ‘Yes,’ replied he, ‘from them that hire him.’ {AMS February 1887, p. 12.3}

“The Magistrates were selected exclusively from the members of the church; with equal propriety, reasoned Williams, might ‘a doctor physick or a pilot’ be selected according to his skill in theology and his standing in the church.”-*Chap*. *9, par. 54, 70, 71.* {AMS February 1887, p. 12.4}

“Anabaptism was to the establishment a dangerous rival. When Clarke, the pure and tolerant Baptist of Rhode Island, one of the happy few who have connected their name with the liberty and happiness of a commonwealth, began to preach to a small audience in Lynn, he was seized by the civil officers. Being compelled to attend public worship with the congregation of the town, he expressed his aversion by a harmless indecorum, which would have been without excuse, had his presence been voluntary. He and his companions were tried, and condemned to pay a fine of twenty or thirty pounds; and Holmes, who refused to pay his fine, was whipped unmercifully. {AMS February 1887, p. 12.5}

*‘* Since a particular form of worship had become apart of the civil establishment, irreligion was now to be punished as a civil offense. The State was a model of Christ’s kingdom on earth; treason against the civil Government was treason against Christ; and reciprocally, as the gospel had the right paramount, blasphemy, or what a jury should call blasphemy, was the highest offense in the catalogue of crimes. To deny any book of the Old or New Testament to be the written and infallible word of God was punishable by fine or by stripes, and in case of obstinacy, by exile or death. Absence from ‘the ministry of the word’ was punished by a fine. {AMS February 1887, p. 12.6}

“By degrees the spirit of the establishment began to subvert the fundamental principles of independency. The liberty of prophesying was refused, except the approbation of four elders, or of a county court, had been obtained. Remonstrance was useless. The union of Church and State was fast corrupting both: it mingled base ambition with the former; it gave a false direction to the legislation of the latter. And in 1658 the general court claimed for itself, for the counsel, and for any two organic churches, the right of silencing any person who was not as yet ordained. The creation of a national, uncompromising church led the Congregationalists of Massachusetts to the indulgence of the passions which had disgraced their English persecutors; and Laud was justified by the men whom he had wronged.”-Chap. *10, par. 78-80.* {AMS February 1887, p. 12.7}

Many more quotations might be made, but these are sufficient. Let it be remembered that the men who practiced these cruelties were Christian men urged on by Christian ministers. These men were no worse than are the men who to-day occupy similar positions. Their action was simply the natural result of the idea that the State was “a model of Christ’s kingdom on earth.” And this, let it be remembered, is the position taken by National Reformers. Whoever wishes to know the result of the success of the National Reform Association, has only to read the history of the Salem Witchcraft and of the persecutions of the dissenting Baptists and Quakers. Those are the only “Christian features” which our forefathers gave to the Government. We do not wish to disparage the men who settled this country; they lived up to the light which they had. They had themselves suffered oppression for their religious convictions, and had never known such a thing as religious toleration, consequently it took them some time to accord to others that freedom which they demanded for themselves. {AMS February 1887, p. 12.8}

But we are happy to say that these “Christian features” were not permanently stamped upon our Government. By the time that the ship of State was fairly launched, men had learned more of the principles of religious toleration. The Declaration of Independence recognized the fact that all men had equal rights, and the Constitution of the United States declares that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion prohibiting the free exercise thereof” and that “no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust, under the United States.” {AMS February 1887, p. 12.9}

The Constitution comprises all that we have received from our forefathers. We believe it to be the best Constitution ever formed by man, because it carefully guards the rights of all, and leaves the conscience of everyone free. It is this Constitution which makes the United States the best country in the world for the spread of the gospel. And allows perfect freedom for the preaching of the gospel from the Bible alone, we are desirous of having it kept as it is, and we cannot countenance those men who, having far more light than the Puritan Fathers had, would revive in this country the practice of the Dark Ages. {AMS February 1887, p. 12.10}

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