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REPUBLIC

— OF —

ISRAEL.

A Theocracy and a Republic Compared.

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THE REPUBLIC OF ISRAEL.



THIS expression must sound strange to the ears of every reader of the Bible; but we adopt it from the National Reformers, who in their wondrous zeal for a religious Government in the United States, and in their equally wondrous determination to bend the facts of the Bible to suit their purpose, actually assert that the Government of Israel, instituted at Sinai, was a republic!

We propose to show that these self-styled Reformers are in error in their theory of the kingdom of Christ, both in respect to the history and the prophecies of the Bible, and will briefly examine the subject of history, to show that they greatly err in affirming that what they seek in the United States is in conformity with the Government of Israel as it existed under the immediate direction of Jehovah. A writer in the *Christian Statesman* used the following language:—

“The nation of Israel was organized at Mount Sinai, as ‘the custodians of the law, liberty, and religion of mankind.’ A republican form of government was given them. The three departments of government, the legislative, executive, and judicial, were substantially represented in it. Moses, as the judge or president, was the chief executive officer. The seventy

elders formed the Congress of General Government. The court of the gate or civil Sanhedrim was the arbiter of justice. The heads of the tribes and princes thereof constituted the tribal or State governments. It was a representative Government. The people were sovereign. They elected their rulers to represent them in office."

We are now dealing with *facts*—facts of history—facts important in their relation to the question at issue, and it is, therefore, our duty to characterize statements in correct terms. The above extract is worse than a mere "fancy sketch;" it is a shameful perversion of the history given in the Bible. We have seldom seen so much assumption in so little space, as the above paragraph contains.

1. When Israel was called out of Egypt, the Government under which they were led was a *theocracy*, pure and simple. And everyone knows that a theocracy is the very opposite of a republic.

2. There was no legislative department in the Government. A republic was well described by President Lincoln as a Government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." But no such Government was instituted at Sinai, or at any other place or time, for Israel. Even Moses, the highest among them, was not a legislator; *Moses never made any laws*. He enforced that, and that only, which he received directly from the Lord.

3. The seventy elders were not legislators; they never made any laws. They did not constitute a "Congress" in any sense in which that word is used in a republic or in any representative Government. The *Statesman* and its correspondents can make these assertions good only by pointing to the act by which

they were constituted a legislative body, or pointing to some law which they enacted. This they cannot do. But by their failure to do this they will stand convicted of misrepresenting the Bible to serve the purpose of their worldly ambition. There is not in the land a Sunday-school scholar of intelligence and study, who does not know that God alone gave laws to Israel, which Moses and the seventy elders were to enforce and administer, with the explicit direction to add nothing to them, nor take anything from them.

4. The patriarchal system existed to the time of the exodus. "Elders" were aged men, heads of families or tribes. The father of the family was priest and ruler, no matter how old his sons might be, nor how numerous their families. And his prerogative descended to the first-born. This order continued until the Lord chose one family to serve as priests for the nation. At first elders were such in this sense only.

5. The Lord directed that seventy "from the elders" be selected by Moses—not making or to make them elders, but—because they were elders. The word of the Lord was as follows:—

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there; and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone." "And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders; and it came

to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease." Num. 11 : 16, 17, 25.

6. The assertion that "the people were sovereign" is false even to an absurdity. They possessed no sovereignty in the Government in any respect whatever. Neither the people, nor Moses, nor the seventy, were consulted in regard to the laws they were to obey, or to the penalties to be enforced. They entered into covenant with God to be his people and to obey him, but God conferred no legislative power upon any of them.

7. Although the Government was a theocracy, under the immediate and sole direction of God, the religious and civil elements were kept distinct, the priests having no inheritance with the tribes, and all but those designated by the Lord as priests being ineligible to the priesthood. All religious rites being ordered by the Lord, the civil rulers had no authority to control them, or interfere in their performance. The prophets through whom the Lord directed the affairs of the Government, might or might not be priests. Sometimes this office was given to women. All was ordered of the Lord, and the people had no voice in any of these matters.

8. The people finally demanded a king, not to better their Government, but to be as the nations around them. Though the Lord listened to their request, the thing displeased him. He gave them a king, but he reserved to himself the right to choose the king for them. Even in this they were not consulted. Saul was chosen of the Lord and anointed before the people knew anything about him. He was rejected—not by the people, but by the Lord—and David was

chosen and anointed in like manner, without the knowledge of the people. And the powers of the kings were so limited by the rules and laws which were given to them, that Israel was once sorely afflicted because King David presumed to take a census of the the people without consulting the Lord!

9. The religious rites of Israel were mostly types, not models to be followed by future Governments. And no Government could adopt them as models without denying the priesthood of Christ, the antitype.

And now, reader, we leave it to you to judge in this matter. Was there any semblance of a republic in the Government of Israel, in any period of its history? Are not the National Reformers guilty of deception an trying to palm off such statements as those we have quoted, as historical truths of the Bible? We have claimed, and we insist, that their movement contemplates an entire change in the structure of our Government. It is impossible to carry their plans into effect and to retain the republican features of our Government. The rights of certain classes of citizens will be ruthlessly trampled underfoot as surely as they succeed in changing the Constitution as they desire and intend to do.

But one other feature of their contemplated work will now be noticed. It is closely related to the subject herein considered. By them it is termed "Bible legislation." We quote again the words of a writer in the *Statesman*:—

"But the change 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."

What is meant by "Bible legislation"? Nothing else but legislation upon the Bible and its teachings. This writer says that "the chief discussions and final decisions of most points will be developed" in the churches. But we deny the right of Congress, Legislatures, Courts, lawyers, and also of the churches, to legislate concerning the doctrines and duties contained in the Bible. When they propose to do this, we ask them to show their credentials. Who has given them authority to enter upon any such work? Was it the province of the "Congress" of Israel, to "legislate" concerning what God commanded them to do and to teach? Where is the evidence? Such power was never committed even to the apostles of Christ. They taught that which they received by revelation; and they taught that at the death of the testator the covenant was ratified, and nothing could thereafter be added to it. Their office was neither legislative nor executive, but ministerial. But certain ones are now dissatisfied with the heavenly calling of "ambassadors for Christ;" they choose rather to be self-appointed legislators and executives; they aspire to a position to which God never appointed mortal man.

No one can legislate upon a matter which is above his authority; and he who legislates upon the Bible, and declares *authoritatively* what man may and may not do in regard to the word of God, and how man must and must not receive its precepts, truly exalts himself above the word of the Most High. Jehovah has magnified his word above all his name (Ps. 138:2) and his righteous justice will not long suffer such an insult to his authority.

J. H. WAGGONER.

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AMERICAN SENTINEL,

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