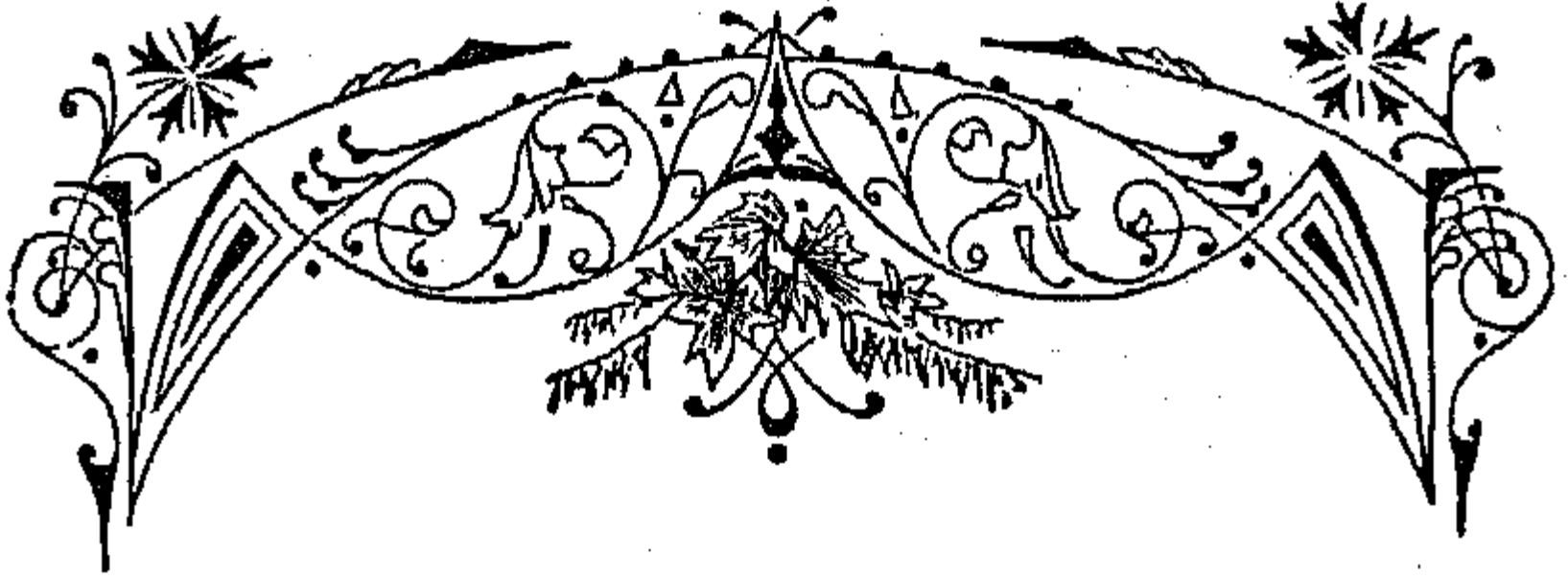


a community called ...

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THE MAINE, A CHRISTIAN LAW.

“WERE a man to come into my house or store, under the Maine Law, to seize and destroy my property,” said one, “I would be the death of him.” He evidently did not view it as a Christian law; certainly not in his understanding of it. If he misunderstood the law, and had something else before him, he was not condemning the law, but a creature of his own imagination. But many condemn the law who correctly understand it. In their view it is not a Christian law, and should not be enacted by a Christian State. Are they right? The question is important. Is THE MAINE LAW A CHRISTIAN LAW? Some will

say, No; for Christianity has nothing to do with human laws. Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world." "All they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword." Christianity governs not by law, but by love. "Law worketh wrath." Moral suasion alone is to restrain and control the world. Yet the blessed Saviour recognized law: "Render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's." And, said an Apostle, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; the powers that be are ordained of God. For he (the civil ruler) is a minister of God to thee for good—a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." But civil government must be consonant with the divine—just and good, yea, of the very spirit and temper of the Gospel. Is it so with the Maine Law, or is that earthly and devilish?

1. Let us look at its object. What would it accomplish? Any thing consonant with the end of the Gospel, or something opposed? Under Christ, the old serpent shall be bound a thousand years, that he shall deceive no more. The Maine Law, too, would bind a de

ceiver. It would break up and root out the traffic in intoxicating drinks. It would remove from the community every place of temptation to drunkenness. It would dry up a great fountain of pollution and crime. It would save souls from death and prevent a multitude of sins. The license law aimed only at the regulation, not the suppression, of the enormous evil. It said, "Let the upas-tree live; let government derive a revenue from its merchandise—only let it not be too exuberant, that too many perish in its deadly shade; trim its branches, circumscribe its uses"—while the ground was strewed with the bones of millions. But the Maine Law lays the ax at the root of the tree. It says, "Away with these snares and traps, these cups of poison. Thou shalt do thy brother no evil. Thou shalt not tempt. Thou shalt not kill." Surely it is Christian in its object—the deliverance of the world from the power of the devil, the prevention of thousands and millions from an entrance in the drunkard's path; the very destruction of this path, that all the nations may walk in sobriety and truth.

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2. Let us examine its measures. How does it accomplish its object? Does it not do it in a Christian way? No, says one, for it unites Church and State; it brings law to arrest a moral evil and support a moral principle. And what if it does? Does not the law arrest stealing, gambling, killing, and Sabbath-breaking? Are not these moral evils? Does not the law protect the defenseless, and is it unchristian? Is not the magistrate appointed to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil? But it deprives me, says another, of my liberty—the liberty of doing as I will with mine own. This liberty the Gospel gives me. Where? On what page of his Gospel has Jesus Christ said, You may with your own tempt another to sin: you may with your own poison his body, ruin his soul? Has he not said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself?” “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” Use your own but never use it to your neighbor’s injury. “But the Maine Law destroys my property without remuneration. This is not Christian

ty, but robbery." What is your property? Let us examine. God hath given us the cattle upon a thousand hills. But he hath said, "If an OX gore a man that he die, he shall be put to death," and if his owner knowingly permits him to do the deed, the owner too shall be put to death. And the Maine law says, If you expose intoxicating liquors for sale, thereby occasioning drunkenness, pauperism, murders, it shall be taken from you as a righteous penalty and destroyed. Its measures are neither unrighteous nor unchristian. They prevent frightful ruin by removing the cause. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out; if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

3. Let us look at the results. Are they Christian or anti-Christian? How does it affect the poor drunkard? He has been led into temptation. At the dram-shop he has wasted his all, and become a curse to his family and neighborhood, and a fit heir of hell. The

wretch, in agony, (for the appetite burns like the everlasting fires,) curses God and the law. But the appetite dies, reason resumes her seat, the tears of penitence fall, the family and home are beloved, food and clothing are provided, labor is sweet, the Sabbath pleasant, the house of God is sought, and heaven is made the prize to be won. Is this result Christian or devilish? How does it affect the youth of a village? What must it be to grow up in a place where a young man has no temptation to be a drunkard? What must be its effects upon the violent, the brutal, the ferocious? The records of our jails, etc., already tell us. Commitments are reduced four fifths. Crime is diminished in the most vicious and immoral places from fifty to seventy-five per cent. What are the results upon the Sabbath—Christian or anti-Christian? How would it affect the Sabbath to have the thousands of liquor shops, now open and full, closed on that day alone? What must be the result of a Maine Law upon all the religious interests of men—upon the prosperity of Zion, upon

revivals of religion, upon the conversion of the world? Through the liquor traffic and evils attendant the heathen world has been turned into a sea of blood. The Church has long cried in her agony for something like a Maine Law. When she has received it she leaps with joy. She sees its results: the Sabbath quiet, the house of God filled, souls converted, God glorified, the heathen saved.

Professed Christian! read, reflect, decide for yourself. Is not the Maine Law Christian? Do you say, I dislike it? Why? Has it made a single family wretched? Has it wasted a single dollar? You say, It has created anger, wrath, malice, evil-speaking. And has not every law on God's statute-book done the same? Is it therefore evil? Perhaps you are an owner in some property which has been affected, some farm producing corn, or rye, or hops, or fruit; or some store, hotel, or distillery, which will suffer detriment from the law; and you are angry, as was Jonah at the destruction of the gourd. But do you well to be angry? Think of more people than inhabited

Nineveh that will be saved by the Maine Law. What is your gourd to the millions that may be kept from death? Perhaps you are a minister, and have warned your people against it. Have you done well? When you shall meet them at the bar of God, and find one and another at the left hand of the Judge who went down to a drunkard's grave sustained by your opposition from the pulpit to a Maine Law, will it give you comfort and secure the approbation of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire?

Christian legislator! how should you legislate for a Maine Law?—guided by Christian principle, or by the principles of the prince of this world? Christian freeman! how should you go to the polls in the exercise of the elective franchise?—in the liberty to do good and obey conscience with which Christ has made you free, or bound in chains, making your country's destruction sure?