

**CHURCHES OF NEW-HAMPSHIRE:  
AN HISTORICAL DISCOURSE,  
DELIVERED BEFORE THE GENERAL  
ASSOCIATION OF NEW-HAMSHIRE,  
AT LITTLETON, SEPT. 11, 1876**

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**E. D. SANBORN**

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## DISCOURSE.

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Church and state are among the most significant and comprehensive words in the English language. Their etymology connects the apostolic age with our own. Their history includes almost everything that was worthy of record, since the advent of Christ. An exhaustive definition of the two words, would reveal to every human being, his whole duty as a citizen and Christian.

The conflicting claims of church and state have given birth to more battles, both with the sword and pen, than all other human interests combined. Christianity came to the Anglo-Saxons from Rome. The first missionaries, sent by pope Gregory, landed in Kent, A. D. 597; but, strange to say, the word "church" preceded them in its Northern march. It was first received by the Goths, on the lower Danube, from Constantino-ple; and these Goths, who were converted to Christianity by Bishop Ulphilas, about A. D., 350, lent the word to other German tribes; and among them, to the ancestors of the English Saxons.

"Church" is formed from an adjective derived from the Greek word "Kurios," and means, pertaining to the Lord; or, when applied to an edifice, the house of the Lord. The old Saxons spelled it "circe," sounding the "c" like "k," which pronunciation the Scotch retain in their word "Kirk," and the Germans, in "Kirche." In its infancy it was an association of men who held like opinions, believed the same religious truths and entertained similar sentiments and feelings. Says Guizot: "The first Christians met together to enjoy their common emotions, their common religious convictions. At this time, we find no settled form of doctrine, no settled rules of discipline, no body of magistrates." They were morally governed by men among them of superior ability. But no society can long exist without rules. This union of believers had doctrines to teach, precepts to enforce, promises to promulgate; hence, they formed an ecclesias-

tical government, choosing their most worthy men to preside in their assemblies, whom they named elders, overseers and deacons. At the beginning of the sixth century, the organization of the church was complete; and its ministers were importuned to assume temporal as well as spiritual power, because they were the best educated and most worthy men in every community.

From this period, for a thousand years, the church and the state became antagonistic; each sought to engross the entire wealth, power and magnificence of Christendom. Popes and kings contended, with tongue and pen; with bows and bills, for the right of investiture. Emperors could not appoint their own cabinets without the consent of the pope; and archbishops were often made royal chancellors and premiers. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, came the convulsions of the Reformation, which, like the explosion of a magazine, rent and shattered the walls of the stately structure which wily and ambitious priests had reared round the Christian church. Germany was, in consequence, devastated by war and drenched in blood; England was torn by civil dissensions in church and state; and, for three hundred years, men were oftener asking, with anxious solicitude, "what shall I believe?" rather than "what shall I do?" A host of contending sects arose, each claiming the exclusive right of dictating the public faith. Conservatives and reformers waged a war of extermination against each other. The victors retained and enjoyed the spoils; the vanquished submitted or emigrated.

Most of the American colonies were united by religious ties. Pilgrims and Puritans occupied New England. The Plymouth colony of Pilgrims was far less influential than that of the Puritans of Massachusetts. The latter colony has left the impress of her institutions on nearly one half the states of our Union. All the American colonies brought with them, in some form, the conviction that the state should support the church. In most of the new constitutions, religious tests were inserted. In New-Hampshire, to-day, a man can not legally hold any important office who is not of the protestant religion. "It belongs to American Liberty," says Lieber, "to separate entirely from the

political government, the institution which has for its object the support and diffusion of religion." This is, now, theoretically, true; but, it has required the labor of a whole century to undo the heavy burdens which the union of church and state imposed upon the people. In Massachusetts, the church was a spiritual Republic, and it was, for many years, the duty of the civil magistrate to execute its decrees. In the first Congress, held at Philadelphia, John Adams declared, "that a change in the solar system might be expected as soon as a change in the ecclesiastical system of Massachusetts." In all the old thirteen colonies, at the period of the Revolution, there existed an abiding conviction that the state should provide for the support of religion. The ablest divines in New England uttered such sentiments as these: "that in a flourishing and respectable civil state, the worship of God must be maintained;" "that the laws for maintaining public worship and decently supporting the teachers of religion are absolutely necessary to the well being of society;" "that the restraints of religion would be broken down, by leaving the subject of public worship to the humors of the multitude;" "that a government that should neglect to punish profaneness and impiety and provide for the support of the public worship of God, would be guilty of a daring affront to Heaven." Still later, even Judge Story, a Unitarian, doubted whether a free government can be permanent, where the public worship of God and the support of religion constitute no part of the policy or duty of the State."

At the beginning of the Revolution, the Congregationalists, though confined mostly to New England, were the most numerous and influential body of Christians. Their clergy were the standing order, were settled or dismissed by the major vote of the towns where they officiated, and were more revered by the people than the magistrates.\* They numbered seven hun-

\*President Quincy has written the following description of a scene at Andover, Mass., about the beginning of this century. It is Sunday morning. "The whole space before the meeting-house was filled with a waiting, respectful and expecting multitude. At the moment of service, the pastor (Rev. Jonathan French), issued from his mansion, with Bible and manuscript sermon under one arm and his wife leaning on the other flanked by his negro man, on his side, as his wife was by her negro woman, the little negroes being distributed according to their sex, by the side of their respective parents. Then followed every other member of the family, according to age and rank, making, often with family visitants a somewhat formidable procession. As soon as it appeared, the congregation, as if led by one spirit began to move towards the door of the church, and before the procession reached it, all were in their seats. As soon as the pastor entered, the whole congregation rose and stood until he was in the pulpit and his family seated."



dred churches. Their ministers were learned men, either graduates of Harvard and Yale or of foreign Universities. The Baptists ranked next in numbers. They were scattered through the colonies and were especially numerous in Virginia. They had about three hundred churches. They did not differ from the Congregationalists in church organization, nor in doctrine, except in the practice of immersion.\* They discouraged an educated ministry, and held "that every brother that is qualified by God has a right to preach according to the measure of faith." The Church of England held the next place. It was the oldest religious body in the colonies. The wealth and social distinction of its members gave that denomination great power, especially in the Southern states. Their clergymen were, usually, ordained in the old country. The Revolution almost annihilated these churches by separating them from state support. In Virginia, Patrick Henry "hurled the hot thunderbolts of his wrath against the tithe gathering clergy," in New England, where congregationalism held exclusive sway, public sentiment discouraged its continuance.

The Presbyterians, at the Revolution, were almost as numerous as the Episcopalians, having about three hundred churches, chiefly in the Middle states. They had a strong and vigorous church government, a severe and rigid theology and a learned ministry. The prejudice in that church against written sermons was so great that, up to the close of the last century, "a man's reputation would be ruined, should his manuscript be seen." Several other denominations then existed, as the Dutch Reformed, the German Reformed and the Lutheran, each numbering about sixty churches. In 1776, the population of the colonies was estimated at three and a half millions, with less than two thousand churches, or one minister for seventeen hundred souls. In 1870, the population had increased to thirty-eight millions,

\*In the Baptist historical volume edited by Rev. Dr. Moss, we find what is probably an accurate estimate of the strength of the denomination as can be had. The statistics given show that the Baptists have increased from 35,800 members in 1776, to 1,815,300 in 1876. Those in all other countries of the world only amount to a total of 400,000, nearly half of whom are in England. The increase has been most remarkable in the Southern States; for while the 4,500 in Massachusetts have increased to 43,360 in a hundred years, the 14,900 of Virginia are now 169,310, and the 425 of Georgia have grown to 174,531. Kentucky follows with 144,267, and North Carolina with 113,414; then come New York and Tennessee, nearly equal. Almost half the Baptists of the United States are found within six adjoining Southern States. They have now 80 educational institutions of all kinds, and 21,376 churches.

the churches to seventy-two thousand, or one for about five hundred of the population.

The denominations then ranked, in members, in the following order: 1, Methodists; 2, Baptists; 3, Presbyterians; 4, Roman Catholics; 5, Christians; 6, Lutherans; 7, Congregationalists; 8, Protestant Episcopalians. Our own church, in a century, had fallen from the first to the seventh in rank. The aggregate sum of church property, owned by all denominations, was estimated, in 1870, at three hundred and fifty-four millions of dollars.\* A tax, levied on this sum, would yield, to the several states, a large revenue. The property belonging to five hundred and forty-five colleges and other Institutions conferring degrees, would probably equal that owned by the churches; and if libraries be included, would far exceed it. It is estimated that Cambridge college alone, would, if taxed, be obliged to pay to the state, sixty thousand dollars annually, a sum nearly equal to the entire income of the colony, when they founded the college, only ten years after their arrival in Boston. This fact shows what the church has done for New England; for this college which has been the model of most of the colleges, since founded, was the offspring of the Puritan church. But it is not necessary, here and now, to speak of Pilgrims or Puritans. Their record is known wherever the muse of history has a worshiper; I was about to say, wherever the sun shines or rain falls.

#### EARLY CHURCHES OF NEW-HAMPSHIRE.

The energetic proprietors of New-Hampshire and Maine were not moved to plant colonies in the wilderness to extend the area of freedom or promote the interests of religion, but to aggrandize their houses and increase their private fortunes. Mason and Gorges were not democrats but royalists; not Puritans but cavaliers; not Independents but Episcopalians. The men they hired to fell the trees, till the soil, fish, hunt and mine, in the new world, were not exiles for conscience' sake, but from love of gain. No provision was made by masters or servants for the preaching of the gospel. No man cared for their souls. The first churches were formed at Hampton and Exeter. Hampton

\*The Statistics, here cited, are from a very able article, in the N. A. Review, for Jan., 1876.

claims precedence in time ; for, when the place was incorporated as a plantation, in 1635, some of the grantees were already "united together by church government." "The original members of the church and the first settlers of the town, generally, were Puritans ; many of them were from the county of Norfolk, England, where Christians of this class were very numerous." They brought a pastor with them. They soon erected a church of logs, where, literally shrouded "in a dim religious light," they paid their vows to the Most High. The first pastor of this first-born church of a new state, and the father of the town, was Rev. Stephen Bachiler, an ancestor, on the mother's side, of Daniel Webster. The settlement at Exeter, the same year, began its existence by the organizing of a church and the founding of a state. Eight members of the church of Boston followed Rev. John Wheelwright in his compulsory exile, and at once formed themselves into the first church of Exeter. These were all Calvinists of the strictest sect. Thus the leaven of Puritanism was hidden in two of the four rising towns of New-Hampshire ; and in process of time, through the influence of Massachusetts, the whole lump was leavened. The History of the New-Hampshire Churches, by Rev. R. F. Lawrence, gives a graphic account of the origin of the first church in Portsmouth. I will quote a passage : " 'Therefore, Honorable and worthy countrymen,' said Captain Smith to the New-Hampshire colonists, 'let not the meanness of the word *fish* distaste you, for it will afford you as good gold as the mines of Potosi, with less hazard and charge, and more certainty and facility.' This discloses, in the briefest manner, the origin of Portsmouth, for that lofty and self-forgetting devotion to great principles which baptized many of the early settlements lining the New England coast never set its seal on the brow of Strawberry Bank. The first colonists, fishmongers of London, more intent on trade than religion, arrived three years after the Pilgrims at Plymouth. They first settled at Little Harbor, nor was it until seven years that houses began to dot the ridge which ran along from Pitts street to Chapel Hill, then called 'the Bank.' Here the church, with its wholesome discipline and heavenly comforts, found no early home. Though a chapel and parsonage seem to have been