

PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY.

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey." Matthew 25:14-15.

Communism is the only modern religion that does not claim Jesus Christ as its founder. Communism could not claim Christ as founder, for He was no Communist. He believed in private ownership of property. He believed very strongly that every man is entitled to the fruits of his own labor. Nowhere does he say, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." He did not believe it is wrong for a man to receive superior pay when he acquires greater skill. If a man built his house on the sand and lost it, it was his house. If he built it on a rock and saved it, it was still his. If a man took his five talents and traded with them and gained five more talents, the increase was his. If he took his talent and buried it in the ground, he lost even the original talent that was given him. He had but little sympathy for the man who came whining that he had so little to start with.

If ever a nation was built on the sacredness of property rights ours was. Most of our ancestors came from the propertyless peasants of Europe. They had never owned anything of value. Even the vassal's ax and plow went to the landlord when he died. He lived on another man's land; he came and went at another man's bidding. His children could not marry without the Lord's consent. Here in the wilderness

he found a home that was his. It was a rugged and untamed wilderness, but it belonged to him.

"The breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock-bound coast;
And the woods against the sky,
Their giant branches tossed;
And the heavy night hung dark
The hills and waters o'er--
When a band of exiles moored their bark
On a wild New England shore.

Amidst the storm they sang,
And the stars heard, and the sea!
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
To the anthem of the free:
The ocean eagle soared
From his nest by the white waves foam,
And the rocking pines of the forest roared:-
This was their welcome home!"

How they loved this land! They loved it chiefly because it gave them something to call their own, something they could keep for life and pass on to their children when they died. If America ever becomes Communist it will have to repudiate all its sacred history, all the the founding fathers loved and cherished, all the rich heritage that has made America great.

Owning something does something to a person. One who has ever owned a plot of ground, a house and lot, a farm or a store can never be the same person again. The New England settlers found their homesteads covered with tall beautiful pines. Cut one of these down, trim off the branches, cut out the top and

off peel d the bark and one had a ship mast ready made. The wood was strong and durable; it was light and steady before the wind. The King of England thought these trees were God's gift to the British Navy. He marked certain trees on every homestead and claimed them for the royal navy. But he said nothing about paying the owners for the trees. He quickly found that ownership of property had changed his subjects across the sea. If the land was theirs, why did the trees belong to the King? And the King of England lived a long way from Massachussetts!

Next to the Bible and the Christian religion the private ownership of property has done most to make America great. A man who owns something is a safer voter, a better citizen, a better neighbor because of it. A man who owns something is quick to assert his rights, especially if his right to ownership of property is threatened. But he usually has more respect for the rights of others. A man who owns something is generally a foe to thieves, forgers, embezzlers and counterfeiters. He is usually an advocate for sound money, safe land titles, and economy in government.

Our patent laws are based on the right of private ownership of goods. These laws make a man owner of part of what he discovers by research, skill or knowledge. These laws have given wings to man's faltering footsteps on the road to knowledge. They have spurred man on to discovery after discovery, improvement upon improvement. Our patent laws gave us the reaper and the binder, the telegraphy and the telephone. These laws gave us the electric light, the internal combustion engine, the automobile and the air plane. These laws gave us refrigeration, the radio and television.

The American pioneer was a rugged individualist. He felt no need of laws to protect himself or his family. He believed the best government was the one that interfered the least with his freedom. He was so suspicious of government encroachment on business that he looked askance on the public school. Land was cheap and the natural resources of the nation were boundless and inexhaustible. So it seemed to him. When his stalwart sons grew into manhood they moved farther back into the forest and carved them out a home, as their fathers had done before them. The wilderness was free to any man brave enough to claim it, and it would last forever. Any man could start a business with a few simple tools if he had skill to use them. Capital, as we know it, hardly existed. But the hopes of the rugged individualist were based on human knowledge, and human knowledge was always subject to error.

In the life of one generation there was a mighty revolution. He found that the resources of the nation were not boundless and they were not inexhaustible. He found that every man could not own a rail road of his own, every skilled mechanic could not open up a steel mill, every weaver could not own a modern textile plant costing millions of dollars. Men with special skills would have to work for giant corporations, not as apprentices till they became masters, but for life. If he rebelled against this and turned to the wilderness as his fathers had done, he found it had disappeared or been fenced in. Vast tracts of good land were still there, but they had been bought up by rich men and were not for sale. If he tried to start a new business of his own he found that a few tools and bare hands cannot compete with giant rolling mills, whirring spindles and roaring blast furnaces, no matter how skillful they were used.

But worse was still to come. He found the giant corporations, being few in number, could more easily combine to hold up the prices of what they had to sell. With one generation the weaver, the smith, and the cobbler had disappeared. Of the small producers only the farmer was left. Of the rugged individualists only the farmer, the local merchant, and the local printer owned their own business. Had the United States Government not stepped in with free postage the local printer would have gone with the weaver, the smith and the cobbler. The local merchant was fast going down before a new giant, the chain store.

But worse was still to come. The farmer found that the very tools that had come to lighten his labor had created huge surpluses of foods and fibers. Money borrowed on his land could not be repaid, mortgages were foreclosed, and the loved homestead passed into the hands of the banks and insurance companies.

The laborer found his wages squeezed to the point he could not buy the necessities of life, even at bankrupt prices. When he tried to organize, as the giant corporations had done, he was told this field was not for him. When he persisted he was threatened with the loss of his job. When this failed the corporations hired thugs to intimidate him and break up his meetings. When he struck back he was thrown into prison. The rugged individualist was leaning against the ropes!