

KF 17920 445

NEDL TRANSFER



HN 4T3E 4

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

NATIONAL CONVENTION

TO SECURE THE

RELIGIOUS AMENDMENT

OF THE

CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES,

HELD IN

PITTSBURG, FEBRUARY 4, 5, 1874.

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE MOVEMENT.

PHILADELPHIA :

PRINTED BY THE CHRISTIAN STATESMAN ASSOCIATION,
No. 104 NORTH SIXTH STREET.

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
NATIONAL CONVENTION
TO SECURE THE
RELIGIOUS AMENDMENT
OF THE
CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES,
HELD IN
PITTSBURG, FEBRUARY 4, 5, 1874.
WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE
ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE MOVEMENT.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED BY THE CHRISTIAN STATESMAN ASSOCIATION, No. 104 N. SIXTH ST.
1874.

EVENING SESSION.

The Convention was called to order by President Brunot, and was opened with prayer by Prof. S. J. Wilson, D.D.

President George, on behalf of the Committee of Enrolment, submitted the following report :

The whole number of members enrolled is one thousand and sixty-four ; of these six hundred and forty-one are certified from auxiliary societies and other bodies of citizens. Eighteen States are represented.

The President then introduced the Rev. Dr. A. A. Hodge, D.D., Professor of Theology in the Western Seminary, who delivered the following address :

ADDRESS OF DR. HODGE.

Although my instincts and convictions have always been thoroughly in sympathy with this movement, yet, as I am not experienced in its exact analysis, and in the close study of the several departments of the general question, I shall not attempt the detailed discussion of any one topic, but only a general statement of what I understand to be the state of the controversy, and the reason for the demands we make.

I. There are three great parties to this debate : 1st. The constantly growing band of Christian men who believe that this work is the duty of the hour, in which the salvation of the country is involved.

2d. The company of intelligent infidels who conscientiously disbelieve our principles, and their natural allies, the licentious, and the trimmers for place.

3d. The entire mass of our fellow-Christians, the overwhelming majority of the nation, who really agree with us in our principles, but who are, as yet, imperfectly informed as to our ends, our methods, or the necessity for, or the feasibility of, our enterprise. With the second class we can have no compromises—we must either convince or defeat them by sheer force. With the third class we can have no controversy. Mutual explanations must remove all misconceptions, and lead to a cordial co-operation.

II. The end we propose is in the widest sense Catholic, and not sectarian. It is simply the recognition within its legitimate sphere by the National government of the general truth of theism and Christianity. These are fundamental to the creed and traditional institutions of all Roman Catholics alike, Gallican and Ultramontane, of all German Lutherans and French Huguenots, of Anglican Churchmen, high and broad and low, of English and American Puritans and Scotch Covenanters. This movement ought to provoke no controversy. In the end it will occasion no division, except between theist and atheist, Christian and infidel.

III. The point we want recognized in the Constitution is not a dogma of the churches, nor a theory of the schools, but a simple fact, everywhere operating, and universally recognized by believers. Jesus Christ is, as a fact, "Ruler among the nations," (1.) providentially guiding their affairs, and determining their destinies ; (2.) morally, by the revelation of truth and duty, the exhibition of motives, and the

stimulus and discipline of providentially arranged circumstances. If this be a matter of fact generally believed, should not a great self-governing community like this nation, conscious of its acts and of their character, make a distinct profession of its allegiance?

IV. The practical recognition of this fact is no new thing in American history. It has formed a prominent characteristic of our successive governments, colonial, state, and national, from the beginning. We propose the adoption of no new principles, and no radical change of customs. We propose only to recognize, as a fundamental principle in the National written Constitution, that which has been a universally recognized principle of national life from the first. We aim not at change, but at conservation. We want to preserve through all coming time, and consistently carry out in all departments of law, the hitherto universally admitted fact, that Christianity is an element in the common law of the land. In very various ways has this great principle been confessed by our nation from the beginning. This is plain in all the history of the Mother Country, whose common law we have inherited; in the institutions and innumerable formal acts of all the original colonies; in all the laws of the States and the national government, with respect to blasphemy, oaths, the Sabbath, marriage, divorce, etc.; in the appointment of Christian chaplains for the army and navy, and for Congress, and by their daily appeals to God, in the presence, and with the assent, of the officers of the government in their official character; in the distinct assertion of these principles in the inaugural addresses of all our Presidents, and in their official appointment of days of public thanksgiving and fasting; and, above all, in the entire system of education in this country for the first two hundred years of its history, which was the creation of earnest Christians for the promotion of Christian objects. In all these schools and academies, Christianity was recognized by devotional exercises, by specific instruction, and was largely embodied in dictionaries, geographies, histories, works of general science and literature. Our present rapidly expanding system of national education has grown out of this early and long-established system. We retain the text books and educational literature, the fruit of the Christianity of a past age, and we retain also the Christian traditions of Bible-reading, etc. The great debate which divides Catholics and Protestants on this subject, relates not at all to the place of Christianity in the school, but rather to the form, quality, and quantity of Christianity to be taught. The one party demands for their children full denominational instruction. The other party being satisfied, with us, with the recognition of Christ as the Supreme Ruler through his Providence, and the Supreme Teacher through his Word. On the contrary, it is our opponents who propose to change all this. They propose to abolish the oath, and the civil Sabbath, as unjust discriminations against the unbelievers. They propose to modify the law of marriage, to do away with the sacredness of the family, the rights of men in their wives, and the rights of parents in their children. They propose to purge Christianity from our entire system of national education, from the text books of the schools, and the instruction of the teachers.

We desire to emphasize this fact with all our force. We are not innovators, but conservators of our race and nation. We want to establish no theological crotchet, nor to secure the ascendancy of any class of religious persons. We want simply to make part of the permanent written law what has always from the beginning formed an effective and universally acquiesced in part of the unwritten law. It is essential for our success that we make this understood. The mass of any people are not affected by abstract reasoning, but by appeal to their emotions or their in-

interests. They are satisfied with the present, with which they are familiar; indisposed to attempt reforms, the entire consequences of which they are not able to anticipate. Naturally, and with a healthy instinct, they shrink from the suggestions of innovators, but respond quickly when they are summoned to assent to principles and to defend institutions inherited from their fathers, the benefits of which they realize from experience.

V. Observe, 1st. The explicit assertion of this principle in the written law can possibly invade no right of a dissenting minority which they possess under the historical conditions above explained. They can possess no rights which the unwritten Constitution and immemorial traditions and practical usages of our nation do not give them.

2d. Every nation and its institutions have necessarily a character historically determined, which is essential to its identity, into which all succeeding generations are born, and to which all immigrants from abroad voluntarily accede. As the nation was formed by its English descent and inheritance, by colonial experience and its republican government, so has it been formed by its Christianity. As no man's liberty is invaded by accepting the historical social structure of the community into which he is born, or into which he voluntarily migrates, so no man's liberty is invaded by the maintenance in every legal way by the nation of its fundamental religious character.

3d. If the Christian majority prevail and maintain Christian institutions, the infidel minority will be just where they have always been, in the exact position in which they voluntarily accepted citizenship; and while they may be restrained from some self-indulgence, they can be constrained to no violation of their convictions.

On the other hand, if the unbelieving minority prevail, the Christian majority will lose that precious heritage from their fathers which they hold in trust for their children, and they will be outlawed. For, when the law of man contradicts the law of God, the Christian has no alternative but to obey the law of God, disobey the law of man, and take the consequences.

VI. There are two Constitutions of the nation, the written and the unwritten. Neither of these are arbitrary conventions or artificial constructions. These, in every land and age, are the result of processes of growth, and they embody in the form of recognized law or usage the great historically established facts of national character and condition. This is true of our written Constitution. Afterwards, when the facts have been providentially changed, the written Constitution has been amended to express these facts. With respect to the national religion, an important omission was made at the first. That omission, of course, has altered none of the facts of the case, but under changed conditions, it may bring them into question.

We claim that since the religion of the nation and its government is a matter of fact and ancient traditional right, there is the same propriety in announcing that fact in the fundamental law of the land that there is for formulating any other principle which gives character to the government. If it be thought desirable to insist in the bond on a republican form of government, it must be quite as essential to provide that the government, whatever be its form, shall be obedient to the revealed will of God.

VII. We are now brought to an historical crisis, when the necessity for the formal constitutional recognition of Christianity is becoming more and more keenly appreciated by ever increasing numbers.

1. Nations, like individuals, are brought by growth or by special discipline to

clearer self-consciousness. The relations of much, taken for granted as true, are not at first understood. And the importance of defining principles long considered as self-evident, may be made apparent by their denial, or by newly developed opposition.

2. Multitudes of disappointed political and social theorists have recently immigrated to our land, who are disseminating theories of human rights and of man's relation to God which are as inconsistent with the facts and traditions of our government as with the Christian religion. We point to the facts of our history and to the present abundant evidences of our national Christianity, and claim that our written law shall be conformed to these facts. Our opponents, in the name of the abstract rights of man, irrespective of all historical conditions, point to the accidental omission of the recognition of Christianity in our written Constitution, and claim that our history and traditions, and the living faith of the majority, shall be de-nationalized in order to conform our practice to the silence of our fundamental law. Ours were the fathers whose lives and work made this nation, and whose faith gave character to our institutions,—Catholics, Episcopalians, Puritans, Huguenots, Quakers, English, Scotch, Irish, Dutch and German Presbyterians and Lutherans and Wesleyans,—while our opponents, for the most part, unless as we let them share in our heritage, are as destitute of a country as they are of a God.

3. We are now engaged in perfecting and extending the most comprehensive and effective system of national education ever known among men. The whole continent will be brought under one comprehensive administration, embracing all the children of the nation, and all grades of education from the common school to the university. It is alike absurd in principle, and in flat contradiction with universal experience, to suppose that the education of the understanding can be separated from the education of the reason and conscience, or that the communication of knowledge can be separated from the formation of moral and religious principles. Hitherto, as a general fact, all the literary apparatus and methods of our education have been moulded by Christianity. Shall it remain so in the future? Shall the minority, on the plea of freedom, deny the majority the privilege of having their children taught history and science as interpretations of God's work? Can the majority be deceived into believing that absolute silence as to God's agency, is not, under such circumstances, equivalent to denial, and that the withholding of all religion from a scheme of education is not equivalent to the inculcation of atheism? As the government of the nation prepares itself for the tremendous responsibility of educating all the youth of the land, who shall forbid that it shall write among its changeless fundamental laws, that immemorial faith of our Saxon race and of our nation, that as men can successfully rule others only as they are themselves ruled by Christ, so they can successfully teach others only as they are themselves first taught by Christ?

VIII. The character of Christian belongs to the nation regarded not only as a collection of individuals, but as well when regarded as an organized community exercising the functions of civil government. This we claim to be true of our nation, both as a matter of principle and as an unquestioned fact.

1. As a matter of principle, no man can deny moral and religious character to nations and to their governments, who does not deny them to the individuals who compose them. If they are intelligent, free, brave, moral, energetic, obviously the nation is so. Now, government is a function of the nation as a providentially organized community. The nation, as thus historically organized, is the government. The character of the people forms the character of the nation, and the character of

the nation forms the character of the government. In every act of the government which concerns moral and religious questions, it must be obedient to the great Law-giver or disobedient, religious or irreligious.

The family and the nation and the civil government are as much creatures of God as the individuals that compose them. Men are born under government and can only exist under governmental conditions. Civil government is as certainly ordained of God as is the church, and each is His instrument in different spheres. The evangelist is a minister of God to preach, and the magistrate is a minister of God to rule. The Christian Scriptures are a revelation of God's will to each in his own sphere. The Christian minister receives the word of God as his law in the Church, and interprets it for himself. The Christian magistrate receives the same word as his rule in the State, so far as it casts light on human duties and relations involved in the functions of government, and the magistrate interprets it for himself.

It is self-evident that if a legislator be a Christian, and at the same time believes that Christ has expressed his will on any question concerned in legislation, he must, when he comes to make laws, act as he believes. If he be a Christian in his heart, he will be a Christian in his vote. If the majority of the legislature agree with him, the laws will be Christian. The character of the legislature must be expressed in their legislation, and the character of the nation should be expressed in the character of its representatives; otherwise it is so far not represented.

2. This principle is no less true as a matter of fact, and is always in exact proportion to the freedom of the nation. Every government must enact laws and ordain regulations involving religious questions. Every government has done so, our own included, to the present day, as is abundantly known to all, and shown above. If a government be a usurping tyranny, it may misrepresent the people in its action concerning religion. But if the nation be free, the government must act in this regard, as in all others, as the true organ of the nation, and represent its character. Our nation has always been free and Christian, and therefore the action of our government has in the main expressed the Christian faith of the people. If we remain Christian and free, our government shall be Christian also. And since the issue is joined, and the flag of the atheist raised, we demand that the standard bearing the symbols of Christ's crown be nailed, together with the insignia of liberty, over the capitol of the nation.

The Hon. T. H. Baird Patterson was next introduced, who spoke as follows :

THE RELATION OF THE GOVERNMENT AND CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES TO CHRISTIANITY.

BY T. H. BAIRD PATTERSON.

Mr. President, Fellow-Delegates, and Fellow-Citizens, Pennsylvanians to the manor born, children of the Pilgrim Fathers, of Scotch and Irish Presbyterian martyrs, of Huguenot refugees, of Christian ancestors of various creeds, who for conscience sake left home and friends to found us a Christian nation, where civil and religious liberty are secured to all:

Be not misled by the assertion that the movement agitated by this Conven-