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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.

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and constitutional for Pennsylvania, they should be so for every part of the United States as well. The Hebrew is under them as well as the Gentile, as he of right ought to be. It does not injure his conscience. He does not hold a particle more of the Christian creed in consequence, nor is he required so to do; nor would he, by an oath of citizenship, if a firm constitutional foundation were put under all these—our Christian institutions and laws. An oath to support a Constitution is not an oath to profess a creed, notwithstanding the wild assertions of the opponents of this movement. If any further reply be needed, I refer to the precedent of the British Constitution, under which a Hebrew takes the oath to support the Constitution, and sits in the House of Commons. It makes no difference that it is an unwritten Constitution—it is a Constitution for all that; and it is a Constitution recognizing Christianity as fully as that of the United States would do if the Christian amendment were in full force.

And now, in the close of this subject, let us be conscious we war against no right of man, and we cannot as Christian citizens fail in our fealty to the claims of our Master on our land. This vast assembly represents the millions of Christians of our country who believe that "Christ is Lord of all," and that the United States are no exception; who believe that "all power is given Him in heaven and in earth," and that the realm of politics is no more beyond His righteous government than is anything else. Be it ours to speed the fiery cross over hill and valley, to kindle the beacon fires till mountain top shall send forth its ruddy glow to mountain top. When all the Christians of our land shall be awakened to see the need, and speak for their Lord, our movement will be a fact accomplished, and a constitutional foundation shall stand impregably under the fair structure of our Christian institutions and laws.

The President then introduced the Rev. David R. Kerr, D. D., who spoke as follows:

MORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF NATIONS.

ADDRESS OF REV. DAVID R. KERR, D. D.

MR. PRESIDENT:—Your General Secretary has requested me to speak on the subject before you, in the aspect of national responsibility to God; and to keep what I may say inside of half an hour, all of which I will endeavor to do, and as the subject is rather large, and the time rather short, and as in the course of my remarks I may swing a little from a perfectly straight line of thought, I had better begin without any unnecessary preliminaries.

There is one thought I cannot pass, in approaching the subject; one of wonder that there should be among Christian people any diversity of opinion in regard to the importance of some such movement as that in behalf of which this Convention is assembled. I can understand why they who rule God out of their own hearts and lives, and would rule him out of the universe, if they could, would feel opposed to any recognition of him by the nation. But that men who love and adore him as God over all, who rejoice in their own personal allegiance to him as their Saviour and their King, should show unwillingness to have him exalted in the nation, and formally acknowledged in the supremacy of authority, is not so easily understood.

In the lowest view of national responsibility, that in which the nation is regarded

as a mere aggregation of individuals, and the responsibility only such as each individual separately bears, it would seem that one who believes in God and the revelation he has given of himself in the Bible, should be willing to have him, as thus revealed, acknowledged in the national as in all the other relations of his life. It is true, the nation exists for earthly ends, or is not primarily a religious organization; but that does not relieve the individuals of it of their moral responsibilities. These go with them into all the relations of life in which they can be placed. The Bible injunction is, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy steps." Now, why should not Christians feel bound so to acknowledge God and be directed by him in their national relations and duties? What is it that makes this application of the principle so startling to many good people?

Mr. President, the first necessity of this movement is an awakening among Christians themselves. It is not from atheists, or Deists, or infidels of any class that we have most to fear. It is the indifference, the opposition, to some extent, of the Christian mind of the nation. Let this be awakened and united in this movement, and it would have a moral power that would be irresistible in this land. But, unhappily, there is division among us. There are some brethren who refuse to admit that the Constitution has the defect of which we complain. These, I think, are not so confident as they have been. They have been reading the Constitution, and many of them are not quite clear that a form of presidential oath which an atheist might take, or the marking of the date of the instrument in the only way in which it could be marked in the use of the existing calendar, is such a recognition of God as in their hearts they could desire. Others are troubled with fears of union of Church and State, and violence to consciences of which they are far more tender than the men who own them. These brethren are learning that what we propose is not altogether an untried experiment in this country; that in many of our State Constitutions there are acknowledgments of God, against which their objections would be just as strong as against what is sought for the National Constitution; and as they have not heard of any unions of Church and State there, nor any grievous sufferings of conscience, it is to be hoped they will yet get over their fears. But perhaps the most plausible plea against us is made by those who hold that the nation is Christian, and as really so as if the name of the Christian's God were put into the Constitution a thousand times. Grant it that such an acknowledgment would not make the nation any more really Christian than it is. A like thing can be said of a personal profession of religion. That does not make a Christian man or woman; but it is a very material part of Christian duty, nevertheless, and such as all who have felt the renovating power of our religion will count it a pleasure and honor to perform. So, in regard to the nation, if it be in fact Christian, if in its essential elements it be an outgrowth of Christianity, if it be the highest existing development of Christian civilization, who that loves our religion should not desire to see the great fact emblazoned on the nation's organic law?

All this and much more might be said in addressing Christian men on their individual responsibilities. But there is more than individual responsibility involved here. A nation is not a mere aggregation of individuals; nor is it strictly a mere voluntary association. It is rather the growth of a people providentially brought together in the same land, who, through common interests, common trials, and common struggles, grow into a community with united interest, united power, and united responsibility. It thus becomes an organic unity, a moral personality before God, with a free agency and accountability, as clear and binding as any moral obligation

that rests on the individual man. And it becomes so, not from a providential development merely, but under an express ordinance of God. "The powers that be," says an Apostle, "are ordained of God; whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." The particular form of organization may be left to circumstances, or the judgment and choice of the people; but when formed, it comes under God's ordinance, and is subject to his law, as revealed to all men in the light of nature, but more fully to us in the light of revelation, and so much the more increasing our responsibility.

A nation so exists, whether it has a written Constitution or not. Many of the colonies which grew into the States which by union formed our national government, had no written Constitution properly so-called. England to this day has no such Constitution. Statutes, decisions, and customs, continued and cumulating for centuries, make up its supreme law. But when a nation does put itself under a written Constitution, if true to itself, it will make it a true expression of its national character. And it is because the nation we love, and in which we live, has not done this, as we believe, that we are pleading with it to put itself right before God, and in its true character before the nations of the world. We plead that the acknowledged character of the nation shall have suitable expression in its organic law. Is there anything unreasonable in this? If it were a Mohammedan nation, it would have such an expression; if it were a Pagan nation, it would have such expression; and why should not a Christian nation have expression of what is distinctive of it? In its case, this is not only reasonable, but imperative. It must so declare its character, or be unfaithful to its highest obligations. In the view of unity and moral personality that has been taken, and especially of the obligation imposed by the ordinance of God, it has no escape from this responsibility.

Nations have no difficulty in recognizing and acting on the principle of national responsibility in their dealings with each other. In our recent troubles with Spain on account of the capture of the *Virginius* and the barbarous deeds that followed, we did not go to the individuals who perpetrated the outrage; we did not go to Cuba with our demand of reparation; we took our case directly to those who represented the supreme authority of Spain. From the *nation* we demanded reparation, and from it we received it. On the same principle God deals with all nations. They may refuse to acknowledge his authority; they may seek to throw off all responsibility to him; but it is in his prerogative and power to hold them to it, whether they acknowledge it or not. He claims, not only under his general ordinance, but in specific terms, to be the "Governor among the nations;" and in his Providence, as in his word, has shown that he does "judge among the nations," and that "blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." The sacred history abounds with records of this, not only in respect to the chosen people, but the nations around them whose history is interwoven with theirs. And in records outside of the sacred history, we have the evidences, in all the ages, of his judgment and power, approving or condemning, blessing or punishing, the nations according to their character and acts. The history of our own nation is a sufficient illustration of this; as, also, of the fact that no existing nation of all the world has been brought under greater obligations to acknowledge and honor him.

Consider the origin of this nation. We see this away back in the first movements of the new life and power that arose among the nations of the old world in the grand events of the 16th century. That life had not the needed freedom there. It was hampered by the very rubbish of the old foundations that had been broken up;

with all its enlarged liberties it was still restrained by the old habits of thought, and the old forms of social and civil, as well as religious life, that still remained. It needed a new world for more perfect development, and the Lord gave it this on the virgin soil of this great continent. To preserve for it a home here, he had withheld from the old world even the knowledge of this continent until shortly before the period of its great awakening in reforming times. Then, after the nations there had been sifted and the chosen people had been found, they were brought here, and planted here as the germ that has since grown into the splendid proportions of this great republic. In its growth, and in all the forms in which it clothed itself, in all the stages of its growth, it had clear and strong expression of its Christian character down to the time of its organization under the present Constitution. But at that time, when above all times it should have reverently remembered the God who planted and protected and prospered it, it suffered itself so far to forget him as not even to give his name a place in its organic law. The nation, in its essential character, was Christian still; and if the people of the nation had rightly understood that they were asked to put themselves under a Constitution as good for Pagans or Mohammedans as for Christians, they never would have consented. They would have risen in an indignation that would have forced some becoming acknowledgment of their religion and their God.

By a remarkable coincidence this unfaithfulness to God was associated with a like flagrant disregard of the rights of man. The nation planted and fostered in the interests of religion and liberty is organized in recreancy to both. In violation of all its instincts of freedom, and in the face of its public declaration of the inalienable rights of man, it recognized and tolerated the system of slavery, so long the shame and the curse of the land. There is not in all history a more remarkable instance of national abnegation. It may have been thought that such a system could not long exist under the influence and operation of the free institutions established. But given constitutional recognition it did exist, and it grew until it became a dominant power of the nation, was able for years to dictate its policy, and at length grew so bold as to demand an extension of its power or a division of the nation. We all remember how that issue was met; and we should remember how doubtfully it was contested until the nation rose to the grandeur of its true ideal of liberty to all the inhabitants of the land. When the struggle began, our rulers had no thought of the destruction of slavery, and our armies were almost everywhere discomfited until the time of the immortal proclamation of freedom. From almost the very hour of that proclamation the tide of battle turned; our armies moved on from victory to victory, until the rebellion was crushed and the authority of the nation was acknowledged throughout all its borders. The grand results have been secured in constitutional amendments. So God has led us back through an ordeal of blood to consistency, duty, and honor in respect to the rights of man.

Now, can any one believe that God is less jealous of his own honor and of his own inalienable rights? Or that he can have less controversy with the nation for its failure to acknowledge the prerogatives that belong to him? At first, and for a time, there may have been some palliation of the offence. It may have been felt by our fathers, in allowing the omission, that the Christian character of the nation was so well understood, and that Christianity itself would remain so fully recognized as the common law of the land, that a formal acknowledgment of it was not necessary. But we can plead for excuse no such delusion now. Enemies coming in like a flood, are threatening all that is distinctive and all that is ennobling in the Chris-

tian character of the nation. With a boldness growing with their numbers, they demand that our Bible be thrown out of the public schools; that our religious oath shall be abolished; that the ministers of our religion shall be driven out of the halls of Congress and State Legislatures, as also from all chaplaincies in the army and navy of the nation; that our marriage and Sabbath laws shall be repealed; that all national acknowledgment of God in days of thanksgiving or humiliation before him shall be abandoned; and all legislation in favor of Christian morality shall cease; that everything distinctively Christian shall be blotted out from the nation. The issue has been made. The battle has begun. The enemy is moving on our incomplete defenses. He tells us that he has the sanction of the Constitution; that he bears the banner of the nation, and flaunts in our faces one whose dark folds bear the dismal motto, "No God, No Christ, No Christian Morality!"

O, is it not time for the Christian people of this nation to be awakened and united in the resistance of an enemy forcing such an issue as this? Ought we not to put the nation in such relations to God that, in defending his prerogatives, we may look for his help in defending and perpetuating our own priceless privileges? Men, Christian men, tell us that what is needed is more earnest and diligent evangelistic work to bring the people of the nation more under the influence of our religion. That, of course, is of the first importance. But let these men take the outposts of our religion; let them go on unopposed in all their insidious workings to create a public opinion against our Christian laws and institutions, until they shall have virtually if not formally subverted them, and have our religion dishonored in all the high places of the land, and in what condition would we be left? Under what fearful disabilities would our evangelistic work be placed?

Away with all the miserable pleas with which any Christian man can excuse neutrality in such a conflict as this. Of what force at the throne of God will be all pleadings from the fears of union of Church and State and violence to consciences of men, in most of whom neither religion nor conscience has any existence that they respect. We want no union of Church and State. Let that proposition be made in this country, and there is no element of the opposition that would rise against it that would be more decided and determined than that represented in this Convention. We wish no restraint upon the rightful liberties of any man. But we would have the God of all men and all consciences acknowledged in his rights. We would have him as the God of this nation exalted in the land, and acknowledged in the supremacy of his authority and the glory of his name.

The President then introduced Prof. Charles A. Blanchard, of Wheaton College, Illinois, who spoke as follows:

THE CONFLICT OF LAW.

ADDRESS OF PROF. CHARLES A. BLANCHARD.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: The apparent and immediate question before us is, Shall the Constitution of the United States be so changed as to recognize the authority of God, His Christ, and His Word? The ultimate and real question is, Are the American people to be and continue a Christian nation?