

National Convention,

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

NATIONAL CONVENTION

TO SECURE THE

RELIGIOUS AMENDMENT

OF THE

CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

HELD IN

CINCINNATI, JAN. 31, AND FEB. 1, 1872.

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF

THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE MOVEMENT.

PHILADELPHIA :

JAS. B. RODGERS CO., PRINTERS, 52 & 54 NORTH SIXTH STREET.

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101

earth with its own ineffable glory. Such a light in the Constitution, throwing its gorgeous coloring over the lesser lights, could not be disregarded. Such a truth, solemnly uttered by the greatest among States, would waken an echo in every heart. I have faith in man, and that faith compels me to feel that few nations are so low as to be able to stifle the voice of such a truth.

We do not suppose that the mere insertion of the amendment sought will of itself save this State and nation in the future. But it will be one step, and an essential one, in the cultivation of a God-fearing spirit, and in the construction of a right character. It will indeed be the crowning glory of our official character, and when supplemented by the same recognition in individual hearts, how blessed would be this nation, and how strong and beautiful a life it would live! And that life would not have its cycle of decay and dissolution, as some affirm, but would gain strength and beauty till earth has no more nations, and needs no more States.

The Rev. T. P. Stevenson, one of the editors of the *CHRISTIAN STATESMAN*, read the following paper on

THE LEGAL EFFECT AND PRACTICAL VALUE OF THE PROPOSED
AMENDMENT.

There is no question which the advocates of this measure are more frequently called to answer, than this: What good will it accomplish? What will be its effect, and what is its practical value? Unless we can answer this question clearly to ourselves, we shall not labor earnestly, and we cannot labor intelligently, in the cause we have undertaken. Unless we can answer it to the satisfaction of the christian public, we shall fail, and we shall deserve to fail. It is the more necessary to answer this question now, because there is in the public mind a feeling of satiety with constitutional changes, a weary wish to be done with agitation, and a natural impatience with those who seem to compel the discussion of difficult or unpleasant questions. I say who *seem* to compel, for those who advocate the Religious Amendment of our National Constitution are not the real agitators of the question which it involves. It has been forced upon us. With our christian origin and antecedents, with the religious character of our Government imperfectly developed, and with the character of the immigration which has poured upon us, this controversy is an incident in the history of American institutions which might, from the first, have been foreseen to be inevitable. Since the Constitution was framed, this measure has always been necessary; we may thank the enemies of christian morality and religion for having, in recent years, demonstrated its necessity. Those who advocate it, are simply the exponents of the christian sentiment of the nation, striving to guard the most cherished features of our institutions from the overthrow which threatens them. I shall state, as briefly as I can, the Legal Effect and Practical Value of the Constitutional Amendment which we propose.

I. It will be a becoming act of national homage to God.—Nearly all men who believe in worship at all, that is, all except Atheists, believe that God is the God of nations, and that they ought to acknowledge this relation by worshipping him. All nations, heathen and christian, have worshipped their gods. Since this nation believes in Jehovah as the God of nations, have we not a sacred and inalienable right as a nation to worship our God? This is claimed as the inalienable right of the individual. Shall it not be conceded to the nation? This right we claim; this right we have always exercised. This right we will maintain, with

our lives, if necessary, as the highest of all rights; a right which no individual, and no minority of individuals, can limit or abridge. The right to worship God includes the right to worship him in such ways as his Word requires, or as our sense of duty or propriety may suggest. We have the right to set apart days to his honor; the right to hallow his Sabbath, and publicly to honor his Word; the right to pray to him, when we assemble for the administration of justice, or the enactment of laws; the right to inscribe this name, if we think proper, on every coin issued from our mints, on every public building, on all public documents, and on our Constitution itself.

But there are special reasons why such an acknowledgment should be made in the Constitution. According to the principles which have already been so ably vindicated on this platform, civil government is the ordinance of God. The powers it wields are derived from him. The ends it is to serve, are appointed by him. The law which it is to enforce, has been given by him. And government is completely dependent on his favor and help, for success in its work. Read the ends of government, as set forth in the Preamble to our national Constitution—"to establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, and promote the general welfare." Tranquillity, safety, prosperity,—who bestows these on nations? Who turns war into peace to the ends of the earth? Whose are the shields that defend the earth? These are blessings, the bestowment of which, God claims as his own prerogative. "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." When a nation, therefore, undertakes to constitute government, it is bound, alike by the dictate of reason and the sentiments of religion, to have regard to God. Men assembled to organize government have no right to take the first step in their work, without regard to him by whose authority they act, and whose ordinance they propose to set up. Failure here, is impiety. Failure here, unless repaired, provides disastrous failure for the nation. The patriot can have no reasonable hope of the success of a government set up by a nation, which forgets or despises God. The nation, therefore, ought to make it plain to its own consciousness, plain to all its citizens, that in this matter, it is acting in the fear of God.

Now, how shall a nation realize this fact to its own consciousness, except by some public act or declaration? Prayer, worship, in the Convention which frames a nation's Constitution, would be valuable as a testimony? It would be truly a national act. But it might be misunderstood, as prayers in Congress sometimes are, as the personal devotions of the members of the convention. It is not an act which is brought directly to the notice, and which receives the express sanction of the whole nation. It is, moreover, a transient act. It passes away in the hour in which it is performed. History may preserve the record of the fact, but it may fail to preserve it. History, however, has preserved for us the painful fact that the convention which framed our National Constitution did actually refuse to have prayer offered during its sessions. Benjamin Franklin, in a brief, but effective speech, which is preserved in his collected writings, moved that "prayers, imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessing on our deliberations be held in this Assembly every morning, before we proceed to business." Dr. Franklin himself appended a note to his own manuscript, saying—"The Convention, except three or four persons, thought prayers unnecessary!"—*Sparks' Works of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 5, p. 155.

But now suppose that the nation writes in its Constitution a distinct acknowledgment of God and of his moral laws; that is a declaration of equal dignity, authority and permanence with any other provision of the Constitution. It is

raided by every vote cast in favor of the adoption of the Constitution which contains it. It is known and read of all men. It solemnly evidences to every citizen, and to the world, that the nation sets up its government in the fear of God. There is no other way of equal authority and value in which this declaration can be made. All other acts are performed through the government, but the Constitution is the voice of the nation itself. All other acts of national homage, like fasts and prayer, and inscriptions on our coins, are transient, not permanent; they are dependent solely on the will of the current administration. But a constitutional acknowledgment of God and his law, is the continuous act of the nation in all its generations, the voice of the whole people, like the sound of many waters and unceasing as the ocean's roar, doing homage to God, the Nation's Upholder, Lawgiver, and Judge.

The design of a written Constitution is simply to exhibit and declare the exact features of the unwritten Constitution, or the actual character of the nation. A written Constitution is valuable, precisely, in so far as it conforms to, and truly expresses the real character of the State. So far as it departs from it, it is worthless. Therefore, a written Constitution is discussed by Judge Jameson, in his invaluable work on "The Constitutional Convention," simply as an "instrument of evidence," by the aid of which, the citizens arrive at a common knowledge and mutual understanding of the actual constitution of the body politic. But there is no fact in the vital constitution of a nation, which is so important in itself, or fraught with such important consequences, as its fear or disregard of God. There is no fact, therefore, so important to be truly evidenced in the written Constitution. Our Constitution, in its present form, with no acknowledgment of God, no allusion to a higher law, with the name of God excluded even from the oath which it prescribes, without a single word from which it could be determined that this is a christian nation,—we believe to have been false to the true character of the nation, when it was framed; we believe it to be false to the national character to-day. If the nation shall now, upon mature deliberation, adopt an amendment, such as we propose, it will be evidence of the highest character realizing to the consciousness of the nation, and declaring to the world, that most important of all facts concerning us, that this nation fears and serves God—the God of the christian Scriptures. If, after full discussion, the nation refuses to do so, it will be additional and painful evidence that, as a nation, we are without God, and, therefore, without hope, marching, as other nations have marched, to inevitable destruction.

II. *It will furnish a legal basis for all christian laws, institutions, and usages in our Government.*—This statement has been embodied in the call for this Convention and for two preceding Conventions. We deem it important, and wish it not to be misunderstood. It is, "all christian laws, institutions, and usages in our Government." We do not propose to find a basis for the laws and institutions of the Church, of Christian families, or of the closet, in the National Constitution; but for that great body of laws, institutions, and usages, in our government, which are of christian origin, and which serve to distinguish us as, in some important sense, a christian nation. The chief of these are prayers in our Legislative Assemblies, occasional days of fasting and Thanksgiving appointed by the State and National Governments, the maintenance of chaplains in our army and navy, in prisons and asylums; the use of the Bible in our public schools, the religious ordinance of the oath, laws guarding the sacredness of the Sabbath, enforcing the christian law of marriage, and suppressing blasphemy and licentiousness. These features of our Government are regarded by the majority of this nation, as of

the very highest value. They serve to express and so to nourish a sentiment without which no nation has ever been organized, and no nation can long exist—a sense of public responsibility to God. If we give them up we lose all shadow of claim to be called a christian nation.

Now there is not one of these existing features of our civil institutions that is not actively and steadily opposed. The courteous and intelligent opponent whose voice has been heard on this platform to-day will candidly admit his opposition to these existing features of our institutions. He and his helpers are working zealously and persistently to overthrow them all. It is vain to close our eyes to the success which has attended their efforts. They have in many places practically abolished our Sabbath laws. In other places they have driven the Bible out of the schools. Laws against blasphemy are nowhere enforced. And there is remarkable consistency as well as persistency in their movement. They are not content that a shred of our christian character shall remain. Every acknowledgment of religious truth must be wiped out from our whole public life, until, as Prof. Lewis has expressed it, “our whole political page becomes a pure, unbelieving, irreligious, Christless, Godless blank.”

And by what line of argument do you suppose they seek to conduct the popular mind to this conclusion? Oftenest, and most plausibly, they reason thus:—“The Constitution is our political covenant, on the terms of which we have united in forming the American government. In that constitution there is no reference to any system of morality or religion, and therefore it is unfair to foist upon the government, in its administration, a religious character not agreed upon in our mutual covenant.” Or again they say: “The Constitution is the charter of the Government. It contains all the functions it may properly perform; all the powers it may ever exercise. The exercise of any religious function is therefore extra-constitutional, a clear departure from that secular sphere which alone is covered by the language of the Constitution. This departure may have been tolerated by general consent in the past, but it must cease whenever any party falls back, as we now do, on the letter of the Constitution and demands strict adherence to its provisions.”

A German Secularist lands on our shores. After a proper time he seeks to be invested with the rights of citizenship. The American Constitution is held out to him as the fundamental bond of our political union. He finds in it no recognition of a God in whom he does not believe, or of a law whose authority he denies. He assents to it and becomes a citizen. A school tax is levied on his property. He pays it, and then demands that the reading of the Bible cease in the schools. “It was,” he says, “no part of the compact by which I became a citizen that I should be taxed to maintain public instruction in the Christian Scriptures.” It may be said that in becoming a citizen he accepted the Constitution of Ohio, it may be, as well as of the United States, and thus did become the party to an acknowledgment of the Christian religion, not as his religion, but as religion of the State. But acknowledgments of God have not always been found in all our State Constitutions. And why should they? If it is good for the National Constitution to be devoid of religious character, why is it not good for a Constitution of a State, of all the States? And must not the National Constitution exert a powerful and constant influence to draw the State Constitutions to its own likeness in this respect? Suppose he has become a citizen in a state whose Constitution contains no acknowledgment of God, then *how will you answer his argument?*

I have not invented these arguments and put them into the mouth of any class

of men. I take them as I find them. How largely the arguments of counsel retained against the Bible in the Cincinnati school case turned on the non-religious character of the National Constitution, you are aware. The New York *Independent* at that time said: "The American people who have no theology in their governments, State or National, who have consented to live together as citizens under a common civil polity, without any reference to their sectarian differences, and, indeed, *without any reference to religion at all*, are simply true to the essential principles of their political covenants and life in dispensing with religion in their State schools whether in the form of teaching or of worship. Fact it is that neither Christianity nor any other religion is part of the law in this land, and this fact constitutes an unanswerable argument why the State cannot perform the functions of a religious teacher. The truth is, it has no religion to teach."

The Internationals remonstrated against the order prohibiting their parade in New York on the second Sabbath of last December, because "nothing in the city charter, in the Constitution of the State, or of the United States will be violated by the proposed procession."

The *Volksblatt*, of this city, last July, argued thus: "We ask fair play, and base our demands on the non-religious character of our political institutions. *On the ground of the non-recognition of any religion by the national and state constitutions*, we deny that they have any right to invoke the state or municipality to their aid in order to confer upon them an official predominance over those of a different faith, or of no faith, or to lend a special legal protection to their specific mode of worshipping God. Those of no faith in this country are entitled to the same religious rights and privileges as believers, and the laws are binding upon Israelite and Christian with equal force."

I do not say that there is no rebutting argument to all this. There is a great deal to be said on the other side, drawn from established usages, from particular statutes, from the precedents of our past history, and from important judicial decisions. But I do say that they have an argument too in the silence of the constitution, an argument which is strong in proportion to the overshadowing dignity and authority of that instrument, an argument which is used as a powerful lever to overturn the most cherished and important features of our institutions. We must wrest this argument from the unbeliever or he will wrest from us every argument which defends our christian institutions. We can no longer leave so precious, so vital a body of laws and usages as those which defend the Sabbath, Christian marriage, the sacred name of God, and the oath, exposed to the argument drawn from a Constitution which contains no utterance in their favor. We must throw around them the shield of Constitutional provision, we must provide for them a basis in our fundamental law, or they perish out of our life as a nation.

III. *It will restrain the government from acts in violation of Christian morality.* Government is the agent of the nation, the organ through which the nation acts. As a moral agent it is capable of violating the laws of God. It can be truthful or false in its diplomacy, faithful or perfidious in its observance of treaties and covenants; pure or corrupt in the administration of justice. It can break or keep the Sabbath. It can make unlawful war, oppress the weak or grind the faces of the poor. For the acts of the government the whole nation is responsible. Other nations hold it so. If the Government of Great Britain commits acts of hostility against us, we make war, not on the British Government, but on the British nation. France last year complained bitterly that she was held responsible for the crimes of the Empire, after the Empire had fallen, but her remonstrance did

not avert the terrible punishment which Germany chose to inflict. God, too, holds the nation responsible for the acts of its government. During the early part of David's reign there was a famine in the land three years, year after year, and when David inquired of the Lord, the answer was: "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites,"—God, in his righteousness, holding the nation responsible for the unexpiated crimes of the former dynasty. But the nation, in turn, has absolute control over her government. She can bind it by law, she can alter or abolish it at pleasure. And a written constitution is a law enacted by the nation for the regulation and restraint of its government.

Now, I ask, what provision has this nation against acts by the government in violation of Christian morality? God says: "When thy king sitteth on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, and he shall read therein all the days of his life that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes to do them." The injunction is addressed to the nation, which is to require this of her rulers. We have not put that law—the law by which the nation is to be judged for the conduct of its government, into the hands of our rulers, nor by the faintest allusion have we referred them to it. And this error has shown itself to be an evil. We are in danger to-day because of the sins of our government. Let me point to one, the desecration of the Sabbath.

A year ago the Board of Visitors to the Naval School at Annapolis found the studies prescribed and pursued on the Sabbath as on other days. A vigorous recommendation against this practice was embodied in their report to Congress. I believe it was effectual for a time. We have no security for the future.

A year ago last December, on Sabbath, the 4th of that month, the telegraph carried from Washington the following intelligence: "The trains yesterday and to-day brought large accessions to the number of Congressmen already here. There is already more than a quorum of each house, and by to-morrow morning it is expected that nearly every member and Senator will have arrived."

The most profound sentiment of respect for his high office does not forbid me to allude in this connection to the frequent journeys of President Grant on the Sabbath.

The Russian Grand Duke was received by our navy in New York Harbor on the Sabbath, with the thunders of cannon. The reception which God had postponed for a month, by the winds of heaven, to the deep anxiety of two nations, could not be postponed for a day in honor of his Sabbath.

The Congress which adjourned finally on Monday, March 4th, 1867, sat through the entire previous day. Out of deference to the common law which invalidates legal transactions on the Sabbath, they did not adjourn on Saturday, but took a recess to meet again on the Sabbath, so that on the journal it appeared as a continuation of Saturday's session, but the subterfuge could not hide the sin from the eyes of God. But worse than all these is the continual carrying of the mails by the government, at the dictate of an avarice which grudges the interruption of a day of worship and rest, employing thousands of men, bribing the railroads to dispatch trains which but for the mail service would not run, and in thousands of villages and tens of thousand homes invading and destroying the quiet and sanctity of the day of rest. But no law enacted by the nation is violated by these acts of the government, and nothing restrains the government from still grosser and more general violations of the Sabbath. Nothing gives us Sabbath quiet in the arsenals and ship-yards, the treasury and the other depart-

ments of the government, except the caprice of the present administration. And what is true of the Sabbath is true of every moral law. The nation has not bound its government to the observance of any. Having failed to do so the nation is righteously held responsible for its transgressions. There is but one earthly power which can restrain a government from immoral acts,—the nation. There is but one way in which it can properly do so—by law. There is but one law which is above the government,—the Constitution. Give us the amendment which we ask, in these words, “the revealed will of God as of supreme authority,” and all immoral acts of the government will be unlawful under the Constitution.

IV. *It will restrain the states of the Union from unchristian legislation.*—A nation must preserve its own integrity,—the integrity of its territory against dismemberment; the integrity of its character against influences which would divide it against itself and so destroy it. Thus every one feels the necessity that this nation be and remain in all its parts a republican nation. We would not allow any state to set up a monarchical form of government,—not because monarchy in itself is perilous to national existence, but because a house divided against itself cannot stand. If we are to be one nation we must have one form of government. Far more important is it that we be and continue in all our parts a christian nation. The nation could not, without infinite guilt and peril, allow any State to set up a distinctly anti-christian form of government, because intestine division is of itself perilous, because the guilt of the local apostasy from God would be rightly chargeable on the whole nation which would tolerate it, and because the corrupt leaven would speedily affect the whole nation. Thus Israel reasoned when under the leadership of Joshua they marched against the tribes which had built an altar on the other side of Jordan. And by the same argument the wrath of the nation was appeased when they learned that the altar was designed not for idol worship, but as a standing witness to their common interest in one God and one religion.

How shall this nation preserve in all its parts the integrity of its character, as a christian nation? There are two methods. One is the application of force, when an emergency arises, outside of the Constitution, in the exercise of the imminent right of self-preservation. In this way we dealt with the theory of State Sovereignty when it embodied itself in actual secession. The other is by Constitutional provision. In this way we have secured our republican character. We have enacted in our fundamental law that Congress shall have the right to secure to every State a republican form of government. Thus we restrain any State from setting up any other form of government, at the peril of coercion by the whole power of the nation. In the same way we have restrained the States from restoring Slavery, and we refused to rehabilitate the seceding States till they had ratified this provision. In other respects, too, the Constitution operates as a restraining law upon the States, prohibiting them from contracting treaties, coining money, and exercising other attributes of sovereignty. This supreme, overruling prerogative the Constitution claims for itself, anything in the constitutions or laws of the States to the contrary notwithstanding.

But, now, there is nothing in the Constitution by which any act of a State legislature can be set aside as unchristian or anti-christian. Nay, further, strange as the assertion may appear, there is nothing there which would be violated if any State were to repudiate the christian religion altogether, and establish **paganism** as the religion of the State. Congress can make no law respecting the establishment of religion, but nothing forbids the States to do so. If the Chinese

should ever be in the majority in any western State, or the Roman Catholics in any other, nothing hinders that they should make the religion of Confucius, or the religion of Rome, the religion of the State, and support their priesthoods and build their temples out of the civil treasury. Our danger, however, does not lie in that direction, but in the opposite direction of political Atheism. In France and Italy political elections are usually held on the Sabbath day. If the State of Ohio, ten or twenty years hence, with a largely increased irreligious population, were to fix her annual election on the "second Sunday in October," nothing in that Constitution which determines her relation to the Union could be urged against her action. If any territory were to frame a constitution with such a provision, and seek admission as a State, there is no bar against its admission. If any State should go farther and abolish the Sabbath as a civil ordinance altogether, abrogate all devout observances in connection with government, annul the Christian law of marriage and leave the relation of the sexes free from legal restraint, abolish the religious ordinance of the oath,—in short, divest itself of every christian feature and blot out every trace of the influences of christianity in our institutions, no constitutional objection could be urged against it. This is practically admitted by the anxiety to effect the abolition of Polygamy before the admission of Utah as a State, because then all control over the matter by the nation must cease,—a plain admission that the Constitution contains nothing antagonistic to that peculiar institution.

The danger which supplies this whole argument is not to be scouted as imaginary. Who knows how soon the active, restless, vigilant party who are striving, as they say, to bring our institutions in these minor respects into accord with the principles of the national Constitution, may seek to realize their conceptions of government in some State where they may have the requisite numerical strength? Who that has seen the rapid growth and the startling success of this party in recent years can view the future without some measure of apprehension. Many States have already taken no inconsiderable strides in this direction. California, by an enormous majority in the legislature of 1870, repealed her Sabbath laws so far as they applied to theatres, and the Anti-Sabbath Press announced that "Shakespeare, Schiller and Goethe had triumphed over the preacher, the theatre over the Church." The divorce laws of many States have been aptly described as differing from the marriage laws of Utah only in this, that at Salt Lake a man can have as many wives as he likes; in Indiana and Connecticut he has the same liberty, provided he takes one at a time. Seriously, the divorce legislation of many States is in flat violation of the plainest commandments of Jesus Christ. Now we propose simply to incorporate in our fundamental law, an acknowledgment of the moral laws of the Christian religion as the supreme standard and guide for all lower legislation. Give us the amendment we ask, and an appeal will lie directly from any unchristian legislation by any State to the Supreme Court of the United States on the ground of its unconstitutionality. The movement, therefore is wholly in the interest of national integrity and unity. May God grant that the question whether we are, and are to be, in our parts, a Christian nation may not be solved as the question of human liberty has been, in tears and blood.

V. *It will promote the purity of the public service.*—The year which lately closed will be memorable in our history for the astounding disclosures of political corruption which it has witnessed, and the vigorous steps of reform which have been taken by an outraged and indignant people. The growth of this evil has been watched for years by thoughtful men with the deepest anxiety, but the revelations

of last summer and autumn surpassed our gravest apprehensions. We have seen the balance of power in American legislatures held by shameless takers of bribes; we have seen corrupt "rings" using ballot-box, legislature and courts as hardly disguised instruments of plunder; we have heard men of previously good repute plead the sanction of universal custom for their equivocal dealings with public trusts, and there is no evidence that we have yet fathomed the depths of the abyss which has suddenly opened under our feet. The whole country exults to-day in the suddenness and completeness of the victory which the people of our chief city have won over the banded thieves who had plundered them so long, but what assurance have we of the permanence of this so-called "reform"? What principle of good government, the neglect of which has wrought this mischief, have we recovered and put under our feet, as the ground of our confidence? The success of the recent efforts shows that no horde of bribe-takers and extortioners will dare to face or can long resist an aroused and angry people. But that truth was self-evident. It needed not all this passionate discussion and vehement action to establish it. What security have we that these evils will not reappear in that inevitable hour when the people shall relax their vigilance and regain their composure? Reform movements are of the nature of revolutions. They are not the normal state of the political body. The people cannot for ever stand guard over the ballot-box and the treasury, the judiciary and the legislature, with mass meetings and "committees of seventy," as the instruments of their will.

The pending "reform movement" fails to recognize the true principle on which the purity of the public service must forever depend. In all the discussions which have attended it, not the remotest reference has been made to that Supreme Eye which is ever upon cities and commonwealths, and upon their public servants, holding them to a strict account for their use of all the revenue, authority, and influence which is put into their hands. Bribery, extortion, and robbery have not been mentioned as *sins* for which the land is guilty before God. It has not been suggested that God has any rights in the premises, or any part in the controversy, nor that other official sins and immoralities, as well as dishonesty, are crimes against him and perilous to the nation. The whole affair has been treated as a matter simply of dollars and cents, and wholly between the people and their rulers.

Philosophy, experience, and religion unite to declare that permanent reform on such principles is impossible. No charters can be framed and no laws enacted, which the ingenuity of dishonest officials will not find means to evade. The only sufficient and abiding safeguard for official integrity is in the moral character of the men chosen to office. The idea implied in the political maxim, "vote for measures, not for men," is utterly false and mischievous. The one question of transcendent importance to the people, is not "to what party does the candidate belong?" "on what platform does he stand?" but "has he a conscience?" All human relations, rights, and duties are determined by the will of God. This gives them their only sacredness. Therefore the unjust judge who feared not God regarded not man, and these two traits of character stand in inseparable conjunction. He who despises God can have no true morality, and can never be safely trusted. Habit, the force of custom or opinion, or a wise selfishness may mould his conduct into the form of morality, but it has no inner vitalizing principle, and falls to pieces at the first breath of temptation, when these external forces are weakened or removed. Government in the hands of men who fear not God is like a ship in the hands of blind men, who can see

neither compass or beacon, sun or stars. The author of civil government has enacted a "civil service law," enduring as the everlasting hills, and binding all the nations of the earth: "Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness." "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."*

How then shall a nation provide against the intrusion of bad men into places of power? In two ways: *First, by law, fundamental, constitutional law*, demanding right moral character in her public servants; *second, through the wise, discriminating action of the people, educated and guided by the Constitution, at the polls.* Our mistake has been in discarding the first of these methods, and trusting wholly to the second. When the absence of such a safeguard was urged in the North Carolina Legislature against the adoption of the Federal Constitution, Mr. Iredell replied: "It is never to be supposed that the people of America will trust their dearest interests with persons of no religion or of a religion materially different from their own." Theophilus Parsons, afterwards Chief Justice, said in the Massachusetts Convention: "No man can wish more ardently than I do that all our public offices may be filled by men who fear God and hate wickedness, but it must remain with the electors to give the government this security." In the same convention Rev. Mr. Shute, a Congregational clergyman, expressed himself thus: "The presumption is that the eyes of the people will be upon the faithful in the land, and from a regard to their own safety they will choose for their rulers men of known abilities, of known probity and of good moral character."

These pleasing anticipations have been rudely dispelled. This single, unsupported reliance has failed us, as we might have known that it would. Not only have we misused the educating power of a law demanding righteous men for civil office, but the Constitution in its silence concerning the moral character and responsibilities of the nation has powerfully inculcated the notion that politics have nothing to do with religion, and that the State, having no conscience itself, cannot properly demand a conscience in its servants. Inquiry concerning the moral character of candidates has been resented as impertinent, or ridiculed as the suggestion of bigotry and intolerance. Moreover since the nation has thrown this responsibility wholly on the voters, it must abide by their decision, and if the slums of New York city choose a gambler and prize-fighter as their representative in Congress, he must forthwith be accepted as lawgiver for the nation. The citizens have followed the example of the nation in shirking the responsibility which ought to have been shared between them. They have naturally neglected the duty to which nothing in the supreme law called their attention. Bad men have corrupted others, and drawn men of like character to their side. No sentiment or declaration in the Constitution has invited and sanctioned united effort against these debasing influences, and a slow but steady and dangerous decline of official integrity has been the result.

We do not imagine that the adoption of this Amendment will at once cleanse the Augean stable of our politics, but we maintain that a Constitution which reverentially acknowledges the authority of God, and the responsibility of nations to him must exert a powerful silent influence in drawing moral, God-fearing men to the administration of government. Under such a Constitution the moral character of candidates for office could not be deemed irrelevant to the question of their election. The acknowledgment, in the terms of the proposed

* Exodus xviii. 21. II Sam. xxiii. 3.

Amendment or any similar terms, of the "revealed will of God as of supreme authority" would make the law I have quoted from the Bible supremelaw in this land, and candidates and constituencies would govern themselves accordingly. If it be objected that men would become hypocrites to obtain office, we can only say that the hypocrisy which abstains from blasphemy and licentiousness, and conforms the outward life to the morality of the Christian religion is a species of hypocrisy which we are exceedingly anxious to cultivate, and which all our laws restraining immorality are adapted and intended to produce.

I have sketched briefly our own conception of the legal effect and practical value of the Amendment which we propose. We are aware that a long controversy lies between us and these results. A host of minor practical issues will be decided in the course of the conflict which is to determine whether we are, and are to be a christian nation. But just as, when the chains fell from the slave, we hastened to embody in the Constitution a guaranty against the re-establishment of Slavery, so we shall one day seal the practical triumph of truth and righteousness over immorality and corruption, by a Religious Amendment to our fundamental law. In arguing for this measure, we are arguing for every practical reform which lies between us and our goal, like the cannon ball which, as Schiller says, shatters all in its way that it may shatter its mark.

The Committee appointed to nominate officers of the National Association for the ensuing year made the following report, which was unanimously adopted:

PRESIDENT:

The Hon. Wm. Strong, United States Supreme Court.

VICE-PRESIDENTS:

His Excellency, W. B. Washburn, Governor of Massachusetts; his Excellency, James M. Harvey, Governor of Kansas; his Excellency, Seth Padelford, Governor of Rhode Island; the Hon. J. W. McClurg, ex-Governor of Missouri; the Hon. W. H. Cumback, Lieutenant Governor of Indiana; the Hon. Wm. Murray, Supreme Court of New York; the Hon. M. B. Hagans, Superior Court of Cincinnati; Felix R. Brunot, Esq., Board of Indian Commissioners, Pittsburg, Pa.; John Alexander, Esq., Philadelphia, Pa.; Charles G. Nazro, Esq., Boston, Mass.; Thos. W. Bicknell, Esq., Commissioner of Public Schools, Rhode Island; James W. Taylor, Esq., Newburgh, New York; Prof. Tayler Lewis, LL.D., Union College, N. Y.; Edward S. Tobey, Esq., Boston; Russell Sturgis, jr., Esq., Boston; the Right Rev. Manton Eastburn, D. D., Bishop of the Diocese of Massachusetts; the Right Rev. G. T. Bedell, D. D., Assistant Bishop of the Diocese of Ohio; the Right Rev. G. D. Cummins, D. D., Assistant Bishop of the Diocese of Kentucky; the Rev. C. S. Finney, D. D., formerly President of Oberlin College, Oberlin, O.; the Rev. F. Merrick, D. D., LL.D., President of the Ohio University, Delaware, Ohio; the Rev. Joseph Cummings, D. D. LL.D., President of the Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn.; the Rev. A. D. Mayo, D. D., Cincinnati; the Rev. T. A. Morris, D. D., Bishop of the M. E. Church, Springfield, O.; the Rev. J. H. McIlvaine, D. D., Newark, N. J.; Prof. O. N. Stoddard, LL.D., Wooster University, O.; the Rev. M. Simpson, D. D., Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church; the Rev. J. Blanchard, D. D., President of Wheaton College, Ill.; John S. Hart, LL. D., Princeton College, New Jersey; the Right Rev. John B. Kerfoot, D. D., Bishop of the Diocese of Pittsburg; the Right Rev. F. D. Huntington, D. D., Bishop of the Diocese of Central New York; the Rev. T. L. Cuyler, D. D., Brooklyn; the Rev. Levi Scott, D. D., Bishop of the M. E. Church, Delaware; Prof. Julius H. Seelye, D. D., Amherst College, Mass.;

* See pages 70, 71.