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Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, New York, Feb. 26 and 27,  
1873.*

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OF THE  
**NATIONAL CONVENTION**

TO SECURE THE  
RELIGIOUS AMENDMENT  
OF THE  
CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES,

HELD IN NEW YORK, FEB. 26 & 27, 1873.

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF  
THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE MOVEMENT.

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# HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT TO SECURE THE RELIGIOUS AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

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BY T. P. STEVENSON,  
*Corresponding Secretary of the National Association.*

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The reader of the arguments presented in the following pages will naturally desire some information concerning the history of the movement, the auspices under which it arose, and the methods by which it has been prosecuted during the ten years of its history.

The religious defect of the Constitution of the United States was not unnoticed at the beginning. Luther Martin, a delegate from Maryland to the Convention which framed it, said: "There were some of the members so unfashionable as to think that a belief of the existence of a Deity, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, would be some security for the good conduct of our rulers, and that in a Christian country it would be at least decent to hold some distinction between the professors of Christianity and downright infidelity and paganism."\*

On the 28th of October, 1789, the First Presbytery Eastward in Massachusetts and New Hampshire presented a loyal and patriotic address to President Washington, in which, after expressing their satisfaction in beholding how easily the entire confidence of the people in the man first entrusted with the administration of the new Constitution had eradicated every remaining objection to its form, they add: "Among these [objections] we never considered the want of a religious test—that grand engine of persecution in every tyrant's hand—but we should not have been alone in rejoicing to have seen some explicit acknowledgment of the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent, inserted somewhere in the Magna Charta of our country."

In the early part of the present century the eminent Dr. John M. Mason, of New York, employed these words: "One would imagine that no occasion of making a pointed and public acknowledgment of the Divine benignity could have presented itself so obviously as the framing an instrument of government which, in the nature of things, must be closely allied to our happiness or our ruin; and yet that very Constitution, which the singular goodness of God enabled us to establish, does not so much as recognize His being."

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\* Genuine Information delivered to the Legislature of Maryland, by Luther Martin, a Delegate. Philadelphia, 1788, page 80.

In the admirable treatise on "The Oath," by the Rev. D. X. Junkin, D. D., published in 1845, the writer says: "The oath of the President of the United States could as well be taken by a pagan or a Mohammedan as by the Chief Magistrate of a Christian people: it excludes the name of the Supreme Being. Indeed, it is negatively *atheistical*, for no God is appealed to at all. In framing many of our public formularies, greater care seems to have been taken to adapt them to the prejudices of the infidel few than to the consciences of the Christian millions. In these things the minority in our country has hitherto managed to govern the majority. \* \* We look on the designed omission of it [the name of God in the oath] as an attempt to exclude from civil affairs Him who is the Governor among the nations."

These views have been intelligently and firmly maintained by a portion of the American people at all times since the adoption of the present Constitution. The contrast in this respect between the Constitution of the nation and the Constitutions of nearly all the States did not escape observation, and it was remembered that, before the national Constitution, no similar instrument of government had been framed by any portion of the American people without an explicit acknowledgment of Almighty God and the Christian religion.

No public effort to remedy this defect was possible, however, while the question of slavery was agitating the public mind. The intense feeling engendered by that controversy, and the sensitiveness to any proposal to change the Constitution, precluded even the consideration of the subject. With the war, however, there came a change. That great calamity was almost universally felt to be an expression of the Divine displeasure against the nation. The public conscience was prepared to welcome any measure which proposed in a suitable and becoming way to give honor to the God whom we had offended, and express our feelings of repentance and our purpose of reformation. The feelings of a large part of the nation were expressed in the following sentences from a sermon by the Rev. Henry A. Boardman, of Philadelphia, in the year 1862: "We must 'search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.' The loss of His favor will explain everything that has happened. And the grand aim should be to learn how we have lost His favor, and by what means we can regain it. This is too large a theme to be discussed within the compass of a few pages, but there is one feature of our Government too closely connected with this question, and too conspicuous, to be passed by in silence. I refer, as you will readily suppose—for the topic is a familiar one—to the absence of any adequate recognition of the sovereignty of God and the religion of which He is the author and object, in our Constitution, and in the practical administration of our political system. \* \* \* Our national charter pays no homage to the Deity. His name does not once occur in the Constitution of the United States. And as if to confound the charity which would refer this omission to some accidental agency, the same atheism is repeated and perpetuated in another form no less inexcusable. The coinage of money is one of the inalienable prerogatives of political sovereignty. The solemnity attached to the function has been recognized by most nations, ancient and modern, Jewish and Christian, Mohammedan and Pagan. You have but to look at the money of any people to know at what altars they worshipped. But *the coinage of the United States is without a God.* \* \* \* Has not the time come to make our formal national confession of this fun-

damental truth—to impress it on our coinage, to insert it (peradventure it may not be too late) as the keystone of our riven and tottering Constitution.”

A Convention for prayer and Christian conference with special reference to the state of the country, had been called to meet at Xenia, Ohio, on the 8d day of February, 1863. When it assembled, it was found to include representatives from eleven different denominations of Christians, and from seven of the States of the Union. An unusual degree of patriotic and religious fervor pervaded all its exercises. It was therefore an auspicious hour for the consideration of the subject when on the second day of its sessions, Mr. John Alexander, then of Xenia, now of Philadelphia, quietly laid on the table of the Convention a paper calling attention to this defect, and proposing that the Convention should take such steps as might seem proper toward its correction. With a view to bring the subject more definitely before the Convention, a form of amendment to the Preamble of the Constitution was suggested, which embodied all the principles which have been advocated in the course of the movement, and which has not since been materially changed.

Notwithstanding some objections that were offered, the paper was received with great unanimity, and referred to a Committee representing all denominations of Christians gathered in the Convention, and the report of this Committee, approving the spirit and design of the paper, and endorsing the action which it proposed, was adopted. From these facts it will be seen that the present movement is the fruit of intelligent and mature conviction, confirmed by long reflection and careful study of the spirit and history of our institutions, and quickened into active effort in an hour of deep religious and patriotic feeling. The eleven denominations of Christians, represented in the Convention, are witnesses of the unsectarian character of the movement. The devout and prayerful spirit which marked its birth, has never ceased to be among its most noticeable characteristics.

The first National Convention to secure this Amendment was held in Allegheny, on the 27th of January, 1864. It was an earnest, prayerful and encouraging meeting. Its action was as follows:

#### RESOLUTIONS.

*Resolved*, 1. That we deem it a matter of paramount interest to the life and prosperity, and permanency of our Nation, that its Constitution be so amended as fully to express the Christian national character.

2. That we are encouraged by the success attending the labors of the friends of this movement to persevere, in the hope that, with the blessing of God, this effort will speedily result in the consummation of this great object.

3. That in the late proclamations of His Excellency, the President of the United States, recommending the observance of days of National fasting, humiliation and prayer, (as suggested by the Senate of the United States,) for the purpose of confessing our National sins, which have provoked the Divine displeasure, and of imploring forgiveness through Jesus Christ—and also days of National thanksgiving for the purpose of making grateful acknowledgment of God's mercies—we have pleasing evidence that God is graciously inclining the hearts of those who are in authority over us, to recognize His hand in the affairs of the Nation, and to cherish a sense of our dependence on Him.

4. That the following Memorial and petition to Congress be circulated throughout the United States for signatures:

## MEMORIAL TO CONGRESS.

*To the Honorable, the Senate and House of Representatives, in Congress assembled :*

We, citizens of the United States, respectfully ask your Honorable bodies to adopt measures for amending the Constitution of the United States, so as to read, in substance, as follows :

"We, the people of the United States, [humbly acknowledging Almighty God as the source of all authority and power in civil government, the Lord Jesus Christ as the Ruler among the nations, and His revealed will as the supreme law of the land, in order to constitute a Christian government] and, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, [and secure the inalienable rights and the blessings of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to ourselves, our posterity, and all the people,\*] do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

"And further: that such changes with respect to the oath of office, slavery, and all other matters, should be introduced into the body of the Constitution, as may be necessary to give effect to these amendments in the preamble. And we, your humble petitioners, will ever pray," etc.

*Resolved*, That a special Committee be appointed to carry the Memorial to Washington, lay it before the President, and endeavor to get a special message to Congress on the subject, and to lay said Memorial before Congress.

The National Association to secure the Religious Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was organized at this Convention, with JOHN ALEXANDER, Esq., as President; ZADOK STREET, Salem, Ohio (of the Society of Friends), Vice-President; a full list of other officers, and an Executive Committee.

A large delegation was appointed to visit Washington, to urge the proposed Amendment on the attention of President Lincoln. This Committee, embracing Professor J. H. McILVAINE, D.D., Princeton, N. J.; Professor J. T. PRESSLY, D.D., Penn.; Rev. JOHN DOUGLASS, D.D., Penn.; Rev. D. C. PAGE, D.D., Pa.; Rev. H. H. GEORGE, Ohio; Dr. STERRETT, Pa.; JOHN ALEXANDER, Esq., Ohio; Rev. J. S. T. MILLIGAN, Mich.; Rev. R. A. BROWNE, Pa.; and Rev. A. M. MILLIGAN, Pa., met in Willard's Hotel, Washington, on Tuesday evening, February 9. The Rev. Dr. GURLEY, Rev. Dr. CHANNING, Chaplain of the U. S. Senate, J. J. MARKS, D.D., Rev. B. F. MORRIS, Rev. L. D. JOHNSON, and Rev. N. K. CROWE, of the District of Columbia, met with the delegation, heard the address prepared by Dr. McILVAINE, the Chairman of the Committee, and gave it their hearty sanction. Most of them signed the address and waited on the President with the delegation. Through the aid of Senator SHERMAN, of Ohio, an arrangement was made with the President for an interview on Wednesday, at 3½ P. M., when the delegation was introduced to the President by Dr. GURLEY, and the Chairman made the following address:

## ADDRESS TO THE PRESIDENT.

MR. PRESIDENT:—The object for which we have taken the liberty of trespassing a moment on your precious time, can be explained in very few words. We are the representatives of a mass Convention of Christian people, without distinction of sect or denomination, which was held in Allegheny City, on the 27th and 28th of January last; and we are instructed to lay before your Excellency the action of that Convention.

\* This clause was dropped after the Amendment prohibiting Slavery was adopted.

After reading the resolutions of the Convention and the Memorial to Congress, embodying the proposed Amendment, the address continued as follows :

We are encouraged, Mr. President, to hope that you will give the great object for which we pray, your cordial and powerful support, because you have already shown, by many significant acts of your administration, that the principle on which it rests is dear to your heart. This principle is our national responsibility to God, which you have expressly and repeatedly recognized. We remember that when, under one of your predecessors, an anti-Christian power had refused to treat with the United States, on the ground that we were a Christian nation, the objection was removed by the authoritative statement that we, as a nation, had no religion ; also, that several of your predecessors refused, when earnestly importuned, to appoint days of national fasting and thanksgiving, for the same reason, whilst you, sir, within the space of a single year, have thrice, by solemn proclamation, called us to either national fasting, humiliation and prayer, for our many and grievous sins, especially our sin of forgetting God, or to national thanksgiving for His unspeakable mercies.

You, moreover, as no other of our Chief Magistrates ever did, have solemnly reminded us of the redeeming grace of our blessed Saviour, and of the authority of the Holy Scriptures over us as a people. By such acts as these, you have awakened a hope in the Christian people of this land, that you represent them in feeling and want of a distinct and plain recognition of the Divine authority in the Constitution of the United States. For we hold it most certain truth, that nations, as such, and not individuals alone, are the subjects of God's moral government, are responsible to Him, and by Him are graciously rewarded for their obedience, or justly punished for their disobedience of His divine laws.

We believe also, that our civil and religious liberties, our free institutions, and all our national prosperity, power and glory, are mercies and blessings derived from God to us through the channel of the Christian religion. Notwithstanding, either from inadvertency, or following some Godless theory of civil government, we have omitted even the mention of His blessed name in the most significant and highest act of the nation.

We believe that in thus leaving God out of our political system, we have grievously sinned against Him, have brought upon ourselves and children His just displeasure, opened the flood-gates of that political corruption which is the mediate, and given occasion to that prodigious development of the spirit of oppression and injury to the negro race, which is the immediate source of our present calamities and sorrows. We believe, therefore, that it is our first duty to repent of this and all our national sins, and to return to our obligations as a Christian people, by acknowledging the true God as our God in our fundamental and organic law, in order that we may consistently implore His merciful interposition in our behalf, to give victory to our national arms, and success to the national cause ; to establish the unity of the nation and the authority of the Government, now assaulted and shattered by a horrible rebellion. We ask for no union of Church and State—that is a thing which we utterly repudiate ; we ask for nothing inconsistent with the largest religious liberty, or the rights of conscience in any man. We represent no sectarian or denominational object, but one in which all who bear the Christian name, and all who have any regard for the Christian religion, can cordially agree ; and one to secure which we are persuaded that any lawful and wise movement would call forth an overwhelming public sentiment in its support.

We, therefore, do earnestly hope that you, our beloved Chief Magistrate, will not be indifferent in our prayer. For, by what you have already done in this cause, and by your integrity, firmness and excellent wisdom, (divinely guided as we believe it has been, and pray that it may ever continue to be,) under the terrible responsibility laid upon you in this, the darkest hour of our country's peril and rebuke, you have won the confidence and affection of the Christian people of this land, beyond all your predecessors, save only the Father of his Country. Knowing, then, the respect and

deference with which your sage counsels are listened to by the whole people, and deeming the present time and occasion most opportune, we are persuaded that if you will give this movement your favor and support, it will be successful, and thus you will place yourself in the hearts of the present, and of all future generations, as one of the greatest benefactors of your country. For, having inaugurated those measures which aim to right, so far as that is possible, our great national wrong committed against man, you will have wielded that vast influence with which you have been clothed by Divine Providence and by the voice of the people, to right, so far as that can be done, that great wrong which as a nation we have committed against God, in leaving Him out of our political system.

The President replied as follows :

**GENTLEMEN :—**The general aspect of your movement, I cordially approve. In regard to particulars, I must ask time to deliberate, as the work of amending the Constitution should not be done hastily. I will carefully examine your paper, in order more fully to comprehend its contents than is possible from merely hearing it read, and will take such action upon it as my responsibility to our Maker and our country demands.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (O. S.), in session at New-ark, in May, 1864, in answer to an overture on the subject from the Synod of the Pacific, adopted the following preamble and resolutions offered by Dr. Musgrave :

*Whereas*, Almighty God, the God of nations, is the head and source of all authority and power in civil government, and nations as such are the subjects of His moral laws, and His revealed will is the supreme law of national life ;

*Whereas*, The Christian and loyal people of our country are everywhere beseeching God to interpose for our deliverance as a nation, from the assaults of a most groundless and wicked rebellion, and to establish and maintain the national unity and authority ; and

*Whereas*, Resolutions have already passed the Senate of the United States, and are pending in the House of Representatives, recommending the Amendment of the National Constitution in several other particulars ; therefore,

*Resolved*, That it is our solemn national duty so to amend our fundamental and organic law, that the preamble of the National Constitution shall read in substance as follows : "We, the people of the United States," &c., (in the words of the proposed Amendment.)

*Resolved*, That this General Assembly recommend to all the people in the congregations under its care, to memorialize Congress upon this subject.

As the Allegheny Convention was an intermediate meeting to effect a permanent organization, it was determined to call the First Annual Meeting of the Association in Philadelphia, in July following. It was held accordingly in the Eighth street Methodist Episcopal Church, on Wednesday and Thursday, the 7th and 8th days of that month. Though the meeting was not large, the character and position of those present, and the interest manifested in the cause were exceedingly encouraging. Addresses were made by the Rev. D. C. Eddy, D. D., of the Tabernacle Baptist Church, and the Rev. J. H. A. Bomberger, D. D., of the German Reformed Church. Dr. Eddy was elected President of the Association for the ensuing year. The Revs. T. P. Stevenson and W. W. Spear, D. D., and Wm. Getty, Esq., were appointed a Committee on Correspondence, and were directed to prepare an address to the public in

behalf of the cause. From this address, the first issued after the organization of the Association, we extract the following passages :

Many Christians are convinced that we have failed to give our civil institutions that definite and practical religious character which is worthy of a Christian people and essential to national permanence and prosperity. We are not aware that in the formation of our Government, by any act or any declaration, we recognized the divine origin of the institution then set up. While we have distinctly asserted, and jealously maintained, the right of the people to set up forms of government for themselves, we have not acknowledged—it would seem we have not felt—that the constitution of government is an act of obedience to God, and that all legitimate civil authority is ultimately derived from Him. Neither have we recognized the moral responsibility of the nation in its organic character, nor its obligation to accept and obey the will of God revealed in His word. And this defect is made painfully conspicuous by the omission of the name of God even from the form of oath prescribed in the Constitution, which simply reads, "I do solemnly swear or affirm."

#### THESE AMENDMENTS RIGHT AND NECESSARY.

We respectfully submit to your consideration, whether these amendments are not simply an appropriate recognition of the relations which all just human authority sustains to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe. Is not anything less than this wholly inconsistent with those relations? We propose the recognition of God, not only because He is the Supreme Ruler of all men and all organizations, but because it is He who has given the institution of civil government to man, and the just authority of the magistrate is derived from Him. "There is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God." It is surely fitting that a constitution framed by a Christian people should recognize a higher source of civil authority than the mere will or consent of the citizen. And in presenting civil government thus, as a divine institution, we enforce, by the highest possible sanctions, its claims upon the respect and obedience of the citizen. The true strength of a government lies in the conscientious regard felt for it as the ordinance of God. Thus only is the magistrate clothed with his true authority, and the majesty of the law suitably preserved. "The sanctions of religion," says De Witt Clinton, "compose the foundations of good government."

The moral character of a government has a powerful reflex influence on the moral character of the people. Especially is this felt in a popular government, where the people are brought into constant contact with it, study its history, admire its provisions, and drink deeply of its spirit. An irreligious government begets an irreligious people. It must be deplored that in a Constitution so universally and so justly admired and loved and studied by the American people, there is nothing to turn the mind of the nation to God, to inculcate reverence for the authority of His Son or respect for His word.

#### JUSTIFIED BY OUR OWN HISTORY.

The principles which we here present are not new in American politics. We are able to plead many precedents, which must have the weight of authority with the American people. Our country was originally settled by men of high religious character, whose only motive in seeking a home in the wilderness was the freedom and safety of religion, and the glory of God. They left the impress of their character on the civil institutions which they set up. In the cabin of the Mayflower, and before landing on Plymouth Rock, the Pilgrims agreed upon a constitution of civil government, in which they declared "the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith" to be among the ends of their organization. This Constitution, beginning: "In the name of God, Amen," invokes, says Webster, "a religious sanction and the authority of God on their civil obligations."

The Constitution of the first government established in the limits of the present State of Connecticut, declares that "where a people are gathered together, the

Word of God requires that there should be an orderly and decent government established according to God."

The first form of government that existed in Pennsylvania asserted "the origination and descent of all human power from God," and the first legislative act of the Colony, passed at Chester in 1662, recognized the Christian religion, while it established liberty of conscience, and declared that the glory of God and the good of mankind are the reason and end of government, which is, therefore, a venerable ordinance of God. And the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, in 1824, on a trial for blasphemy, referring to this early statute, says: "Christianity—general Christianity—is and always has been a part of the common law of Pennsylvania; not Christianity founded on particular tenets, nor an established Church, with tithes and spiritual courts, but Christianity with liberty of conscience to all men."

The State Constitutions of the era of the Revolution present the same characteristics. In 1780, the Constitution of Massachusetts declared "that the happiness of a people, and the good order and preservation of civil government, essentially depend on piety, religion, and morality." And in the Convention of that State, met in 1820, to revise the Constitution, Mr. Webster said: "I am clearly of opinion that we should not strike out all recognition of the Christian religion. I am desirous that in so solemn a transaction as the establishment of a Constitution we should express our attachment to Christianity—not indeed to any of its peculiar forms, but to its general principles." But it is needless to multiply examples; for of the thirteen States existing originally, not one had failed in its Constitution to make recognition, more or less explicit, of the authority of God and the claims of His law. And it is a matter of deep regret, that when we were enabled, after the triumphant assertion of our independence, to set up a statelier governmental structure, we left out that which constituted the chief strength and glory of those earlier commonwealths.

Whatever explanation we put upon this unfortunate omission, it cannot be considered presumptuous, after the experience of nearly three-quarters of a century, to propose amendments to any constitution, however admirable and beneficent. It has already been amended in some particulars. The present rebellion has led to a general conviction that additional amendments are necessary to secure universal liberty, and prevent even the possible recurrence of the evils which we now suffer. We propose that the Constitution be made unmistakably *Christian*, as well as *free*.

#### IN ACCORD WITH OUR NATIONAL ACTS.

There are well-established features in our Government, which are consistent only with such principles as we seek to introduce into the National Constitution. Through our whole history chaplains have been appointed by Congress; prayer is offered daily during its sessions, and the nation is called at intervals, by both Congress and the Executive, to thanksgiving, or fasting and prayer. A recent resolution of the Senate on such an occasion, recognized the medium of Jesus Christ, and the President called us to give thanks "for preserving and redeeming grace." We have gone to the Christian religion for the only bond we have for the integrity of the ruler, or the fidelity of the citizen—the divine ordinance of an oath. Such acts can have no meaning, except as a nation we acknowledge God. If such implied recognition of God be proper and becoming, no objection can be urged against the express recognition which we propose. Its necessity will be felt when we remember that one Chief Magistrate once refused to appoint a day of fasting and prayer in an hour of public calamity, because the nation, in its Constitution, recognized no God, and another, in contracting a treaty with a Mohammedan power, hesitated not to declare that "The Government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion. It has in itself no character of enmity against the laws and religion of Mussulmans."\* Surely our Christian character should be so well defined, that the Chief Magistrate of the nation could not doubt or ignore it, so clear that all the world should know us as a nation whose God is Jehovah.

\* Treaty with Tripoli. Art. xi. Laws of the United States, vol. 4.

In this movement, prompted by pure Christian patriotism, participated in by various Christian denominations, all of whom are opposed to any sectarian establishment of religion, we invite the co-operation of every lover of his country, and every follower of Jesus Christ. We invite all ministers of the Gospel to proclaim to the nation the claims of Him whose ambassadors they are. We invite the co-operation of all ecclesiastical bodies in this effort to return to our fathers' God, to honor our common Redeemer, and to secure the best interests of our land.

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The next Convention was held in the West Arch street Presbyterian Church on the 29th of November, 1864. Ex-Governor Pollock presided, and addresses of unusual interest and power were made by Judge Strong, Dr. Edwards, Dr. McIlvaine, Dr. George Junkin, Dr. Joel Swartz, (Lutheran,) of Baltimore, and the Rev. Dr. Goddard, (Episcopal,) of Philadelphia. Delegates were present from different parts of the country, and altogether it was a very encouraging meeting. The following resolutions were adopted :

*Resolved*, That a National recognition of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Scriptures, as proposed in the memorial of this Association to Congress, it is clearly a Scriptural duty, which it is National peril to disregard.

*Resolved*, That, in consideration of the general diffusion of religious intelligence, principles and institutions throughout our country—in view of the many express recognitions of Christianity by the Constitutions and the legislative enactments of the several States—and in view, also, of the religious history of the founders of this Government, it is a striking and solemn fact that our present National Constitution is so devoid of any distinctive Christian feature, that one of our Chief Magistrates once refused to appoint a day of fasting and prayer in an hour of public calamity, because the Nation, in its Constitution, recognized no God; and another, in contracting a treaty with a Mohammedan power, hesitated not to declare that "The Government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion. It has in itself no character of enmity against the laws and religion of Mussulmans."

*Resolved*, That the measures proposed by this Association are not sectional, nor sectarian, nor partisan, but the general voice of Christian patriotism, asking that which is right and wholesome, which is in keeping with our antecedents, and which will not operate oppressively upon the conscience of any citizen.

*Resolved*, That the state of the times, recent and present, and the state of public sentiment, warrants and encourages the attempt to secure the Amendment of the Constitution which is proposed by this Association.

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During the subsequent years the movement has been promoted by the holding of annual conventions, the circulation of petitions to Congress, by sermons, public meetings, and addresses before representative bodies, by the distribution of tracts, and by the formation of auxiliary societies. Of these, the National Reform Association of Southern Illinois has had the longest history, and its influence has been most widely felt. Of the conventions, that in New York, in 1866; the Ohio State Convention, which met at Columbus, in February, 1869; the Northwest Convention, at Monmouth, Illinois, in April, 1871, and the National Convention at Pittsburgh, in 1870, were the most noteworthy. The Pittsburgh Convention gave a marked impulse to the cause. No immediate attempt has been made to secure action by Congress. All the efforts of

the Association have been directed to the formation of a right public sentiment on the relation of government to religion,—a sentiment without which the amendment would be as valueless as its adoption would be impossible. For nearly six years the progress of the movement, and the labors in its behalf, have been faithfully chronicled in the pages of the *CHRISTIAN STATESMAN*, a paper established by the writer of this sketch, and the Rev. D. McAllister, for the advocacy of this cause. Established at first as the individual contribution of its editors to the cause, and issued only semi-monthly, it has lately been enlarged and is now published weekly, on an adequate pecuniary foundation, and with a large and steadily increasing circulation. Its pages furnish a complete record of the movement since September, 1867, and a full report of proceedings and addresses at all principal conventions. Many of the most elaborate discussions of the principle of national responsibility to God, and other related topics, have first appeared as contributions to its columns.

For convenience of reference, and to show the dignity, importance and consistency of the principles which underlie this movement, as well as the calm, earnest and judicious spirit in which it has been carried forward, I append here the Calls for the three preceding National Conventions, held in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati, in the years 1870, 1871, and 1872 respectively, together with the resolutions adopted at each :

#### CALL FOR THE PITTSBURGH CONVENTION.

The Constitution of the United States makes no acknowledgment of Almighty God, the Author of national existence ; nor of Jesus Christ, who is the Ruler of Nations ; nor of the Bible, which is the Fountain of law and good morals, as well as of religion. This has, from the beginning, been a matter of deep regret. It may have been an oversight, but it was, and it is, both an error and an evil. It does not reflect the views of the great majority of the people upon these matters. It dishonors God. It is inconsistent with the character of nearly all our State Constitutions, and with all the precedents of our early history. It has introduced, or furthered, views and measures which are now struggling for a baneful ascendancy in State and national politics : such as, that civil government is only a social compact ; that it exists only for secular and material, not for moral ends ; that Sabbath Laws are unconstitutional, and that the Bible must be excluded from our public schools.

The National Association, which has been formed for the purpose of securing such an amendment to the National Constitution as will remedy this great defect, indicate that this is a Christian nation, and place all Christian Laws, Institutions and Usages in our Government on an undeniable legal basis in the fundamental law of the nation, invites, &c.

#### RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT PITTSBURGH.

*Resolved*, That civil government is grounded, like the family, in the principles of the nature of man as a social creature ; that it has its powers and functions thus determined by the Creator, and is, therefore, like the family, an ordinance of God.

*Resolved*, That nations, as sovereignties, wielding moral as well as physical power, and having moral as well as material objects, are morally accountable to God.

*Resolved*, That the moral laws under which nations are held accountable, include not only the law written on the heart of man, but also the fuller revelation of the Divine character and will, given in the Bible.

*Resolved*, That it is the right of nations as such, no less than of the individuals composing them, to worship God according to the religion of Jesus Christ.

*Resolved*, That in order to maintain and give permanency to the Christian features which have marked this nation from its origin, it is necessary to give them authoritative sanction in our organic law.

*Resolved*, That the proposed amendment of our National Constitution, so far from infringing any individual's rights of conscience, or tending in the least degree to a union of Church and State, will afford the fullest security against a corrupt and corrupting church establishment, and form the strongest safeguard of both the civil and religious liberties of all citizens.

*Resolved*, That the present movement is not sectarian, nor even ecclesiastical, but that it is the assertion of the right, and acknowledgment of the duty of a people who believe in the Christian religion to govern themselves in a Christian manner.

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CALL FOR THE PHILADELPHIA CONVENTION.

There is no political document so all-important to the American statesman and the American citizen as the Constitution of the United States. All law, all customs, all forms of administration are shaped by it. Everything in any State, corporation or business that affects a citizen in the remotest degree as to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" is tested by it, and stands and works only as it agrees with it. Year by year its molding power is felt. The President, the Congress and the Courts are coming more and more into evident agreement with what is there written. Our statesmen and our whole people are learning their Americanism, as to its letter and spirit, from that great instrument. This is as it should be. This was intended from the beginning.

But, at the same time; it is a serious matter if that Constitution should be found wanting in any principle or any matter of fact. The deficiency will in due time work mischief. Error in the Constitution will work as powerfully as truth, and what is left out of it may one day be formally declared un-American. And one such serious matter there is; one unnecessary and most unfortunate omission. God and Christianity are not once alluded to: although the Constitution is itself the product of a Christian civilization, and although it purports to represent the mind of a Christian people, who in all their State Constitutions had made explicit reference to both God and religion. Hence it is that all the laws of this country in favor of a Christian morality are enacted and enforced outside of the Constitution. They rest only upon the basis of what is called Common Law. We have, strictly, no oath, no law against blasphemy, Sabbath breaking or polygamy that has any better foundation. And, as matters seem to be going, it will soon be discovered and decreed that common law is only another name for custom, which has no binding force. And then where are we? In atheism, corruption and anarchy.

The National Association which has been formed, &c.

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT PHILADELPHIA.

*Resolved*, 1st. That this Convention of those who aim to secure a religious amendment to our National Constitution gratefully acknowledge the good providence of God in the evident progress of this cause during the past year.

2d. That, with the conviction that under God all that is wanting for its ultimate and early triumph, is the publication and illustration of the facts and the principles upon which it is based, we pledge ourselves to renewed zeal in its prosecution.

3d. That this Convention renewedly calls the attention of the American people to the fact that in some of our treaties with foreign governments, which are of equal authority with the Constitution itself, we are declared to be a nation in no sense founded upon Christianity, and not (formally) unlike Mohammedans.

4th. That this Convention reiterates with an increased and solemn appreciation of their importance the following principles of moral and political philosophy, which, in substance, have been set forth by former Conventions, viz:

That civil government in the earth stands for its right of existence upon the same basis with the family, both being the appointments of the God of nature and morality,

and that nations, like families, are public persons, with moral character, with rights, duties, and responsibilities.

That the continued ignoring of God and religion exposes us to the guilt of formal national Atheism.

That the nation constituted by the union of the thirteen British-American Colonies was a Christian nation, as is shown by their several Colonial histories and separate State Constitutions, and therefore it was and is no more than simple justice to the people to reflect their sentiments in the National Constitution.

5th. That, in view of the controlling power of the Constitution, in shaping State as well as National policy, it is of immediate importance to public morals and to social order, to secure "such an amendment to the Constitution as will remedy this great defect, indicate that this is a Christian nation, and place all Christian laws, institutions, and usages in our Government on an undeniable legal basis in the fundamental law of the nation;" especially those which secure a proper oath, and which protect society against blasphemy, Sabbath-breaking, and polygamy.

#### CALL FOR THE CINCINNATI CONVENTION.

Government is instituted for man as an intellectual, social, and moral and religious being. It corresponds to his whole nature. It is intended to protect and advance the higher as well as the lower interests of humanity. It acts for its legitimate purposes when it watches over domestic life, and asserts and enforces the sanctity of the marriage bond; when it watches over intellect and education, and furnishes means for developing all the faculties of the mind; when it frowns on profaneness, lewdness, the desecration of the Sabbath, and other crimes which injure society chiefly by weakening moral and religious sentiment, and degrading the character of a people.

Acting for such purposes, government should be established on moral principles. Moral principles of conduct are determined by moral relations. The relations of a nation to God and His moral laws are clear and definite:

1. A nation is the creature of God.
2. It is clothed with authority derived from God.
3. It owes allegiance to Jesus Christ, the appointed Ruler of Nations.
4. It is subject to the authority of the Bible, the special revelation of moral law.

In constituting and administering its Government, then, a nation is under obligations to acknowledge God as the author of its existence and the source of its authority, Jesus Christ as its ruler, and the Bible as the fountain of its laws, and the supreme rule of its conduct.

Up to the time of the adoption of the National Constitution, acknowledgments of this kind were made by all the States. They are yet made by many of the States. And in the actual administration of the national Government the principle is admitted. But the fundamental law of the nation, the Constitution of the United States, on which our Government rests, and according to which it is to be administered, fails to make, fully and explicitly, any such acknowledgment. This failure has fostered among us mischievous ideas like the following: The nation, as such, has no relations to God; its authority has no higher source than the will of the people; Government is instituted only for the lower wants of man; the State goes beyond its sphere when it educates religiously, or legislates against profanity or Sabbath desecration.

The National Association which has been formed, &c.

#### RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT CINCINNATI.

*Resolved*, That the State, as a power claiming and exercising supreme jurisdiction over vast numbers of human beings, as the sovereign arbiter of life and death, and as an educating power, has necessarily a moral character and accountability of its own.

*Resolved*, That it is the right and duty of the United States, as a nation settled by Christians, a nation with Christian laws and usages, and with Christianity as its greatest social force, to acknowledge itself, in its written Constitution, to be a Christian nation.

*Resolved*, That as the disregard of sound theory always leads to mischievous practical results, so in this case the failure of our nation to acknowledge, in its organic law, its relation to God and His moral laws, as a Christian nation, has fostered the theory that government has nothing to do with religion, and that consequently laws in favor of the Sabbath, Christian marriage, and the use of the Bible in the schools, are unconstitutional.

*Resolved*, That we recognize the necessity of complete harmony between our written Constitution and the actual facts of the National life; and we maintain that the true way to effect this undoubted harmony is not to expel the Bible and all idea of God and religion from our schools, abrogate laws enforcing Christian morality, and abolish all devout observances in connection with Government, but to insert an explicit acknowledgment of God and the Bible in our fundamental law.

*Resolved*, That the proposed religious Amendment, so far from tending to a union of Church and State, is directly opposed to such union, inasmuch as it recognizes the nation's relations to God, and insists that the nation should acknowledge these relations for itself, and not through the medium of any Church establishment.

The most imposing and influential Convention yet held was that of which the following pages give the proceedings. In the number of delegates in attendance, in the variety and effectiveness of the addresses which commended the cause to enthusiastic and delighted audiences, and in the generous provision made for the prosecution of the work on an enlarged scale during the coming year, this Convention far surpassed all that have preceded it.

Wednesday, the 26th ult., the day fixed for the assembling of the Convention, was a day of spring-like mildness and beauty, a circumstance which contributed to swell the audiences at the first two sessions of the Convention. But the increasing interest of its proceedings, and the earnestness of its members and friends, were manifest in the fact that, notwithstanding an incessant snow-storm on the second day, which lasted far into the night, the attendance continued undiminished until the end. The assembly, at each of the evening sessions, numbered fully 1,500 persons, and these, with scarcely an exception, remained till a late hour with evident interest and delight.

According to the report of the Committee on Enrollment, found on page 49, *four hundred and seventy* members took seats in the Convention, and *three hundred and sixty-three* of these bore certificates of their appointment as delegates from public meetings, auxiliary societies, churches and other bodies. The students of Harvard Law School, for example, had held a meeting and appointed three of their number as delegates to New York. Thus the Convention, large as it was, represented an immensely larger constituency devoted to the cause. Nineteen States and one territory were thus represented.

A delightful feature of this, as of all previous conventions, was the harmony with which the representatives of the various denominations of Christians were able to deliberate and act together in the interests of their common Christianity and of the civil institutions which rest on it. Not a trace of denominational self-assertion, or of sectarian jealousy, was visible through the

whole course of the proceedings. In fact, sectarian diversities sunk out of sight in the unity of feeling and purpose which pervaded the assembly, and the question, "Of what church is he?" was seldom asked. To every one who deplores the divisions of the Church, our work has great moral value, as it makes visible the underlying unity and essential agreement of all Christian sects, and brings them together in a holy fellowship which greatly promotes mutual acquaintance and esteem.

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A similar sketch of the origin and progress of this movement, of which this is in part a condensation, was prefixed to the proceedings of the last National Convention. The reader is referred to this for additional information.