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TO SECURE THE

RELIGIOUS AMENDMENT

OF THE

CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES,

HELD IN

PITTSBURG, FEBRUARY 4, 5, 1874.

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE MOVEMENT.

PHILADELPHIA:

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

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## TESTIMONIES TO THE RELIGIOUS DEFECT OF THE CONSTITUTION.\*

BY THE REV. D. M'ALLISTER, GENERAL SECRETARY.

The religious defect of our National Constitution, otherwise so admirable 'an instrument, is now arresting general attention. On the one hand, the enemies of our Christian institutions of government glory in the fact that the Constitution of the United States contains no acknowledgment of God or the Christian religion; and, on the other hand, Christian citizens, however reluctantly, are constrained to admit the fact.

This defect, of late coming so prominently into public view, has never passed altogether unnoticed. From the formation of the Constitution until the present organized effort to secure its religious amendment, there has been an unbroken chain of testimony to its great defect. To many who have but recently learned with surprise, that our Constitution contains no acknowledgment of God or Christianity, this mass of testimony from some of the ablest thinkers and most patriotic citizens of our country, has been utterly unknown. It may prove interesting and important to gather this array of testimony, scattered through many documents, some of which are accessible to but few, into one complete summary, as a part of the literature of this movement.

Following chronological order, we first meet with the testimony of

LUTHER MARTIN, 1788,

delegate from Maryland to the convention that framed the Constitution. In his letter, dated January 27, 1788, to the Legislature of Maryland, of which State he was Attorney General for thirty years, he says in regard to the exclusion, by the convention, of all reference to God or Christianity from the Constitution :

"There were some members so unfashionable as to think that a belief of the existence of a Deity, and of a state of future 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 out some distinction between the professors of Christianity and downright infidelity or paganism."—*Elliott's Debates, Vol. I., pp. 385, 386.*

The testimony of those members referred to has not been preserved. There is no record of their objections in the reported proceedings of the Convention.

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\* A number of additional testimonies are given in this report, for the sake of completeness. The writer became acquainted with these added testimonies since the Convention met.

## MEMBERS OF STATE CONVENTIONS, 1788.

Here again the records of the conventions of the States, held to ratify the Constitution, are defective. But enough is found in the proceedings of some of them to show how sensible were many of their members of its religious defect. Mr. Singletary, Gen'l Brooks, and Colonel Jones in the Massachusetts convention, (*Elliott's Debates*, Vol. II. pp. 44-119,) and Messrs. Caldwell, Abbott, and Lancaster, in the North Carolina convention, (*Ibid.* Vol. IV. pp. 191, 199, 215,) bear similar testimony to that of Luther Martin, and in some instances emphatically call attention to the omission of the name of God from the President's oath.

## DR. JOHN RODGERS, 1788.

This eminent chaplain of the Revolution, observing with regret the omission of all acknowledgment of God from the Constitution, inquired of Alexander Hamilton, on his return from the convention in New York, how that body could fail to incorporate in the Constitution a suitable recognition of the Almighty. The well-known reply was, "Indeed, Doctor, we forgot it."—*Duffield's "God of our Fathers,"* p. 15.

FIRST PRESBYTERY EASTWARD IN MASSACHUSETTS AND NEW HAMPSHIRE,  
1789.

This body of patriotic citizens, in Newburyport, October 27, 1789, sent an address to George Washington, in which allusion is made to objections that had been urged against the Constitution. It is then added:

"Among these 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 has sent, inserted somewhere in the Magna Charta of our country."—*Morris' Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the U. S.* p. 443.

## DR. JOHN M. MASON, 1793, 1800.

Next in order among those who have borne public testimony against the religious defect of our National Constitution, is Dr. John M. Mason, that eminent patriot and prince of pulpit orators. In a sermon entitled "Divine Judgments," preached on September 20, 1793, a day set apart in New York for public fasting on account of the yellow fever in Philadelphia, after enumerating manifold and great mercies conferred by God upon us as a nation, he asks: "But where has been our gratitude? What have we rendered to the Lord for His

profusion of benefits?" We ask our readers to weigh well the solemn words with which the eloquent preacher answers his own inquiry :

" Let us appeal to the most interesting, important and solemn business in which we have been engaged since our national existence. 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 of 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! Yes, my brethren, it is a lamentable truth; a truth at the mention of which, shame should crimson our faces, that, like Jeshurun of old, we have waxed fat and kicked. 'Of the Rock that begat us, we have been unmindful; we have forgotten His works, and the wonders that He hath shown us.' "

In a note to this part of the sermon, the writer thus pursues the same subject :

" While many, on various pretenses, have criminated the Federal Constitution one objection has urged itself forcibly on the pious mind. That no notice whatever should be taken of that God who planteth a nation and plucketh it up at His pleasure, is an omission which no pretext whatever can palliate. Had such a momentous business been transacted by Mohammedans, they would have begun, 'In the name of God.' Even the savages whom we despise, setting a better example, would have paid some homage to the Great Spirit. But from the Constitution of the United States, it is impossible to ascertain what God we worship, or whether we own a God at all. It is a very insufficient apology to plead that the devotion which political institutions offer to the Supreme Being is, in most cases, a matter of mere form; for the hypocrisy of one man, or set of men, is surely no excuse for the infidelity of another. Should the citizens of America be as irreligious as her Constitution, we will have reason to tremble, lest the Governor of the universe, who will not be treated with indignity by a people any more than by individuals, overturn from its foundations the fabric we have been rearing, and crush us to atoms in the wreck."—*Works, Vol. III. pp. 52, 53.*

The testimony cited from Dr. Mason's writings would be incomplete, if we failed to quote from his "Voice of Warning." In this stirring discourse, dated September, 1800, and designed to convince Christians of their duty not to vote for irreligious and infidel men for rulers, he remarks :

" The Federal Constitution makes no acknowledgment of that God who gave us our national existence, and saved us from anarchy and internal war. This neglect has excited in many of its best friends more alarm than all other difficulties."—*Works, Vol. IV., p. 570.*

SAMUEL B. WYLIE, D. D., 1803.

This distinguished scholar and divine, widely known from his long and honorable connection with the University of Pennsylvania, in a discourse styled "The Two Sons of Oil," gives the following testimony :

"The Federal Constitution, or instrument of national union, does not even recognize the existence of God, the King of nations. In those civil deeds, though the immediate end may be the happiness of the Commonwealth, yet the ultimate end, as well in this as in every other thing we do, should be the glory of God. Ought not men, in the formation of their deeds, to consider their responsibility to the moral Governor and their obligation to acknowledge his authority? (Prov. iii. 5.) "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." That a national deed, employed about the fundamental stipulations of magistracy as an ordinance of God, and the investiture of magistrates as his ministers, should nowhere recognize the existence of the Governor of the universe, is, to say nothing worse of it, truly lamentable. May it not be said of this nation as of Israel, (Hosea viii. 4.) "They have set up kings, but not by me; they have made princes, and I knew it not"? Did not the framers of this instrument act not only as if there had been no divine revelation for the supreme standard of their conduct, but also as if there had been no God? Did they not in this resemble the fool mentioned in Psalm xiv. 1, 3, who "said in his heart, There is no God"? Every official act of the governor of a province must have some specific stamp of his dependence upon the authority which appointed him,—and shall a nation act as if independent of the God of the universe, and expect to be guiltless?" (*Pages 34, 35.*)

SAMUEL AUSTIN, D. D., 1811.

This celebrated New England Congregational Divine, afterwards President of the University of Vermont, in a sermon to his congregation at Worcester, Mass., on the occasion of the annual State fast, April 11, 1811, speaks as follows:

"However sagaciously devised and balanced our National Constitution of government may be, in a mere political view, it has one capital defect which will issue inevitably in its destruction. It is entirely disconnected from Christianity. It is not founded on the Christian religion. Not a single word respecting God or religion is to be found in the original Constitution, save that an oath or affirmation is required of officers of government."—*Sermon preached at Worcester, pp. 23, 32.*

THE HON. SAMUEL TAGGART, 1812.

This writer, a Presbyterian minister, represented the Hampshire (Mass.) district for several terms in Congress. In 1812 he was pastor of the Presbyterian church in Coleraine, where, on the public fast, July 23d, he preached two sermons entitled "God's Visitation of Sinful Nations." These sermons were repeated August 29th, in Shelbourne. From the very full and able discussion found in the first of these sermons, only brief extracts can be made. The author says:

"I am constrained, somewhat reluctantly, I confess, to notice a feature in our national government itself, which presents to my view a national evil of great magnitude. I mean its being entirely destitute of every appearance of a feature which can be termed religious. Perhaps there is no one feature in the Constitution of the United States which has been the subject of more numerous encomiums, or more unqualified praise, upon both sides of the Atlantic, than this, 'that it takes no notice

of, and is not at all connected with religion.' In this instance, the United States are exhibiting a new and singular spectacle to the world. A government without a connection with religion of some sort is probably a novelty, a phenomenon which the world has never witnessed before. It is a bold experiment, and one which, I fear, can only issue in national apostasy and national ruin."—*Sermons, pp. 22, 27.*

PRESIDENT TIMOTHY DWIGHT, 1812, 1813.

The next witness whom we cite is Dr. Dwight, the well-known President, in former years, of Yale College. On July 23d, 1812, the public fast-day in Connecticut, in view of the calamities of war, President Dwight, of Yale College, preached a discourse, in two parts, in the college chapel. In the second part, among reasons for grave apprehension, is the following :

"The second of these reasons is, *the sinful character of our nation.* Notwithstanding the prevalence of religion which I have described, the irreligion and the wickedness of our land are such as to furnish a most painful and melancholy prospect to a serious mind. We formed our Constitution without any acknowledgment of God, without any recognition of his mercies to us as a people, of his government, or even of his existence. The convention by which it was formed, never asked, even once, his direction or his blessing upon their labors. Thus we commenced our national existence, under the present system, without God. I wish I could say that a disposition to render him the reverence due to his great name, and the gratitude demanded by his innumerable mercies, had been more public, visible, uniform, and fervent." (*Page 46.*)

In a volume entitled, "President Dwight's Decisions of Questions discussed by the Senior Class in Yale College, in 1813 and 1814," are many weighty remarks on the question, "Ought religious tests to be required of civil officers?" This question was discussed December 22d, 1813. The language of this testimony is as follows :

"It is highly discreditable to us that we do not acknowledge God in our Constitution. Now, it is remarkable that the grossest nations and individuals, in their public acts and in their declarations, manifestoes, proclamations, etc., always recognize the superintendency of a Supreme Being. Even Napoleon does it. We, however, have neglected to do it. God says, 'They who despise me shall be lightly esteemed;' and we have rendered ourselves liable, as a nation, to his displeasure. The corruption which is now rapidly extending in this country gives reason for apprehension that we are soon to suffer the punishment to which we have exposed ourselves.—*Dwight's Decisions, pp. 111, 112.*

THE REV. CHAUNCEY LEE, 1813.

The same year, May 13th, the Election Sermon, or the sermon at the annual general election in Connecticut, was preached by the Rev. Chauncey Lee, of Colebrook, a man of note, as the preachers of these sermons usually were, and of fine ability. The subject of this discourse is, "The Government of God, the true Source and Standard of Human

Government." The text chosen was Matt. vi. 13, the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer. Near the close of the discourse the preacher said :

"Let it then be received as an axiom in politics; let it be engraven upon our hearts as with the point of a diamond, that *religion is the only sure foundation of a free and happy government*. . . . With this truth blazing before us, can we pause and reflect for a moment, without the mingled emotions of wonder and regret, that that public instrument which guaranties our political rights of freedom and independence—our Constitution of national government, framed by such an august, learned, and able body of men; formally adopted by the solemn resolution of each State; and justly admired and celebrated for its consummate political wisdom, has not the impress of *religion* upon it, not the smallest recognition of the government or the being of God, or of the dependence and accountability of man. Be astonished, O earth! Nothing by which a foreigner might with certainty decide whether we believe in the one true God, or in any God; whether we are a nation of Christians, or—but I forbear. The subject is too delicate to say more, and it is too interesting to have said less. I leave it with this single reflection, whether, *if God be not in the camp, we have not reason to tremble for the ark?*" (*Sermon, pp. 42, 43.*)

THE REV. THOMAS ROBBINS, 1815.

This able clergyman, in a sermon preached at East Windsor, Connecticut, on the national fast appointed by the President and Congress, January 12, 1815, gave utterance to what becomes a wide-spread feeling in every time of national calamity. During the war of 1812, as more recently during the rebellion, the hearts of our people were turned to God. In this sermon by Mr. Robbins, published by particular request, the sins of the nation are confessed :

"In our national capacity we have not acknowledged and served the God of heaven. The great evil of our country, in my view, has been that we have attempted to strike out a new path to national prosperity regardless of all the dictates of experience, and the testimony of the Word of God. We have been not a religious, but a political people. Our government was formed upon the principle of excluding all religious principles and character. The country was universally pleased with this feature of the Constitution, believing that, unlike all other prosperous nations that have ever existed, we should rise to national greatness without any national religion. God is not formally recognized, owned or worshipped. I speak not of individuals, for we doubt not that the Lord Jesus has his church in our land, which has enjoyed the rich blessings of His Holy Spirit. But in our collective national capacity we do not worship the God of heaven, we do not acknowledge his Son, we do not receive His Holy Word. I do not recommend the the legal establishment of any particular denomination, but lament that our nation has not adopted some method of professing a humble acknowledgment of the Saviour of men, and of the religion of the Holy Scriptures."—*Sermon, pp. 18, 19.*

DR. JOHN B. ROMEYN, 1815.

A very important testimony to the religious defect of our National Constitution is found in a sermon by Dr. J. B. Romeyn, pastor, in the

early part of this century, of the Cedar street Presbyterian church, New York. The sermon, entitled "The Duty of Americans in the Present Crisis," was preached, like that of Mr. Robbins, on the national fast, January 12, 1815. First among the national sins to which the preacher calls attention, is "the nature of our political Constitution." He then proceeds:

"The particular point to which I refer is its defect in regard to religion. That I may not be misunderstood, I think it proper to state that the people of this country are avowedly a Christian people. . . . As a Christian people, the inhabitants of the United States have the right to regulate their own political compact, and no one can consistently object to such regulation. To no people has God given such an opportunity to govern themselves as he has to us. All our acts, therefore, must be considered the acts of our choice. This is peculiarly the case with the Federal Constitution. The United States adopted it deliberately of their own accord in time of peace, with no foreign power to compel them. Though it be thus the choice of a Christian people, in it are not recognized even the existence and government of God, much less the authority of his revealed Word.

"I dislike and reprobate the modeling of churches by civil power, and the exclusive establishment of any particular denomination. Such establishments, I hope, will never take place in this country; for I consider them a grievous evil. But I do not hesitate to say that propriety, reason, and the Word of God require from us, as a Christian people, two things: 1. The recognition of the existence and providence of God. 2. The acknowledgment of his revealed truth." (*Sermons, Edinb. ed., pp. 477, 480.*)

ALEXANDER M'LEOD, D.D., 1815.

Prominent among these testimonies, in connection with the war of 1812, is that of Dr. Alexander McLeod, pastor of the Reformed Presbyterian church, New York. In 1815 he published a series of sermons on "The Character, Causes, and Ends of the Present War"—an admirable group of patriotic and statesmanlike discussions. In the second sermon of the series he remarks:

"The public immoralities of the Constitution of our Federal government may be classed under two heads, viz., disrespect for God, and violation of human liberty. By the terms of the national compact God is not at all acknowledged, and holding men in slavery is authorized. Both these are evils. No association of men for moral purposes can be justified in an entire neglect of the Sovereign of the world. Statesmen in this country had undoubtedly in their eye the abuse of religion for mere political purposes, which in the nations of the Old World had corrupted the sanctuary and laid the foundation for the persecution of godly men. But no consideration will justify the framers of the Federal Constitution and the administration of the government in withholding a recognition of the Lord and his Anointed from the grand charter of the nation. At our ordinary meals we acknowledge the Lord of the world. We begin our last testament for disposing of worldly estates, 'In the name of God'; and shall we be guiltless, with the Bible in our hands, to disclaim the Christian religion as a body politic?" (*Sermons on the War, pp. 54, 55.*)

DR. GEORGE DUFFIELD, 1819.

December 9th, 1819, was appointed by the Governor of Pennsylvania as a day of humiliation, thanksgiving, and prayer. Among the sermons preached on that day, was one entitled, "Judgment and Mercy," in the Presbyterian church of the borough of Carlisle, by the above named clergyman. Mentioning the sins of which the nation was guilty, he said :

"There is one strictly national, that commenced in the adoption of the Federal Constitution, *i. e.* the want of an acknowledgment in it of a Supreme Being and of a Divine revelation. That all-important engine of our national prosperity is, in form at least, entirely atheistical. Undoubtedly it was a great sin to have forgotten God in such an important national instrument, and not to have acknowledged Him in that which forms the very nerves and sinews of the political body. He had led us through all the perils of the Revolutionary struggle, and had established us in peaceful and plentiful security, and then to have been forgotten in the period of prosperity, certainly demanded His rebuke. Therefore hath the voice of His Providence proclaimed and even still it sounds in our ears: 'I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me. Therefore will I be unto them as a lion; as a leopard by the way will I observe them.'"

JAMES R. WILSON, D.D., 1820-1840.

This rarely eloquent divine, at one time Chaplain to the Legislature of New York, has left a number of sermons, published at intervals during a period of twenty years or more, in which testimony similar to that which has already been given is found. His sermon on "The Subjection of Kings and Nations to Messiah," was published in 1820. In this he says :

"In the United States the refusal to acknowledge God has probably been more explicit than it ever was in any other nation. Soon after we had obtained, through the beneficent providence of God, liberation from the dominion of a foreign power; soon after the most eminent displays of Jehovah's goodness to our land, the convention elected to form articles of fundamental law for the Commonwealth, rejected the government of God, and with a degree of ingratitude, perhaps without a parallel, formed a Constitution in which there is not the slightest hint of homage to the God of Heaven.—(*Page 32.*)

Another sermon, on "Civil Government and the Sabbath," published in 1829, in which the report of the United States Senate on the transportation of mails on the Lord's day is powerfully handled, contains important testimony. Contending that legislators are bound by the law of the Bible, the writer meets an objection :

"But the people, by their Constitution, they tell us, have withheld from them the power of knowing or being governed by the Divine law. This we deny. It is, indeed, to be greatly deplored, and good men do deeply deplore, that there is no

formal recognition of Him who is Prince of the kings of the earth in the Federal Constitution; but the Constitution has nowhere said that this government either shall or may disobey God." (*Page 44.*)

Similar passages may be found in the sermons entitled, "The Written Law," and "Prince Messiah."

PRINCETON REVIEW, 1832.

The report of the Committee of the United States Senate, (1829) in reference to the transportation of mails on the Lord's day, and the consequent increased disregard of that day by the nation, called forth many able articles on the relation of civil government to the Sabbath. Among them is an article in the *Princeton Review*, in which occurs the following passage:

"It is, probably, the regret of all pious men that the Constitution of the United States never recognizes the being or providence of God. How far He will consider this as impious, who can tell? But surely it would have been, at least, prudent to make some acknowledgment of our dependence, and some expression of gratitude for national favors."—*Princeton Review*, Oct. 1832, pp. 519, 520.

JUSTICE STORY, 1833.

This eminent jurist, in his Commentaries on the Constitution, after maintaining that it is both reasonable and just for civil government "to foster and encourage the Christian religion generally, as a matter of sound policy as well as revealed truth," is constrained to state that the National Constitution is so destitute of religious character that it conflicts no more with the belief of the Jew, or even infidel, than with that of the Christian. Or, in the words of Judge Cooley, in his recent edition of Story's Commentaries: "To meddle at all in matters of religion is no part of the business of the general government." Such is the religiously defective character of the Constitution of a great government which, as a matter of sound policy as well as revealed truth, should foster and encourage the Christian religion. No wonder Judge Story further says:

"It yet remains a problem to be solved in human affairs, whether any free government can be permanent where the public worship of God and the support of religion constitute no part of the policy or the duty of the State in any assignable shape. The future experience of Christendom, and chiefly of the American States, must settle this problem, as yet new in the history of the world, abundant as it has been in experiments in the theory of government."—*Story's Commentaries, Cooley's edition, Vol. II., pp. 605, 606, 609.*

THE REV. D. X. JUNKIN, D.D., 1845.

One of the best discussions of some of the principles that underlie civil society, is a treatise by Dr. D. X. Junkin, published in 1845.

Its title is "The Oath a Divine Ordinance, and an Element of the Social Constitution." It is unquestionably the ablest work to be found on the subject. Its author says:

"The oath of the President of the United States [as embodied in the Constitution] 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. In every oath the name of God should, in obedience to the Divine command, be interposed; and we look upon the designed omission of it as an attempt to exclude from civil affairs Him who is the 'Governor among the nations.'" (Psalm xxii. 28.)—*pp. 141, 142.*

ALEXANDER H. VINTON, D. D., 1848.

In the election sermon, preached before the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, the Honorable Council, and the Legislature of Massachusetts, Jan. 5, 1848, Dr. Vinton states that our own nation, like France, has chosen the social compact theory of Government. Of this theory he thus speaks:

"Forgetting or slighting the distinction between the source of authority and the power of appointment, the theory of the social compact seemed to alienate religion, and to stand alone, in perfect human sufficiency. It was *negatively* atheistic, and it thus invited the practice of atheism. Now, if there be any such thing as the organic relation of a nation to the great Governor of the world; if God be, in any valid and available sense, the Ruler of nations, this omission to recognize him, or to make much of him, in the essential theory of government, was a perfect, if not a fatal, oversight." "France," he continues, "adopted the principle to the extent of its most ruthless radicalism. The issue of the experiment is sufficiently notorious. Our own nation has made election, likewise, of the same theory, as the basis of its polity, though with a mitigation of its ferocity, and with conservative checks. But the great question is, are these checks sufficient? Is there not the same capacity for mischief in our modified system, as in its simpler forms? And what shall prevent the development of its political evil?"—*The Religious Theory of Civil Government, pp. 18, 19, 21.*

DR. E. D. M'MASTER, 1849, 1856.

The first testimony of this witness, President of Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, is found in a masterly discourse delivered on the occasion of the national fast, August 3d, 1849. The preacher said:

"The men who planted the first colonies in this land and laid the foundations of these States, were men who feared God, and even in their political affairs, as in other things, were not ashamed to honor His Son. In the days, too, of our weakness and fear and perplexity, when struggling to throw off a foreign dominion, and to gain a place as an independent nation among the powers of the earth, the fathers of our country made in her name, an explicit, formal, and solemn appeal to God in

the heavens, as the righteous Judge and Governor of nations, to own the justice of her cause and vindicate her rights. He heard and answered; gave victory to our arms, and independence to us as a nation, and peace in all our borders, and great prosperity and blessing to us as a people. But oh! how changed is all the scene since that! In the Constitution, which is the bond of union of these States, under which they have grown up from thirteen to thirty great commonwealths, spread and spreading over the whole continent, and the medium through which so manifold benefits have flowed to us a people, there is not found the name of God, nor any reference, direct or indirect, express or implied, to His law, His providence, or His being, unless it be in the ambiguous term 'I swear' in the prescribed oath of office, and the formal designation of the era of its establishment, as that of 'our Lord.'—(Page 23.)

At a later day, (July 2d, 1856,) in a memorable address before the Literary Societies of Miami University, entitled "The True Life of a Nation," Dr. MacMaster repeated his testimony in these words:

"It is not true that there is made by our nation the entire separation of religion from the State and all political affairs, which is often alleged. But it is true, and it is a matter of just reproach, that in the Constitution of the United States, the organic law of the nation, there is, in direct and express terms, no recognition of the being, the providence, or the law of God."—(Page 24.)

#### THE MERCERSBURG REVIEW, 1851.

Coming on down to the year 1851, we meet with the testimony of the *Mercersburg Review*. In the July number for that year, is an elaborate and exceedingly valuable article, entitled "Our National Religion," in which it is maintained that our government has from the first been in connection with Christianity, notwithstanding the religious defect of the National Constitution. This defect is referred to in the following terms:

"The position taken in the Constitution of the United States may be regarded as not simply neutral, but decidedly negative in its character. . . . It does appear as though, in over-anxiety to forestall any inclination even to the establishment of a national church, all recognitions of religion under any form were studiously avoided. This, we are free to confess, is a remarkable feature in an instrument framed for the government of such a nation, and at such a time. It would indeed seem as though the solemn vow, previously made in a season of trouble, had been wholly forgotten. The contrast, in this respect, between the Declaration of Independence and this Constitution, is humiliating and painful. The appeal made to the King of kings in the former, followed by ten thousand fervent supplications from an afflicted, struggling people, was not unavailing. But we look in vain, in this great charter, in which that Declaration found its happy consummation, for a counterpart to that appeal. How shall this painful incongruity be reconciled!"—(Page 329.)

ROBERT BAIRD, D. D., 1856.

In his well-known and widely circulated work on "Religion in America," first published in 1856, this author, after exculpating the

framers of the Constitution for omitting all formal acknowledgment of Christianity, nevertheless adds these words :

"Should any one, after all, regret that the Constitution does not contain something more explicit on the subject, I cannot but say that I participate in that regret. Sure I am that, had the excellent men who framed the Constitution foreseen the inferences that have been drawn from the omission, they would have recognized, in a proper formula, the existence of God, and the truth and the importance of the Christian religion."—*Religion in America*, p. 242.

PROF. J. H. M'ILVAINE, D.D., 1859.

This writer, Professor of Political Science in the College of New Jersey, in an article in the "Princeton Review," for October, 1859, entitled "A Nation's Right to Worship God," testifies as follows :

"The Constitution of the United States has rigorously abstained from all recognition of or allusion to Christianity, or to the being of a God. What is called the oath of the President elect is presented in these words: 'I do solemnly swear or affirm,' &c., in which the officer elect is left free to swear by nothing at all, and thus to leave out not only all recognition of God, but therein also, the very essence of an oath. The practical effect, whether or not the original object of all this, is the neutrality of the government with respect to all religions, so that no possible governmental influence can be constitutionally exerted for or against any form of religious belief. This absolute neutrality in religion of the Constitution of the United States is admitted and defended by the commentators. Says one of them: 'There are reasons why the introduction of religion would have been unreasonable if not improper. The Constitution was intended exclusively for civil purposes. . . . The purity of religion is best preserved by keeping it separate from government.' For these and other reasons he adds. 'It was impossible to introduce into the Constitution even an expression of gratitude to the Almighty for the formation of the present government.' Such are the views of the commentators upon the Constitution of the United States, in which they manifest a cordial zeal for the purity of religion by keeping it separate from government; but unfortunately they do not inform us what is to preserve the purity of government after it has become sequestered from religion—has thus solemnly excommunicated itself. It were devoutly to be wished that some eminent statist of that school would speak to this point."—(*Princeton Review*, October, 1859; pp. 675-677.)

This brings us up to the period of our great struggle for national life and human right. And now, as in the war of 1812, the moral and religious defect of our Constitution becomes more clearly and widely seen, and more frankly acknowledged. We notice the following prominent testimonies during this period of our history :

DR. GEORGE DUFFIELD, JR., 1861.

On January 4, 1861, the day appointed for fasting and prayer by the President, as the premonitions of the coming political earthquake startled the nation into some sense of its sins, Dr. Duffield, then of

Philadelphia, preached a discourse, "The God of our Fathers," of far more than ordinary historic value. The phrase "national sins," in the President's proclamation, suggested to the preacher the inquiry as to what the sins were. In answering this he says:

"'Ye have robbed me, even this whole nation,' and as a nation He will hold us responsible for this robbery of his service and honor, just as much as he did Israel, and Babylon, and Persia, and Greece and Rome. To deny that God is 'the Governor of the nations,' (Ps. xxii. 28,) is to deny his Divine providence, acknowledged in the Declaration of Independence, and to deny the providence of God is to deny his attributes. \* \* \* It is that old story of Israel and human nature over again: 'Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked.' Temporal prosperity was too much for him. 'Then he forsook the God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.'" (*Deut. xxxii. 15.*)

Then, quoting Dr. Mason's testimony, as we have already given it, to the omission of God and Christianity from the Constitution, Dr. Duffield asks: "Was this omission intentional, as in the original draft of the Declaration of Independence? or was it a moral oversight, even greater than the tremendous political oversight in the original Articles of Confederation?"—*The God of our Fathers*, pp. 13-15.

HORACE BUSHNELL, D. D., 1861.

The disaster at Bull Run, at the close of July, 1861, led our nation to try its ways and turn to the Lord. The Sabbath immediately following that dark day of national humiliation and shame, Dr. Bushnell, of Hartford, Connecticut, preached one of the most remarkable sermons called out by the war. This discourse is entitled "Reverses Needed." It is exceedingly difficult to make selections from the closely-linked discussion. The following must suffice:

"It is a remarkable, but very serious fact, not sufficiently noted, as far as my observation extends, that our grand Revolutionary fathers left us the legacy of this war in the ambiguities of thought and principle which they suffered in respect to the foundations of government itself. The real fact is that, without proposing it, or being distinctly conscious of it, they organized a government, such as we, at least, have understood to be without moral or religious ideas; in one view a merely man-made compact, which, without something further, which in fact was omitted or philosophically excluded, could never have more than a semblance of authority. More it has actually had, because our nation itself has been wiser and deeper, and closer to God, than our political doctrines; but we have been gradually wearing our nature down to the level of our doctrines, crushing out, so to speak, the sentiments in it that took hold of authority, till at last, we have brought ourselves down as closely as may be to the dissolution of all nationality and all ties of order. . . . Proximately our whole difficulty is an issue forced by slavery; but if we go back to the deepest root of the trouble, we shall find that it comes of trying to maintain a government without moral ideas, and concentrate a loyal feeling around institutions that, as many reason, are only human compacts, entitled, of course, if that be all,

to no feeling of authority, or even of respect. In all these schemings of theory by which we have been contriving to generate, or have generated, a government without going above humanity, we leave out all moral ideas, and take away all true forces necessary to government. Our merely terrene, almost subterranean, always godless fabric, becomes more and more exactly what we have taken it to be in our philosophy."

Then, while remarking that the time of our fearful conflict was "no time to agitate or put on foot political reforms of any kind," the author also says, in perfect harmony with the sentiment which less than three years later secured the formation of this Association :

"It might not be amiss, at some fit time, to insert in the preamble of our Constitution, a recognition of the fact that the authority of government, in every form, is derivable only from God; cutting off in this manner, the false theories under which we have been so fatally demoralized."—*Sermon, pp. 9, 10, 13, 18, 26.*

And now, in this immediate connection, I have to introduce the testimony of a witness, the very mention of whose name will cause many eyes to open wide with astonishment.

THE NEW YORK "INDEPENDENT," 1861.

Of all the opponents of the Religious Amendment, not one has so diligently hunted up difficulties and objections,—so persistently and unfairly assailed the movement and its supporters, as the *New York Independent*. And yet out of the mouth of this journal itself shall we now condemn its recent course and justify the men upon whom it would heap opprobrium. In the time of our national calamity it spoke the very language which to-day it denounces as unwise and intolerant. In its leading editorial for September 26, 1861, headed "The Lord's Indictment against the Nation," called forth by President Lincoln's proclamation for a national fast, after the Bull Run disaster, it says :

"The President calls upon us to-day, in sorrowful remembrance of our own faults and crimes as a nation, and as individuals, to humble ourselves before God, and to pray for His mercy. What, then, are the faults and crimes which stand more immediately connected with our public calamities—the sins which as a people we are called upon to confess and forsake? Some are disposed to dwell almost exclusively upon that huge organic iniquity which has struck its roots so deeply into our national history, which spreads over so large a portion of our territory. . . . But the root of our iniquities and calamities lies deeper even than this; and fruitful in sins and judgments as slavery has been, it is itself more a product than the cause of our national iniquity. . . . Jehovah has a broader indictment against us than is represented by this one count, even with all its frightful specifications. That indictment reads, 'Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters! they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.' To sum up the iniquity of this nation in one comprehensive charge, it is GODLESSNESS: not atheism in the philosophical sense of denying the existence of God, but that practical athe-

ism which ignores the law and authority of God and the requirements of religion in both public and private affairs: which leaves out of view the law of God as a rule of civil and social life, and the favor of God as an element of public prosperity.

“The specifications under this indictment are such as the following: Dr. Bushnell, in his sermon on the Bull Run disaster, has made prominent the fact that from the beginning we have shown our godlessness as a nation, *by ignoring the name and authority of God in the frame-work of our political institutions*. Neither the name of God, nor any reference to His law, His government, or His providence, can be found in the Constitution of the United States. Even the oath of fidelity administered to the President has no recognition of God or of the sanctions of religion. The only allusion of a religious kind in the Constitution is in the phrase, ‘Sundays excepted,’ in the ten days allowed the President for signing a bill: but this is because by usage in secular business Sunday is a *dies non*. The Constitution provides, as it should, against a religious establishment, religious tests, or any infringement upon the rights of conscience. But it does not even recognize the fact that it is an ordinance of God for the well-being of society that civil government shall exist; and that such government should be administered upon the principles of truth, justice, order and beneficence set forth in the moral government of God. ‘We the people’ made the Constitution, and ‘We the people’ have worshipped it as the mirror of our own wisdom and power. Not Pharaoh boasting: ‘My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself;’ not Nebuchadnezzar, strutting upon his palace wall and saying, ‘Is not this great, Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?’ was more vain-glorious and atheistic than we have been in boasting of the mechanism of our political institutions. We have allowed all men to have their own religion or no religion, under the Constitution; but the Constitution itself has nothing to do with religion except as a barrier between it and the State! Failing to discriminate between *legislating* for a particular creed or form of religion, and *recognizing* the great foundation truth of all religion—the just authority of a Holy and Almighty God, we have set up ourselves, our concrete nationality, ‘We, the people,’ as the original source of all authority and power, and have worshipped the work of our own hands. From this atheistic error in our prime conceptions of government has arisen the atheistic habit of separating politics from religion; the voter must not carry his religious scruples to the political caucus, nor set them against the party nominations at the polls; the minister must not bring politics into the pulpit, though the legislature should license dramshops and brothels, though Sodom should be rebuilt by the Salt Lake of Utah, though man made in the image of God should be sold like a brute under the eaves of the national capitol. Nay, in the very Senate chamber, when Senators are warned that a measure is unjust and against the law of God, it is sneeringly, scornfully answered, that there is no law higher than the Constitution. ‘We, the people,’ made that, and ‘We, the people,’ can make and unmake laws as we please. This godless habit of thought and action has taken possession of the public mind in all political institutions and affairs. But he that sitteth in the heavens is teaching us that we can hold our Constitution, our Union, our government, our nationality, only by his pleasure.”—*N. Y. Independent, September 26, 1861.*

Are you wonderingly asking, Is that all extracted from the “*Independent?*” Yes, every word of it, and more is found to the same ef-

fect, and all in the leading editorial. Nor will the convention object to the length of such an extract. What a grand "Religious Amendment" speech it is! In those days the *Independent* was a power in the land. Men of the broadest and finest culture, and of purest piety, spoke through its columns. Bacon, Storrs and Thompson discussed momentous questions on the principles of a profound political philosophy, and in constant acknowledgment of the authority of the word of God. And who can tell how much influence this very editorial of the *Independent* had in giving birth to the Religious Amendment movement? But the days of that triumvirate of scholarship and Christian patriotism and high-cultured ability have departed. Ichabod is written over the once glorious sheet. Digging through the rubbish of recent years, we bring to light some of the buried grandeur of the past. In utterances like this which I have read, when our nation avows itself a Christian nation and takes Jehovah as its acknowledged Lord, the memory of the *Independent* will be embalmed to latest generations.\*

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\* The effect upon the *Independent* of being thus cited as a witness to a defect in which it has recently gloried as a chief excellence of the Constitution, was very remarkable. In its issue of February 26, it thus delivered itself: "A curious incident of the Christian Amendment Convention was the reading by its Secretary, the Rev. D. McAllister, with a very emphatic chuckle, of an editorial from the *Independent* of September 26th, 1861, on the occasion of the National Fast after Bull Run. The Convention enjoyed that editorial extremely, and it was a very able one. Its most emphatic position was, that 'from the beginning we have shown our godlessness as a nation by ignoring the name and authority of God in the framework of our political institutions.' . . . We had warning that this arrow was to be shot at us, stolen from our own quiver; for we afforded Mr. McAllister our politest assistance in showing him in our own office the editorial. . . . But his stolen arrow, though not quite true, is not so crooked as Mr. McAllister would pretend. Even then the *Independent* would have rejected scornfully the proposition of these fanatics to engraft the Christian religion into the Constitution. The utmost the *Independent* in its youth ever allowed was, that God, whose existence Jews and Pagans also accept, be recognized as the source of authority."

From the above it is evident that the editor of the *Independent* lost his temper. It is difficult to explain the application of the term "fanatics" to such men as Dr. Tayler Lewis, Prof. J. H. Seelye, Dr. A. A. Hodge, Mr. Brunot, Judge Strong, and any number of other men of like character, in any other way. But worse than this; the editor is not sufficiently careful concerning the truthfulness of his statements. He gives his readers distinctly to understand that he courteously showed the writer the editorial in question, and thus put into his hands a weapon of which he had no knowledge before. The extent of "showing" the editorial was simply granting the use of the files of the *Independent*. Thanks were due for this courtesy. But the editor manifestly had no knowledge of the editorial, was both surprised and mortified when it was pointed out to him, and only after a careful reading reluctantly admitted that it was the writer of the editorial, and not Dr. Bushnell, in the sermon referred to, who arraigned the Constitution for its "atheistic error."

The same moral obliquity is noticeable in the attempt to deny that the *Independent*, even in the days of indiscreet "youth," favored anything more than a bare acknowledgment of God, such as any Pagan might accept. The burden of the indictment is, that "neither the name of God nor any reference to his law . . . can be found in the Constitution of the United States." Will the editor inform his readers what "Law" this is? Is the Word of God utterly ignored as no part of his Law? Again, the indictment reads, "The Constitution itself has nothing to do with religion except as a barrier between it and the State!" Will the editor vouchsafe a definition of the religion here referred to? Was it anything but Christianity? The following sentences from the editorial quoted, settle this point: "Christianity, fairly applied, produces the purest democracy. . . . When its doctrine of the divine origin and redemption of the soul, and its precept of equal unselfish

HENRY A. BOARDMAN, D.D., 1862.

Among the most pointed and explicit of all the testimonies here accumulated, as to the religious defect of our Constitution, is that of Dr. Boardman, of Philadelphia, in a sermon preached in that city on September 14, 1862, and entitled "The Lord Reigneth." Having referred to the sins of the nation and their just punishment, he proceeds:

"Our duty is plain. 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. It may be conceded that the spirit of Christianity is to a certain extent incorporated into our Constitutions. The legal recognition of the Sabbath, the oath on the Holy Evangelists, and the appointment of chaplains, are, so far, an acknowledgment of the Christian religion. But 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 excusable. . . . The coinage of the United States is without a God. . . . Is it too much to hope that this opprobrium may be wiped away? If we have never been taught the lesson before, we are admonished of it now, that the 'Lord reigneth.' Has not the time come to make our formal national confession of this fundamental truth—to impress it upon our coinage; to insert it (peradventure it may not be too late,) as the keystone of our riven and tottering Constitution? If the country is not ready for these two simple but significant steps in the direction of Christianity, we have been chastened to very little purpose."—(*Sermon, pages 20-23.*)

DR. GEORGE JUNKIN, 1863.

This witness was long connected with Washington College, Va., and afterwards with Lafayette College, Pa., where he was Professor of Political Science. In his work on "Political Fallacies," speaking of the Constitution, he says:

"We have never believed it perfect. Doubtless some improvements are possible; but it makes abundant provision for them, without utter demolition. The principal

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love prevail in any community, there all factitious pride and all unrighteous authority melt into the mighty brotherhood of humanity. The other theory of democracy regards man as by nature independent of all authority. . . . The high priest of the one theory is John Robinson kneeling at Leyden to commend the parting pilgrims in prayer to God. The high priest of the other is Voltaire at Ferney, writing down Christ as an impostor and his religion as a weak superstition. The fruit of the one is the Christian democracy of the Plymouth Colony; of the other, the atheistic democracy of the first French revolution—a deified Humanity usurping the place of God, and demanding that homage to its own pride which it refuses to God's authority."

It is to be hoped that the *Independent* will "wait upon the Lord, and renew its youth."

defect apparent to our vision meets us at the vestibule. The portico lacks one gem to perfect its lustre. There is union and justice, common defence and general welfare, blessing and liberty, but we cast our eyes about in vain for that which alone can give stability and beauty to the whole. The Koh-i-noor, whose radiant glories crown the grandeur of the beautiful temple, the Shekinah, is absent. The grand bond of our national Union does not distinctly acknowledge the being of a God. For more than forty years, a Fourth of July has seldom passed, on which I have not preached and warned my countrymen of this defect, and told them if it be not supplied, God would pull down their temple and bury a nation in its ruins. This warning has been sounded forth from thousands of pulpits in the land, and would have been much more extensively trumpeted but for the paralyzing influence of the fallacy couched in the demagogue's *double entendre*: "Religion has nothing to do with politics."—*Political Fallacies*, pp. 305, 306.

DR. ROBERT J. BRECKINRIDGE, 1863.

In an article in the *Danville Review*, entitled the "Divine Origin and Supremacy of Civil Government," Dr. Breckinridge writes: "We have imbibed the notion from our statesmen that government is a sort of compact among men, instead of an eternal principle." This theory of government he speaks of as "a theory essentially atheistic, and whose necessary consequence is anarchy, as is every arrangement that has no God in it." "What has the idea of government being a compact done for us? It has hatched in our bosom the monstrous prodigy of secession and anarchy." He then adds:

"It must be a source of shame and wonder that our Constitution, the embodiment of our system, has no mention of God in it. How in this its power is weakened? What bad morals it teaches the young offspring to be born and raised under its protecting ægis! And bitterly are we reaping the effects of its implied atheism, as well as presenting to the world the astonishing fact of a Constitution ignoring the only source of its power, without which not a single wheel of its machinery would ever move upon its pinions."—*Danville Review*, Jan. 1864.

JOHN NORTON POMEROY, LL.D., 1863.

Dr. Pomeroy, Professor of Political Science in the University of New York, is best known by his works on "Constitutional Law" and "Municipal Law." In the latter of these profound treatises, occurs the following testimony on the point in question:

"In the United States we have in theory, at least, banished all recognition of God. Yet some remains of our long education, lasting through centuries of our English history, are still preserved to us in the oaths administered to witnesses, and the forms of writs or judicial orders acknowledging that we exist as a free and independent people by the grace of God. I may be permitted here to express a fervent hope that, as a people, we are certainly Christian, so as a nation we may soon throw off our character of infidelity."—*Municipal Law*, p. 194.

"The theory of our National Constitution is that the State, as an organic body, has nothing whatever to do with religion, except to protect the individuals in what-

ever belief or worship they may adopt; that religion is entirely a matter between each man and his God. . . . This is not the place to inquire into the correctness of our theory of the relations of the State to religion. It is not adopted by any other Christian government. . . . It is proper, however, to remark that there is a growing opinion among thoughtful men all over the country, that this thing should be abandoned, and that as a State we should acknowledge the claims of God upon us, and own him to be the Supreme Ruler of nations in their organic capacity, as well as of the single individuals who make up the nation."—*Municipal Law*, pp. 392, 393.

This brings us to the year of the formation of the National Association for the Religious Amendment of the Constitution. And thus our chain of testimony is complete, stretching its strong and closely connected links from the very year of the grave omission to the vigorous organized effort for its remedy.

And now, in closing, let me simply call attention to a number of important points concerning this chain of testimony:

1. The witnesses are citizens of the highest standing. Learned and patriotic men, lawyers, judges, divines, legislators, editors, professors of political science, all unite in harmonious and most explicit testimony to the religious defect of our Constitution. This mass of testimony might be indefinitely augmented by citing less eminent witnesses.

2. The testimony is calm and deliberate. It was not called forth in defense of any party or sect. There is nothing partisan or sectarian about it. Men of all shades of political opinion, of the different religious denominations, some of them not church members at all, so far as is known, in the South as well as in the North, lift up the same voice and point at the same lamented defect.

3. In times of national calamity and danger, the testimony becomes peculiarly emphatic. During the war of 1812, and again during the rebellion, when we were made to feel our dependence, as a nation, on God, we confessed our sin with evident sincerity. Voices now silent in the time of the nation's peace and prosperity, were ten years ago lifted up in solemn warning. But shall we conduct ourselves toward the God of nations, as Pagans have dealt with their divinities? Shall we betake ourselves to Him in the raging of the storm, and when the sun beams forth again, forget the power that protected us? If God is to be our refuge and our strength when the land is rocked to its foundations, let us have self-respect and dignity of character enough, if nothing more, to acknowledge Him when peace is extended to us like a river.

And truly this magnificent assemblage gives good ground for hope that the time when the defect pointed out shall be remedied cannot

be very far distant. One of the steps which Dr. Boardman twelve years ago deemed so important and imperatively necessary, has already been taken. We have impressed upon our coinage the sentiment to which patriot hearts thrilled response in our national agony: "In God we trust." The other step, the acknowledgment of God in the Constitution, will consistently, logically, and next in order, follow. Is not the gathering of these numerous delegates from so many States here to-day, the lifting of the nation's foot in readiness to stride onward in that very step which will settle it firm and fast on the foundation of eternal truth?

If the voices of the witnesses cited have sounded so potently down through the generations past, what must the effect of the voice of this convention be? Isolated voices, like streams converging from different declines, now mingle and sweep onward in one vast overwhelming current. The voice of this gathering is the voice of many waters. And tributaries now pouring in, and soon to pour in, in more frequent and abundant confluence, from Atlantic and Pacific slopes, from Rocky mountain heights, from rolling prairie land and granite hills and southern vales, will swell the volume and augment the power of these congregated waters until their voice shall be like the seven thunders round the throne, or the utterance of "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands" of angels and living creatures and elders in the ascending ascription, "Blessing and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever."

The Rev. D. R. Kerr, D.D., then pronounced the benediction, and the Convention adjourned to meet at half-past seven in the evening.

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#### EVENING SESSION, FEB. 26.

The Convention re-assembled at half-past seven o'clock, and was called to order by the President. After prayer by the Rev. Dr. Kieffer, the President introduced the Rev. R. Audley Brown, D.D., who spoke as follows:

#### RELATION OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THOSE WHO OPPOSE IT.

ADDRESS OF REV. R. A. BROWNE, D. D.

The association organized to secure a recognition of Christianity in the Constitution of the United States, has cause for congratulation and thankfulness for the progress made—that the issues involved are becoming clearer, and the natural enemies and