

LINCOLN

From the New York Herald

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION.

The following delegates from the convention held in Allegheny city, January 27, for the above object, met in Willard's Hotel, Tuesday evening, February 9, namely: Professor J. H. McIlvaine, D. D., Princeton, N. J.; Professor J. T. Pressley, D. D., Penna.; Rev. John Douglass, D. D., Penna.; Rev. D. C. Page, D. D., Penna.; Rev. H. H. George, Ohio; Dr. Sterritt, Penna.; John Alexander, Esq., Ohio; Rev. J. S. T. Milligan, Mich.; Rev. R. A. Brown, Penna., and Rev. A. M. Milligan, Penna.—The Rev. Dr. Gurley, Rev. Channing, D. D., J. J. Marks, D. D., Rev. B. F. Morris, Rev. R. D. Johnson and Rev. N. R. Crow, of this District, 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. Revs. S. O. Wylie and J. R. W. Sloane, with Wm. Brown, Esq., delegates from the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian church to the President, also, by invitation signed the address and acted with the delegation. Through the aid of Senator Sherman, of Ohio, an arrangement was made with the President for an interview on Wednesday, 3½ p. m., when the delegation was introduced to the President by Dr. Gurley, and the chairman made the following address:

MR. PRESIDENT: The object for which we have taken the liberty of trespassing a moment upon 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 action, in two or three brief resolutions, we now respectfully ask your permission to read:

Resolved, First, That we deem it a matter of paramount importance to the life and prosperity and permanency of our nation that the Constitution be so amended as fully to express the Christian national character.

Resolved, Second, 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, it will speedily result in the consummation of its great object.

Resolved, Third, That the late proclamation 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, 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 acknowledgements 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 national affairs, and to cherish a sense of our dependence as a nation upon Him.

Resolved, Fourth, That the following memorial and petition be circulated throughout the United States for signatures:

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

We, citizens of the United States, respectfully petition your honorable bodies to adopt such measures as may be necessary for amending the National Constitution, so that it may 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 Governor 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 defence, 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 we further petition that such changes, with respect to the oath of office, slavery, and other matters, as may be necessary to give effect to these amendments of the preamble, may be introduced into the body of the Constitution; and we, your humble petitioners, will ever pray, &c., &c.

Resolved, Fifth, That a committee be appointed to lay this memorial before Congress and before the President, with the request that he would make it the subject of a special message to the National Legislature.

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 either to 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 magistrate 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 the want of a distinct and plain recognition of the divine authority in the Constitution of the United States. For we hold it a 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 to 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 responsibilities 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, the great wrong which we as a nation have committed against God in leaving Him out of our political system.

The President replied:

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, and will take such action upon it as my responsibility to my Maker and our country demands.

The form of petition agreed upon by the Convention and bearing the names of the committee was prepared for the two Houses of Congress. Similar petitions were ordered to be circulated throughout the various portions of the country for the signatures of the people; and all classes of the community, male and female, who love our country and desire to have it become that "blessed nation whose God is the Lord," are earnestly requested to sign and circulate these petitions, copying the form prepared by the Convention on two sheets, the one for the Senate and the other for the House of Representatives, and signing the same names to both, and when all the names possible are obtained, transmit the one for the Senate to the Hon. Charles Sumner, and the one for the House to the Hon. Judge Kelley, Washington, D. C.

Editors to whom this circular is sent are requested to give it an insertion in their papers, and all papers throughout the country are requested to copy.

We hope the Herald will publish this circular, and aid the cause with its great influence. J. H. McIlvaine